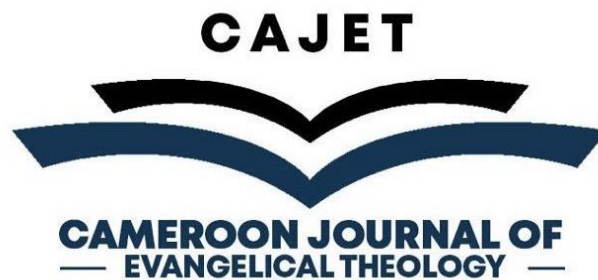


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Ecclesiological Response to the Hunger-Stricken in Local Churches of Anglophone Cameroon

Réponse ecclésiologique aux victimes de la faim dans les églises locales du Cameroun anglophone

Fai Ebenezer¹

Abstract

Every Church exists in a society primarily to serve God and minister to that society's people. She is expected to be a spiritual rescue center, socially or economically, as the case may be. The church in Anglophone Cameroon currently finds herself amid an ongoing socio-political quagmire. Several challenges come with such a situation. In the specific case of the Anglophone Cameroon, there has been substantial infrastructural loss, a death toll on the increase, and hunger-stricken people in the society, in general, and the pews, in particular. Many hungry parishioners in the local church pews of Anglophone Cameroon have motivated this paper. The writer has attempted to discuss an overview of ecclesiology, which is the study of the Church, analyzed the history of the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon, and presented an overview of hunger. There are undoubtedly several types of hunger, but the one discussed in the paper is hunger for food. The biblical position on the hunger-stricken has been dealt with in the Old Testament, where the Israelites were not to harvest all crops from their farms. In the New Testament, Jesus fed the hungry. The ecclesiological response to the millions who are hunger-stricken in local churches is that the church should feed them, through their pastor, counsel those starving, and teach Christian traders about stewardship so they do not overcharge for basic food prices. The critical analytical method is employed in this paper.

Keywords: ecclesiological, response, hunger-stricken, Anglophone Cameroon, local churches

Résumé

Toute église existe dans une société avant tout pour servir Dieu et exercer un ministère auprès des membres de cette société. On attend d'elle qu'elle soit un centre de secours spirituel, sur le plan social ou économique, selon le cas. L'église du Cameroun anglophone se trouve actuellement dans un borbier sociopolitique. Une telle situation s'accompagne de plusieurs défis. Dans le cas spécifique du Cameroun anglophone, il y a eu une perte substantielle d'infrastructures, un nombre croissant de morts et des personnes souffrant de la faim dans la société, en général, et sur les bancs d'églises, en particulier. De nombreux paroissiens affamés sur les bancs des églises locales du Cameroun anglophone ont motivé la rédaction cet article. L'auteur a tenté de présenter une vue d'ensemble de l'ecclésiologie, qui est l'étude de l'église, a analysé l'histoire de la crise anglophone au Cameroun et a présenté une vue d'ensemble de la faim. Il y a sans doute plusieurs types de faim, mais celle dont il est question dans cet article renvoie au manque de nourriture. La position biblique sur les personnes souffrant de la faim a été traitée dans l'Ancien Testament, où les Israélites ne devaient pas récolter toutes les cultures de leurs champs. Dans le Nouveau Testament, Jésus a nourri les affamés. La réponse ecclésiologique aux millions de personnes souffrant de faim dans les églises locales est que l'église doit les nourrir, elle doit conseiller les affamés par l'intermédiaire de leur pasteur et

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enseigner aux commerçants chrétiens la notion d'intendance afin qu'ils ne surfacturent pas les prix des denrées alimentaires de base. La méthode de l'analyse critique a été employé dans cet article.

Mots-clés : ecclésiologie, réponse, faim, Cameroun anglophone, églises locales

Introduction

Every Church exists in a society primarily to serve God and minister to that society's people. She is expected to be a spiritual rescue center, socially or economically, as the case may be. The church in Anglophone Cameroon finds herself amid an ongoing socio-political quagmire. Several challenges come along such quagmires. In the precise case of the Anglophone Cameroon, there has been substantial infrastructural loss, a death toll on the increase, and hunger-stricken people both in the society and the pews. Many hungry parishioners in the local church pews of Anglophone Cameroon have motivated this paper. The writer shall attempt to discuss an overview of ecclesiology, analyze the history of the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon, briefly present an overview of hunger, the biblical position on the hunger-stricken, and an ecclesiological response to the millions who are hunger-stricken in the local churches. The critical analytical method is employed in this paper.

An Overview of Ecclesiology

As the body of Christ, the church is both an organism and an organization. The technical terminology for study of the church is known as ecclesiology. D. J. Tidball opines that this study traces its roots back to the Old Testament people of God,² that is, Israel – the people God chose. Milliard J. Erickson dealing with the etymology of the word “church,” explains that *ekklesia* referred to the assembly of the citizens of a city.³ This connotes that it was not a religious word but has only gained that meaning in Christianity. It thus translates in the Septuagint the Hebrew word *qahal* used for ordinary crowds (Gen. 49:6, Numb 22:4).⁴ Gyang D. Pam affirms that ecclesiology is the theological understanding of the Christian church.⁵ *Ekklesiazō* means to summon an assembly. It has as cognate the noun *ekklesia*, which refers to Church⁶ or a gathering of people. However, the word ‘church’ has also come to be used in referring to a place where Christians gather and listen to the word preached and taught every week.⁷ These are people who follow Jesus as their Lord and Savior.⁸ In that light, Tidball avers that Paul uses *ekklesia* mainly with the gathering of the local congregation (Rom 16:5, 2 Thess. 2:1, Philem. 2), which usually meets in someone’s house.⁹ That is the meaning used in this paper. The hunger-stricken gather weekly in the local churches of Anglophone Cameroon as well. As local churches in Anglophone Cameroon, there is a need for an ecclesiological response to their hunger, that is, a response that reveals the character of Christ.

²D. J. Tidball, “Church,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* eds. T. Desmond Alexander, Brian S. Rosner, D.A. Carson et al (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2000), 407.

³Milliard J. Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine* Ed. L. Arnold Hustad (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1992), 330.

⁴Tidball, 409.

⁵Gyang D. Pam, *A Compendium of Theology* (Jos, Nigeria: Sele Printing and Publishing, 2021), 392.

⁶Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Norton Street, Nottingham: Intervarsity Press, 1994), 854-855.

⁷Gabriel Oluwasegun, *Principles and practice of Church Management*, New Edition (Ibadan, Nigeria: International Publishers Limited ,2016), 11.

⁸Ronald F. Youngblood, F.F. Bruce and R. K. Harrison, *Nelson's Bible Dictionary: A Complete Guide to Understanding the World of the Bible* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2005), 41.

⁹Tidball, 409-410.

Brief History of the Anglophone Crisis

War is commonly believed to be as old as a social existence; as long as there remain class contradictions, war will remain a tragic part of human life.¹⁰ When some groups feel superior to others they deem inferior, it breeds animosity, often resulting in conflicts. The crisis in the Anglophone part of Cameroon may not have been labeled as a full-blown war. Still, from every indication, it is a struggle between the government of the *Republic of Cameroon*, otherwise known as “La Republique,” and separatist fighters known as “Amba Boys or Amba Fighters.”

The causes of this crisis are both remote and immediate. The Anglophone crisis began in 2016 with the demand to restore the two-state federation.¹¹ Towards the end of World War One, with the defeat of Germany, the League of Nations appointed France and Britain joint trustees of Kamerun¹² (German spelling for Cameroon), with France taking the more significant part. France and Britain had unanimously fought to oust Germany, which had beguiled Britain and colonized Cameroon during the Scramble for Africa. On the eve of independence, British Cameroon voted to join *La Republique du Cameroun* in February 1961 through the United Nations Plebiscite. Consequently, it obtained independence on October 1, 1961, with the nomenclature of East and West Cameroons.¹³ Piet Konings and Francis B. Nyamnjoh avow that this amalgamation of two states, in the long run, birthed the ‘Anglophone’ consciousness among people of West Cameroon who felt marginalized by the Francophone-dominated State and even by the Francophone population as a whole.¹⁴ This serves as one of the remote causes of the crisis and makes it clear that it was only a matter of time before the climax would ensue, as it has since 2016. Before 2016, a cross-section of Anglophones had been exasperated and disgruntled as they felt like second-class citizens in a country they both owned with Francophone Cameroonians. C. Nna-Emeka Okereke further expounds on this as he avers that the current crisis results from the years of assimilation of English-speaking Cameroonians.¹⁵ The Anglophone minority has felt marginalized by the La Republic and has been made to feel like sojourners in their own country. Even when certain Francophone Cameroonians are posted to Anglophone Cameroon, especially law enforcement officers, they mostly speak French and do not bother that the people they are addressing do not understand French. Though French and English are the official languages of the Republic of Cameroon and are supposed to be of equal status, not everybody speaks the two languages, mainly because of illiteracy.

As an immediate cause of the crisis, J. D. Pefok posits that in September 2016, lawyers from Anglophone Cameroon did a peaceful protest over the marginalization of the Anglophone Common Law; they went on strike in October 2016, and in November, *Anglophone Teachers Trade Union* protested against distortions confronting the educational system in the

¹⁰ Negussay Ayele, “A Brief Profile of Wars in the Horn of Africa,” *Northeast African Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1/2 (1984): 8.

¹¹ C. Nna-Emeka Okereke, “Analyzing Cameroon’s Anglophone Crisis,” *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (March 2018):8.

¹² “Report Part Title: The Roots of the Anglophone Problem: Colonial Legacy and Failure of the Centralized Model,” <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep31413.5>, accessed September 4, 2023.

¹³ Okereke, 8.

¹⁴ Piet Konings and Francis B. Nyamnjoh, “The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (June, 1997): 207.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

Anglophone regions.¹⁶ Abiem a Tchoyi gives the following as immediate causes of the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon:¹⁷

1. Criticism of the centralized State.
2. Transfer of decision-making centers to Yaoundé, far from the Anglophone population and their problems.
3. Failure to respect commitments to equitably consider the institutional, legal, and administrative cultures and traditions inherited from the former administering powers.
4. Non-compliance to the solemn promises made during the referendum campaigns (1961 plebiscite and 1972 referendum).
5. The change of the name of the State from the *United Republic of Cameroon* to the *Republic of Cameroon*.
6. Disrespect for bilingualism in the public sector even though the constitution makes English and French two official languages of equal status.

Sadly, the Biya-led government has apparently been “indifferent” to Anglophone grievances.¹⁸ Some officials have denied the assertion that there is such a thing as an Anglophone crisis. Before the entire world, they asserted that all was well and that whatever the matter was, it was under control. Sadly, the Cameroon government can urge Russia and Ukraine to settle their disputes amicably; simultaneously, they have theirs and have been using force to settle it. This is due to poor political governance, which was why Anglophones felt marginalized in the first place.¹⁹ The government should have done everything to right these wrongs, but unfortunately, force has been their best answer. If one talks of ceasefire and laying down arms, it ought to be between the two sides, but it would seem the Cameroon government wants separatists to lay down their weapons while still holding on to theirs. (This does not mean the writer supports any side in the ongoing socio-political crisis).

This writer’s candid opinion of why the crisis has lingered this long is pride and miscalculation. When the crisis began, those who picked up arms must have thought that it would be a matter of months of resistance and the federation they demanded would be achieved. The Cameroonian government might also have underestimated the separatist fighters since they erroneously felt they were untrained and could not stand on par with trained soldiers.

In all fairness, one cannot say the masses are safe from either of the Titans. People have become targets by those who took up arms to fight for them if they suspect any links with government forces and vice versa. The government soldiers sometimes know the spots where separatist fighters are. Still, they will pick innocent civilians and insist they show the camps, and sometimes, once they leave, the other group comes and picks the person for having been seen with the former – there is nobody to report to as there is total anarchy.

There has been a great deal of unprofessionalism on the part of Cameroonian forces who use church premises as their base in launching attacks. In this writer’s village, the military occupied the *Presbyterian Church* in Tatum in the North West Region for several months forcing parishioners to worship in their houses. In Bamkika’ay, these forces broke into a pastor's house and the Baptist Church hall to launch their attack on separatist fighters Saturday,

¹⁶ J. D. Pefok, “The Anglophone Crisis Causes Indefinite Delay of Bar Elections,” *The Post*, No. 01793, Friday, 3 February 2017.

¹⁷ Abiem a Tchoyi, “Anglophone Marginalization: Cold Hard Facts,” *The Rambler*, Edition No. 0037, 18 January 2017.

¹⁸ “Cameroon’s Anglophone Crisis: How the Catholic Church Can Promote Dialogue,” <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep31594>, accessed September 4, 2023.

¹⁹ “Cameroon,” <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/compassion-peace-justice/hunger/internationaldevelopment/joininghands/joining-hands-country-profiles/cameroon-jh/>, accessed September 4, 2023.

September 10, 2022. After that day's battle, they stormed the wards of the *Banso Baptist Hospital* and forcefully took away an alleged separatist fighter and his caretaker, who was undergoing treatment. One asks if a mission hospital like the one mentioned is supposed to take sides in the crisis before treating a patient. If the Hospital takes sides, what becomes of the Hippocratic oath, which urges medical practitioners to make patients' interests primordial?²⁰

As if that was not enough, the separatist fighters, who were infuriated and embittered, demanded that the Hospital provides their brother; otherwise, no Hospital vehicle could travel to Bamenda (headquarters of the North West region of Cameroon) where they could get more drugs. It included all *Cameroon Baptist Convention* pastors. Given that the attacks on the separatists came from a Baptist Church premises, it was alleged they knew something about it. Unfortunately, when the administrator of the Hospital went to the Brigade in Tobin, Kumbo, to see to it that some workers that the Cameroon forces held hostage, also accusing them of siding with the separatist fighters by offering them medical attention be released, he too was remanded in custody.

This is the ugly picture of what is happening in Anglophone Cameroon. Statistics reveal that there have been about 712,000 internally displaced people since 2016, 4000 civilian deaths, 700,000 students out of school, and 2.2 million people in need of humanitarian aid.²¹ Ludovic Amara asserts that about 60,000 Cameroonian refugees are in neighboring Nigeria alone.²² Most of those left in Anglophone Cameroon villages cannot run away because of age or have nowhere to run. They keep running into bushes for safety, and once they notice the place is calm, they return and keep repeating the cycle. This writer's wife has had to carry his son on her back. At the same time, pregnant to run into the bushes in the middle of the night, sometimes under torrential downpours, for safety because Cameroon government forces have stormed the village in search of separatist fighters and, in the process, brutalize anyone they meet. Many churches are empty and almost closing down; many pastors no longer have sheep to cater to since they are all scattered. The few people, mostly older, are hunger-stricken and urgently need attention. Non-Governmental organizations like *Shumas* through the *World Food Program* have been trying to salvage the situation. Still, their effort is not meeting the need of everyone as a more significant number of persons are dependent.

An Overview of Hunger

The word hunger has many social, spiritual, or economic meanings, but as Angela Mears avers, the empty stomach and hunger for food readily come to mind.²³ It is a state of weakness resulting from a lack of food.²⁴ It can cause conflicts, and conflicts can as well cause it.²⁵ There are strange things people do as a result of hunger for food. These include but are not limited to thieving, prostitution, and lying. It is common parlance that a hungry man is an angry one, and as such, they can go to any length to assuage their hunger. Sometimes, it results in

²⁰ "Hippocratic oath." Encyclopædia Britannica. *Encyclopædia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite*. Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011.

²¹ "Anglophone Crisis," <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/cameroon>, accessed September 4, 2023.

²² Ludovic Amara, "Anglophone crisis: UN reports over 700,000 internally displaced persons and over 60,000 Cameroonian refugees in Nigeria," [Anglophone crisis: UN reports over 700,000 internally displaced persons and over 60,000 Cameroonian refugees in Nigeria \(stopblablacam.com\)](https://www.stopblablacam.com), accessed September 4, 2023.

²³ Angela Mears, "Hunger," *The North American Review*, Vol. 296, No. 1 (Winter 2011): 34.

²⁴ Nkwain Adeline Yafi, "A Perspective From Cameroon: Hunger, Poverty, and Terrorism in the North," <https://www.worldhunger.org/hungerpovertyandterrorisminnorthernncameroon/>, accessed September 4, 2023.

²⁵ Susan Shepler, "The Real and Symbolic Importance of Food in War: Hunger Pains and Big Men's Bellies in Sierra Leone," *Africa Today*, Vol. 58, No. 2, *Special Issue: Everyday Life in Postwar Sierra Leone* (Winter 2011): 46.

population density, social disruption, and war.²⁶ Hunger will be inevitable when there are more people than the available land to work or jobs. The war also causes hunger because, during the war, there is a lot of destruction, or people cannot cultivate their farms; the Anglophone Cameroonians who are agrarian are only an example. Conflicts exacerbate the situation of hunger,²⁷ and the case of Anglophone Cameroonians is no exception. It is also caused by social inequality, poverty, or environmental degradation.²⁸ When available resources are not distributed evenly, it causes some to have more than enough while others barely have what to survive on. Hilal Elver affirms that even though food crises differ from nation to nation, they are all products of manufactured causes, whether armed conflicts, political turmoil, or climate change.²⁹ As much as one can assert that human factors majorly cause hunger or food crisis, as Elver has opined, they are not always the sole causes of natural disasters like earthquakes, eruptions, and floods that destroy places and farms. Often, hunger forces people to move through harsh terrains for food.³⁰ When people are hungry, they no longer care where to get food. It is akin to the situation of the four lepers in 2 Kings 7:1-5 who decided to risk it all to go to the camp of the Syrians, the enemy camp, to look for food. Elver asserts that hunger and starvation kill approximately nine million people yearly, more than malaria, HIV, and Tuberculosis combined.³¹ Although hunger keeps increasing yearly, food production has increased because the world produces enough food to feed ten billion people. However, it is ironic that people are still dying of hunger. This is accounted for by the fact that many people are poor and cannot afford food.

Meenakshi Gigi Durham avers that the lack of food (hunger) makes people mentally unstable.³² Out of personal experience as a pastor serving in the Anglophone part of Cameroon, the writer has had to counsel people who are mentally unstable because they have shifted from having to starving. Most times, because these people depend on the goodwill of others, the trauma of seeing themselves depend on others weighs down on them. Elver concurs with Durham as he posits that hunger does undermine resilience to absorb or recover from other shocks, such as political unrest.³³ There are thousands of hunger-stricken people in Anglophone Cameroon churches. Most of them are hunger stricken because of the crisis, as they have lost all they worked for. In the next section, the writer shall discuss the biblical position on hunger.

Biblical Position on Hunger

The Bible is not silent about the hunger-stricken in society. From the Old Testament, in Deuteronomy 24:19-21, YAHWEH gave the Israelites instructions not to harvest everything from their farms. In Ruth chapters 2 and 3, Ruth benefited from this provision as she was allowed to glean from Boaz' farm. In their commentary, H. D. Spence and Joseph S. Exell noted that Boaz showed his practical sympathy by giving parched corn to Ruth to eat and

²⁶ Frederick H. Buttel, "Ending Hunger in Developing Countries," *Contemporary Sociology*, Vol. 29, No. 1, Utopian Visions: Engaged Sociologies for the 21st Century (January, 2000):14.

²⁷ David Laborde, Livia Bizikova, Tess Lallemand and Carin Smaller, "Ending Hunger:: What would it cost," *International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)* (2016):12, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/resrep17133>, accessed September 4, 2023.

²⁸ Buttel, 17.

²⁹ Hilal Elver, "Suffering from Hunger in a World of Plenty," *Middle East Report*, No. 286, Suffering and the Limits of Relief (Spring 2018):14.

³⁰ Tina Wallace, "Refugees and Hunger in Eastern Sudan," *Review of African Political Economy*, No. 33, War and Famine (August, 1985): 64.

³¹ Elver, 14.

³² Meenakshi Gigi Durham, "Hunger Pangs," *The Iowa Review*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (Fall, 2012):4

³³ Elver, 16.

securing that her gleaning should be even more successful.³⁴ He never stopped providing for the hunger-stricken Ruth but protected her; that is an example to be emulated. Proverbs 25:21 implores God's people to feed even their enemies. In the New Testament, the Greek words are *limos* as a noun meaning 'hunger' and *prospeinos* as an adjective for intensive hunger.³⁵ The implication of this is that hunger is in levels. When Jesus' disciples were hungry and began to pluck ears of corn to eat on the Sabbath, Jesus defended them before the Pharisees in Matthew 12:1 and 2 because he cared about them. He could not send the multitudes who had been with him for days without food in Matthew 15:32. These and several other examples in the Bible prove God intends that the hunger-stricken in and around His people should be fed.

Ecclesiological Response

The ecclesiological response in this section discusses what the church should do with the hunger-stricken led by their pastor. When people are hungry, one of the first places they naturally go for help is the church,³⁶ irrespective of whether they are members of that church. Billy Kangas is so concerned about the hunger-stricken who are not only in Anglophone churches but all over the society that he asserts that making it cease is a moral issue. For it to be dealt with, there is a need for prayers and putting resources together.³⁷ It is important to pray, but praying without planning is equivalent to playing without knowing. After prayers, there is a need for action. Some of them include:

Feed those hungry to the best of the church's ability. Kabakura Jean Bosco Ceusi avers that thousands of needy of the Anglophone region are hungry. The situation is worsening by the day if the crisis continues unabated.³⁸ During the martial Law clampdown in Poland on December 13, 1981, by General Wojciech Jaruzelski, which brought untold hardship to the Poles,³⁹ church people outdid the governments of the day by massively donating relief materials.⁴⁰ Just like the Polish church, the church in Anglophone Cameroon is encouraged to double its efforts in providing food for the hungry. Religious congregations are estimated to give about 7 billion yearly to people in need, about 1/7th of their total revenue.⁴¹ As established above, the church is doing a lot in this area, but she is encouraged to do more because the number of hunger-stricken continues to rise.

It should be noted that hunger cuts across religious lines.⁴² The situation in Anglophone Cameroon is not a religious war but affects everyone. Many readily run to the church with the

³⁴H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell, *The Pulpit Commentary: Ruth, I and II Samuel* (Peabody, Massachusetts, 2011), 41.

³⁵W.E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger and William White, Jr., *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words: Keyed to Strong's Reference Numbers* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1970), 315.

³⁶"People Are Hungry, and the Church Responds," <https://archny.org/people-are-hungry-and-the-church-responds/>, accessed September 4, 2023.

³⁷Billy Kangas, "Fifty Ways Catholics are Working on Ending Hunger Today!" <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/billykangas/2014/07/50-ways-catholics-are-working-on-ending-hunger-today.html>, accessed September 4, 2023.

³⁸Kabakura Jean Bosco Ceusi, "Cameroon: Western Region Continue To Suffer From Hungry," [Cameroon: Western region continue to suffer from hungry \(oeildhumanite.com\)](http://Cameroon: Western region continue to suffer from hungry (oeildhumanite.com)), accessed September 4, 2023.

³⁹"Martial Law in Poland 1981—1983," <https://ipn.gov.pl/en/brief-history-of-poland/collected-content/9083.Collecte-Content-Martial-Law-in-Poland-19811983.html#>, accessed September 4, 2023.

⁴⁰Harry Genet, "Churches Respond to a Hungry Poland," <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1982/february-5/churches-respond-to-hungry-poland.html>, Accessed September, 2023.

⁴¹"What is the Church's Role in Ending Hunger?" <https://www.crosswalk.com/church/pastors-or-leadership/what-is-the-churchs-role-in-ending-hunger-560660.html>, accessed September 4, 2023.

⁴²David Beckmann and Arthur Simon, *Grace at the Table: Ending Hunger in God's World* (New York, Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1999), 5.

hope of finding assistance. Commenting on Mark 6:31-35, when Jesus fed five thousand men, R.T. France posits that Jesus initially wanted to retreat with his followers. However, the unwanted crowd at that time followed and frustrated his retreat plan, but Jesus still fed them.⁴³ The situation in Anglophone Cameroon, which has extended to Francophone Cameroon (because some Anglophones who have run away from the crisis have found peace there, and since they have no jobs, they depend on the goodwill of the churches to feed), is no different in that people go to wherever they will find food whether they are *bona fide* members of the church in question or not. James D. Edwards asserts that Mark records the feeding of the 5000 by Jesus immediately following the episode of the extravagant party thrown by Herod but juxtaposes the two parties and shows how Jesus feeds the people who were like sheep without a shepherd out of compassion for them.⁴⁴ The church in Anglophone Cameroon must continually let the compassion of Jesus guide her heart if she must reach out to those starving, even when they are not her members.

Try to establish them as long as the means are there. Providing food for the hunger-stricken in the church is essential. Still, this writer opines that if the church in Anglophone Cameroon can establish those most affected, it will be worthwhile. To establish in this context refers to providing money for those affected to start a trade. If the financial means are there, it will salvage the situation better. In the long run, it will prevent the church from feeding everybody for as long as the crisis lasts, which is unknown now. Once people have what to do, they can fend for themselves and not continue to return to the church to ask for help. The concern is how long and how much the church can spend on this, which is why this suggestion is contingent on the availability of resources.

Pray and counsel with them. As Nditemeh Charlemagne affirms the Church remains apolitical in the ongoing Anglophone crisis⁴⁵ but will not relent on her onus of praying for the nation for peace to return. As Ngala Hansel avers, it is unfortunate that the *Banso Baptist Hospital* administrator, with three other staff, had to be remanded in custody after being accused of collaborating with separatists, even though the *Cameroon Baptist Convention* has denied those accusations.⁴⁶ The Hospitals or the churches do not take sides in a crisis such as this. Because the Church is apolitical, they are encouraged to continue praying for peace to return to Cameroon and pray for this hunger-stricken in their pews. Praying for God to provide for them and praying that the Lord will comfort them since many are also psychologically affected. There are hungry people in the pews every meeting day as many no longer work or do business because they have either been looted or infernos have razed down their sources of livelihood. In Tatum village (a locality of the Northwest region of Cameroon), where the writer of this article hails from, government forces burnt down a whole market in a single day, forcing millionaires to become beggars. The church, however, still owes it as a duty to pray for the peace of her Jerusalem, for in her peace she will find hers (Ps 122:6). As they pray, pastors should counsel with them because some of the victims need more than food since they are emotionally and psychologically traumatized.

Encourage other members of the church who are business-oriented, especially food vendors, to understand and practice their stewardship of possession at this time (Gen 2:15, Matt 25:14-30, Lk 16:1-12). They should be dissuaded from raising the basic prices of food so

⁴³ R.T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 260.

⁴⁴ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 190.

⁴⁵ Ngala Hansel, "Arrest of medical staff in Kumbo: CBC executive calls for fasting, prayer," <https://cameroonnewsagency.com/arrest-of-medical-staff-in-kumbo-cbc-executive-calls-for-fasting-prayer/>, accessed September 4, 2023.

⁴⁶ Hansel.

that their brethren cannot afford it. It is not strange that despite the hunger resulting from the Anglophone crisis, some people have usurped the situation and made high profits with their highly inflated prices of food items, making it hard for average families to buy. This writer asserts that since some of these business people (buyam-sellams) are members of some churches, the men of God ought to remind them of the fact that they are merely stewards of whatever resources they have so that they can use them to glorify the Lord by not overcharging as is the case. It is also lamentable but understandable that the cost of transportation is also at its peak, increasing almost by 500 percent in some cases, thereby forcing the increment in prices of basic communities; it still does not eradicate the fact that some business people overdo it to garner profits through their exorbitant prices.

Conclusion

Can the church in Anglophone Cameroon solve all the problems of those hit by the crisis and hunger-stricken? Should they feed only their members? Does she have the money to care for this hunger-stricken in Anglophone Cameroon? These questions need answers; however, the Church in Anglophone Cameroon is doing its best with hunger-stricken pews. This paper overviewed the Anglophone crisis and hunger, looked at its biblical position and provided an ecclesiological response to hunger-stricken in local church pews. The writer believes that the Church should not only feed the hunger-stricken but speak up as the conscience of society.

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