


'New Nigeria': A socioreligious dimension of prophetic envisioning

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Globally, the quest to create societies free of corruption and violence that foster appreciation for human dignity and quality of life is highly envisioned and desired. Similarly, the current political, economic, religious and social tension in Nigeria calls for deep and courageous reflections about the country's future in the League of Nations. These social realities have created a quest for a new society of justice, love, freedom and faithful stewardship in governance. Thus, this article portrays a song by Solomon Lange, titled 'New Nigeria', as prophetic within the tradition of prophetic envisioning. Also, it interprets the intersections between the prophetic dimension of this song and the sociocultural realities in Nigeria. Specifically, it argues that amidst Nigerians' aspirations and struggles to build a new and corruption-free society, this song can contribute to raising national awareness that stimulates alternative consciousness, which invites the citizenry to courageously and tirelessly hope and work towards its actualisation.

Introduction

Recently, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, in a speech to commemorate his first year in office, stated that: 'from day one, we purposely set out to correct our condition, to change Nigeria'.¹ Based on this presidential comment, Nigerians hope that this 'change' will aim at fostering social cohesion and focus on creating a peaceful and corruption-free society of justice, human dignity and national development. To achieve this, there is a need to envision a new society that will foster appreciation for an alternative national consciousness.

Thus, of particular interest to this article is a song titled 'New Nigeria'. This song was recently released on an album titled *My Offering*. The lyrics of this song are as follows:

I see a new Nigeria, coming forth from the hand of the Lord. Rejoice, sons and daughters of the land. Rejoice, there is healing in the land. I hear rejoicing everywhere. Yes! It's done by the hand of the Lord. I see corruption gone forever; there's no more violence in the land. I see peace everywhere and it's done by the hands of the Lord. I see a new Nigeria coming forth from the hand of the Lord. Thank you, Jesus, I see a brand new nation.

This song was composed and sung by Solomon Lange, a multitalented internationally known Nigerian musician, who constantly relates the socio-economic sufferings and hopelessness of people, especially Nigerians, with faith in God. Using the Bible as a foundation, he speaks in the prophetic redeeming language of peace and hope through songs. His approach to peace building through music, among different tribes and religions in Nigeria, especially in the North, has earned him a the national award of 'Peace Ambassador' by the Federal Republic of Nigeria, under the office of the former first lady Dame Patience Goodluck Jonathan.

The song 'New Nigeria' specifically captures and brings to light the despair and anticipation of Nigerians. It speaks against corruption and violence as the major social crises in the country, but also envisions a peaceful atmosphere of rejoicing and celebration. Significantly, this article, through a lens of sociocritical realism, investigates the prophetic dimension and significance of this song for building a caring democracy where transparency, accountability, justice and human flourishing are envisioned and actualised. Therefore, considering the social, political, economic and religious tension and challenges in the nation, how should Lange's vision of a 'New Nigeria' be perceived?

1. This presidential speech was presented on 29 May 2016 during the celebration of Democracy Day in Abuja, Nigeria. For the full text, see <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/204256-full-text-president-buharis-democracy-day-message-nigerians.html> (accessed 12 July 2016).

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Based on the biblical tradition of the prophets, the following theologians have argued that the prophetic office has a two-fold task: Gustafson (1988) argues that the task involves envisioning and criticising; Brueggemann (2001:3) criticising and energising; Ward and Ward (1995:13) judging and redeeming. Moreover, Koopman (2012:39–40) portrayed policymaking as an additional task. Hence, the practice of prophetic speaking can be categorised into three interdependent dimensions, namely prophetic criticism, prophetic envisioning and prophetic policymaking. Applying these approaches to the demands of actual circumstance requires what Brueggemann called ‘prophetic imagination’ (2001). Imagination brings people to engage with the promise of newness that is at work in our history with God.

Having highlighted very briefly the description of prophetic criticism and prophetic policymaking, I approach this article by identifying and interpreting some major themes such as corruption and violence within the current socioreligious context of Nigeria, because corruption and violence are the major crises in contemporary Nigeria. Similarly, the song will be discussed under the following headings: ‘Lange’s “New Nigeria” in the context of Nigeria’; ‘Lange’s “New Nigeria” in the company of prophetic proclamation’ and ‘Prophetic envisioning of a “New Nigeria”’. This approach aims to investigate and appreciate the prophetic dimension embedded in this song.

Brief description of prophetic criticism and prophetic policymaking

Prophetic *criticism* (Brueggemann 2001; Gustafson 1988; Koopman 2012), *indictment* (Koopman 2004) and *judgment* (Ward & Ward 1995; Wilson 1980) perform the task of denouncing the reality that is in conflict with the vision of a new society. Prophetic criticism addresses societal challenges from the root. Koopman (2012) affirms that:

prophetic criticism gets to the roots of the problems that pervade institutions and cultures, or that pervades [*sic*] the actions and behavior of individual persons ... The indictments of the prophet as critics construe the human condition in deep and broad proportions. (p. 136)

It gives a description of the present situation and pronounces judgment (Green 1984:57), which leads to conviction of guilt and constitutes a call for a fundamental repentance and a radical turn from unfaithfulness to faithfulness.

To illustrate, the monarchical government centralised authority and took away land from the people. This resulted in the formation of different classes. The kings and the nobles formed the elite, who revelled in luxury (Am 4:1–3; Is 3:14–23). Bribery and corruption had set in. The jubilee laws of restoration of property and the sabbatical laws of annulling debts and setting the slaves free had been forgotten. Wealth accumulation through unjust and fraudulent ways had become standard practice for those in power (Is 5:8–10). God raised up prophets like Amos, Isaiah, Hosea and Micah; these prophets challenged and criticised the kings of biblical Israel, as well as those who

indulged in corruption and revelled in luxury (Brueggemann 2001:23; De Villiers 2010a:1; 2010b:1; Mckane 1982:256).

According to Gustafson (1988:43–46), policy discourse is conducted by people who have the responsibility to make laws and to carry out the actions that are required by those laws. Laws are made to embody the vision of a good society and to address the criticisms against so many wrongs in the society (Koopman 2012:139). Prophetic policymaking is the humble acknowledgment that prophetic speaking directly or indirectly impacts public discourse, public opinion formation and policymaking. This means that the policymaking process, policymakers and upholding the integrity of policy are very important in prophetic speaking.

According to Stott (1982:167), it is the responsibility of the prophets to open up biblical principles that relate to societal problems and to enable people to develop principles of the kingdom of God about them – principles like justice, accountability, equality, good stewardship and love. This signifies that the socio-ecclesiological proclamation of the church should inspire and encourage opinion-formers and policymakers in the congregation to apply these principles in the public domain.

Lange’s ‘New Nigeria’ in the context of Nigeria

It is not strange for a song like this to be written and sung by a Nigerian, from Nigeria and for Nigeria because religion is fundamental in the nation. Christianity, Islam and African traditional religion are the major religions in the country. The religiosity² of Nigerians is reflected in many ways. For instance, Mbachirin (2006:71–72) averred that the preamble of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria states that the country is ‘one indivisible and indissoluble Sovereign Nation under God’. This suggests that Nigeria as a nation is not an end in itself but stands under the transcendent shepherding of God. The Nigerian coat of arms carries the motto ‘Unity and Faith, Peace and Progress’, demonstrating that we desire and strive in faith for social cohesion that fosters and builds a united, peaceful and progressive nation. In this way we proclaim that we have faith in God that our nation is going to survive, faith in ourselves and faith in one another. It is a subtle religious prayer of faith for unity. Similarly, the national anthem³ acknowledges God as the Supreme Being from whom all of creation originated. This anthem is also a prayer of dependence on God for direction in fulfilling one’s responsibility to the betterment of the nation. The national pledge, the oaths of allegiance and oaths of offices are also concluded with the prayer, ‘so help me God’.

2.The word ‘religiosity’ is very ambiguous. While it refers to the quality of being religious or pious, it is equally used more often in the sense of an exaggerated and insincere religious zeal. ‘Religiosity’ as used in this article carries both ideas.

3.Following is the second stanza of the National Anthem:

Oh God of creation
Direct our noble cause
And guide our leaders right
Help our youth the truth to know
In love and honesty to grow
And living just and true
Great lofty heights attain
To build a nation where peace
And justice shall reign

However, Nigerians continue to be beset by various problems such as corruption, poverty, abuse of human rights and dignity, religion, political and ethnic extremism, violence, insecurity, unemployment and injustice. These problems make life miserable and impede national development, social cohesion, and human flourishing. Thus, Nigerians yearn for a better socio-economic and political environment. For this to happen, there is need for 'alternative consciences' (Brueggemann 2001).

The song 'New Nigeria' is a step in this direction. Hence, it encapsulates the socio-economic and political realities and yearnings of Nigerians. Moreover, themes such as corruption, violence, peace, healing, rejoicing, new Nigeria, sons and daughters of the land affirm this.

I will attempt to briefly discuss two of these themes, namely corruption and violence, for three reasons. Firstly, both Transparency International and the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) rated Nigeria as one of the most corrupt countries in the world and the fourth most violent country.⁴ Secondly, no meaningful development can be attained where corruption and violence are prevalent and virulent, not even in Nigeria. Thirdly, corruption and violence are some of the forms of injustice that biblical prophets spoke against. For example, the prophet Amos' most frequent charge against Israel was that the wealthy and powerful had exploited the poor and weak (2:6–8) and engaged in false and deceitful business practices (8:4–6). These practices evidenced a disregard for and a perversion of justice (Birch 1997:170; Polley 1989:112).

Corruption

Corruption is a global phenomenon affecting societies at different levels and times. According to Achebe (1988), corruption has:

permeated the African society, and anyone who can say that corruption in Africa has not yet become alarming is either a fool, crook or else does not live on the continent. (p. 65)

The 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index report by Transparency International ranked Nigeria among the most 'highly corrupt' nations in the world.

Corruption has reached the level of impunity, and has become a culture for many Nigerians at all levels of society. Olusegun Obasanjo, a former Nigerian President, affirmed that:

there was [*is*] corruption! Corruption! Corruption! And corruption! Everywhere and all the time! Corruption was not only rife, it has eaten so deeply into the marrow of our existence that looters and fraudsters had become our heroes, and it seems we could no longer place any faith in honesty, and decency, and hard work. (cited in Njoku 2000:5)

4. See Corruption Perceptions Index 2014, <http://www.transparencyinternational.org/>; the 2014 World Bank Group Enterprise Survey of Business Managers states that 44.8% of firms identified corruption as a major constraint in Nigeria (<http://www.enterprisesurveys.org/data/exploreeconomies/2014/nigeria#corruption>). For violence, ACLED contends that 'Nigeria is the fourth most violent country in the ACLED dataset when measured by the number of violent events; and the seventh most distinct temporal and spatial patterns; between 1997 and 2000, levels of both violence and reported fatalities were relatively stable. Since 2010, both have climbed sharply'. (April 2013. Country Report: Nigeria https://www.acleddata.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/ACLED-Country-Report_Nigeria [Accessed 29 June 2015]).

Corruption is 'the abuse of public office for private gains' (World Bank 1999). However, when Nigerians talk about corruption, they refer not only to the abuse of state offices for private gain but a whole range of social behaviours in which various forms of morally questionable deceptions enable the achievement of wealth, power or prestige as well more mundane ambitions. The Nigerian notion of corruption encompasses everything from government, bribery and graft, rigged elections and fraudulent business deals to the diabolical abuse of occult powers, medical quackery, cheating in school and even deceiving a lover (Marquette 2010:25). Therefore, corruption in Nigeria is a:

form of anti-social behaviour by an individual or social group which confers unjust or fraudulent benefits on its perpetrators, is inconsistent with the established legal norms and prevailing moral ethos of the land and is likely to subvert or diminish the capacity of the legitimate authorities to provide fully for the Holistic wellbeing of all members of society in a just manner. (Osoba 1996:372)

In an effort to understand the reasons for the precarious situation of corruption, Prozesky (2013) posited that:

at the heart of the moral evil of corruption ... is [*the*] lack of concern for the common good in the form of dishonesty. (p. 14)

This lack of concern is manifest in greed, unprincipled, and selfish desires.

Buttressing this, a report by the Political Bureau of Nigeria:

perceived corruption in Nigeria to be essentially a product of excessive materialism generated by our individualized capitalist order which emphasizes the struggle to acquire wealth by individual without regard to the collective interest and welfare of the larger society. (Report of the Political Bureau 1978:215)

Some reasons for corruption in Nigeria include ineffective institutions, weak leadership, weak protection of civil liberties, poverty, closed economic and political systems, poor remuneration of public servants and religious radicalism (Ayodeji & Omolawal 2014; Ogbeyi 2012; Okolo & Etekepe 2015:248; Olukayode 2013:176; Shehu 2006:36).

The impact of corruption⁵ is globally recognised as one of the most critical threats to economic development, political stability (Rose-Ackerman 1975; Rose-Ackerman 1997), peaceful and social cohesion, human capacity building and the development of societies (Kyambalesa 2006; Mauro 1995; Ogbeyi 2012; Treisman 2000). In Nigeria, corruption is responsible for the deterioration in the private and public sectors, resulting in a 'democracy deficit', which is referred to as 'the incapacities of governmental institutions to reflect the real values and ideas of the citizens' (Tronto 2013:17). Buttressing this standpoint, former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (2009) posits that

the most immediate source of the disconnect between Nigeria's wealth and its poverty, is the failure of governance at federal, state, and local levels ... lack of transparency and accountability

5. On the effect of corruption, renowned scholars such as Leff (1964), Huntington (1968) and Lien (1986) argued that a minimal amount of corruption might be efficient, because it removes government rigidities. However, Adenugba and Omolawal (2014:522) suggest that it is the responsibility of society to decide whether to subscribe to this concept.

has eroded the legitimacy of the government, and contributed to the rise of groups that embrace violence and reject the authority of the state. (p. 1)

The general consensus among Nigerians is that corruption has affected human dignity and flourishing. Despite the nation's wealth in human and natural resources, many Nigerians continue to languish in abject poverty. Nonetheless, the government has dedicated itself to combating corruption in all spheres of national life. This commitment has been demonstrated by past and current presidents,⁶ faith-based organisations and non-governmental organisations. In spite of the commitment of these organisations, there is still a national outcry seeking a new approach in this fight. In response to this clarion call, Lange's song 'New Nigeria' can play a very significant role in this context.

Violence

Violence, as physical assault against a person, animal or property, is perpetrated globally as a result of injustice, inequality and lack of concern for creation. Thus violence is one of the biggest challenges that societies face on a global scale, for instance, the brutal Rwandan genocide, the killings in Darfur and Liberia, among others. Destruction of life and property in these areas, and other parts of the world, shows that nothing is more dangerous than an atmosphere of hatred and violence (Huber 2011:1).

The concept of violence in a broader sense encompasses physical⁷ destruction of life and property and structural restriction of people from developing and using their capabilities (Huber 2011:2). According to Agang (2011:28), violence is an 'outburst of anger against something or someone's values. This means something that a person protects from being devalued or demeaned'. Therefore, violence as an act of aggression intends to inflict injury, to structurally restrict, to destroy or to kill. Violence as a physical social phenomenon committed by human beings against other human beings is classified and manifests in a number of ways, namely:

personal violence – especially violence against children and acts of rape, violence in families and on the streets, other forms of criminal violence affecting individual lives, as well as the social fabric, terrorist violence ranging from suicide bombing to organized warfare, civil wars in failed states or between states, foreign military interventions on humanitarian, economic, or other grounds. (Huber 2011:3)

6. Nigerian President Gen. Muhammadu Buhari (1983–1985) introduced ethical revolution that led to the anticorruption campaign known as the 'War against Indiscipline'. For the first time in the history of Nigeria, through this agency, past corrupt leaders were tried and convicted for corruption and embezzlement. This agency also reoriented Nigerians on how to behave in public places and renewed vigour for nationalism and patriotism. Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999 formed the Economic Financial Crimes Commission. The commission is empowered to prevent, investigate, prosecute and penalise economic crime such as advance fraud (419) and money laundering. On 29 September 2002, Obasanjo also inaugurated the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission. Its vision is 'to fight corruption to a standstill and restore Nigeria to the enviable standard of responsibility and dignity within the comity of nations'. The National Orientation Agency through the help of president Goodluck Jonathan launched (17 May 2012) the 'Do the right thing: Transform Nigeria campaign'. Its focus is to imbibe the culture and attitude of doing the right thing, to fight and win the war against corruption in Nigeria. However, it is our observation that prophetic preaching from a Christian tradition has a vital role in this anticorruption crusade.

7. However, Huber argued that not every form of violation of human persons takes the forms of physical violence. There are psychological and other forms of non-physical violence. For example, bullying at the workplace or at school is often described as a form of psychosocial violence. 'Violent language' – namely language that hurts people – is another form (2011:2).

Similarly, violence in Nigeria is categorised as political violence, socio-economic violence, sociocultural violence, ethno-religious violence and the violence of human and drug trafficking (Ahmed 2009:7; Enns, Holland & Rigs 2004:149). These forms of violence have been attributed largely to bad governance characterised by corruption, electoral manipulation, human rights abuses and lack of transparency, accountability and justice in the distribution of political-economic resources (Ahmed 2009:7; Kajom 2012:1–2). However, in naming these different forms we have to keep in mind that while many forms of criminal violence are recorded, a high percentage of violence remains hidden (Huber 2011).

Currently, direct physical violence in Nigeria, exerted by human persons against one another, is mostly based on ethnic and religious grounds. In other words, Nigeria today suffers seriously from ethnic and religious violence. Butressing this point, Sayne states that the:

[u]se of mercenaries and ethnic militias is on the rise. In some places, the resulting chaos is opening up space for organized crime, such as kidnapping, smuggling, and banditry. The local terrorist group Boko Haram increasingly plots attacks in indigene-settler violence hotspots, including a recent series of bombing of religious worship centers in some parts of the nation. (Human Rights Watch July 2012:2)

Statistically, Human Rights Watch (June 2011:20) reports:

... more than 15,700 people have been killed in inter-communal, political and sectarian violence between 1999 and 2011, especially in Plateau State, with a total of 3,800 deaths since 2001, at least 1,000 of them in 2010 alone. However, [the] United States Commission on International Religious Freedom claims that 12,000 Nigerians have been killed in sectarian and communal attacks and reprisals between Muslims and Christians from 1999 up to 2009. That's an average of 1,090 deaths per year. (cited in Daniel 2014:33)

This violence caused by ethnicity and religion has continued to impede genuine unity and progress.

From the preceding statements, one can argue that the religious violence in Nigeria is mostly between Christians and Muslims. According to Turaki and Kukah, the full implementation of the sharia legal system in some parts of the country (Sokoto, Kano, Zamfara States) is one of the major causes of religious violence (Kukah 2007; Turaki 2007). The killings and suicide attacks by the Boko Haram sect clearly demonstrate the religious dimension of violence in the country. This issue and many more have created mistrust among these religions. Michael asserts that, 'in this context of mistrust, insecurity, many Christians have also become unfortunately violent in order to confront the challenge of an increasing Islamic fundamentalism' (cited in Kajom 2012:5).

Conflict over land ownership is one of the causes of ethnic violence in Nigeria. According to Getui (1999):

[t]his may range from absolute tribalism to racism and even to ethnic cleansing. When those in power have discovered that the demographic number of a certain ethnic group will not favour them remaining in power, ethnic cleansing has been used to maintain power. (p. 101)

For instance, in March 2012, the Tiv and Fulani ethnic groups clashed over land, many were killed and about 15 000 people displaced. According to a newspaper report (*This Day*, 05 May 2013), in Wukari, Taraba State, hundreds of people were feared dead, several others injured and hundreds of houses were set ablaze in a violent clash between two tribes: the Hausa and the Jukun (cited in Daniel 2014:35). Moreover, there are conflicts in the Niger Delta region (Dike 2001:37; Kajom 2012:28), and the Biafra movement in the Eastern part calling for the creation of a Biafran nation.

This context of hostility between Christians and Muslims, and between some ethnic groups, has resulted in insecurity of life and property and has affected any reasonable level of socio-economic progress in the land. To this end, the prophetic oracles of Isaiah and Zechariah, which formed the basis for this song, 'New Nigeria', can serve as a tool for national sensitisation and awareness to promote a culture of peaceful coexistence in the country – a culture that speaks of the promise of peaceful coexistence as the cardinal virtue and value of all religions. It reaches out and persuades all who seek peace according to their own religious traditions and commitments in Nigeria.

Lange's 'New Nigeria' in the company of prophetic proclamation

The lyrics of this song are rooted in the prophetic oracles of Isaiah and Zechariah. These biblical prophets' divinely inspired proclamations (Wilson 1980:14) contribute to the moral, ethical and theological reform of their context. The prophet Samuel, for example, showed the nation Israel its sins, voiced its repentant prayer and led it to victory against its foes at Mizpah (1 Sam 7) (Stibitz 1898:20). In line with this prophetic proclamation, Solomon Lange sang in the name of God from the Bible to the concrete reality of corruption and violence faced by Nigerians. The phrase 'New Nigeria' or 'I see a new Nigeria' in Lange's song is deeply connected to the prophetic oracle of Deutero-Isaiah (Is 43:19a: 'See, I am doing a new thing!' INV). This prophetic proclamation by Deutero-Isaiah invites the Israelites to stop mournfully looking back and clinging to the past and open their minds to the fact that a new, miraculous act of God is springing up in their midst. The new thing that God proclaims God's self to do, 'is the new thing which Israel had ceased to consider, hope for, or believe in' (Westermann 1969:128). Thus, the proclamation is for biblical Israel not to keep focusing on what God has done in the past; instead, they are invited to behold in the present and see that God is doing a new thing (Nsiku 2006:839).

In the same fashion, Lange's song envisions God at work in the midst of the current insecurity, violence, poverty, HIV and/or AIDS, corruption and abuse that has resulted in hopelessness on the continent of Africa, especially in Nigeria. Many Nigerians, like the Israelites, kept dwelling in the past, talking about 'the good old days' and doubting whether a new, human, flourishing Nigeria were possible. Like Israel, Nigeria needs to be 'shaken out of a faith that has nothing to learn about God's activity, and therefore nothing to learn about what is possible with God' (Westermann 1969:129).

Hence, Lange's song in the company of prophetic proclamation can serve as a channel for this shift to take place.

Following the prophetic oracle of Zechariah (Zch 2:10a: 'Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion' KJB), Lange depicts an atmosphere of celebration. Thus he announces, '[r]ejoice sons and daughters of the Land. I hear rejoicing everywhere'. For Zechariah, the daughter of Zion⁸ or the people of Zion (Yilpet 2006:1080) are to be glad because God will dwell among them to bring comfort and restoration in the land. In the same way Lange invites the sons and daughters of the land to rejoice.

Nonetheless, Nigeria is faced with serious problems that need to be addressed, among which are the problems of corruption, violence and most urgently the rescue of the remaining Chibok girls from captivity at the hands of their Boko Haram abductors. For more than 2 years now, there has been a global outcry and pressure⁹ on the Nigerian government calling for the whereabouts and rescue of these beautiful daughters of the land. Significantly, as the Nigerians patiently await the return of these girls, Lange's song in the company of prophetic proclamation implicitly declared from the oracle of Jeremiah that: '[t]here is hope for your future, declares the LORD, and your children shall come back to their own country' (31:17).

Prophetic envisioning of a new Nigeria

The dimension of prophetic envisioning is to portray an appealing vision of the future.¹⁰ This vision may indict the contemporary broken reality, but its main function is to allure and attract people to act concretely and to attempt to approximate the vision (Koopman 2012:132). This vision energises and provides a unique paradigm shift in thoughts, words and actions. Thus, it calls for a fresh, proactive, alternative approach to the current crisis. This alternative:

is not rooted in social theory or in righteous indignation or in self-sacrifice but in the genuine alternative that God is. God makes possible and requires an alternative theology and an alternative sociology. (Brueggemann 2001:9)

To achieve that, prophetic envisioning uses the language of amazement, hope, symbols, analogies, similes and metaphors (Brueggemann 2001:59–79; Koopman 2012:123).

Lange's song 'New Nigeria' speaks of a concept of prophetic envisioning in the Nigeria context. This song is not wishful

8. See Petersen 1985:176; O'Brien 2012:347. The personification of the female Zion or the use of the word *bat*, literally 'daughter', to refer to the population of a city or region is well known. This text calls to consciousness all the negative sentiments that Babylon held for Israel. Babylon, which had been the mightiest of empires, would be brought low, whereupon Zion would be able to leave her position in captivity. This means that Zion would replace Babylon as the significant city.

9. An international example is the #BringBacktheGirls campaign.

10. Prophetic proclamation is not only directed towards the future but also to the present – prophetic task by means of criticism and energising regarding the future, called to present faithfulness (cf. Green 1984:59–61). The prophets were calling for repentance today and for a present renewed faith in a God who actively controls the future. This approach introduces the important distinction between prophecy as 'foretelling' and 'forth-telling'. To foretell is to predict a future happening, while to forth-tell is announce or proclaim a message to a group or person. Significantly, both perspectives are necessary in the context of corruption.

thinking about the future of Nigeria; rather it is an energising vision that humbly proclaims hope through music – hope that is theological and Trinitarian in nature (Koopman 2012:133), which is shaped by speech (Brueggemann 2001:69). It rests upon what happened in the past and on what is happening in the present, specifically in God's acts of creation and of recreation in Christ and renewal in the Spirit (Alves 1972:198).

This kind of hope in the context of corruption and violence is the refusal to accept that Nigeria will never be corruption-free and peaceful. Thus, this hope energises us, not through what we already possess but through what is promised and about to be given (Brueggemann 2001:14). This newness comes when we understand that suffering and hope cannot be separated – suffering that makes it impossible for us to forget that there is a political, economic, religious and social task still unfinished and still to be accomplished. Therefore, Nigerians should live in fervent anticipation of the newness that God has promised and will surely give. For this reason, Solomon Lange confidently declares and invites Nigerians to rejoice because this newness 'is coming forth from the Hand of the Lord'. In other words, this vision of a new Nigeria calls for a fresh, proactive, alternative approach to the current crisis.

Conclusion

In this article, Solomon Lange's song 'New Nigeria' was portrayed as a prophetic proclamation within the dimension of prophetic envisioning. It argued that, despite the high level of corruption and violence, the earnest anticipation of the return of the remaining beautiful Chibok girls, and the quest for social, economic and political change in Nigeria, this song brings hope and courage, which calls for an 'ethics of playfulness', an ethics that is no whip or threat but rather an invitation to step out of the sham and humbug of old patterns, into the imaginative space of new possibilities (Cilliers 2015:54). Thus, 'New Nigeria' should be perceived, embraced and celebrated as a futuristic hope that encompasses the past, present and future destiny of Nigeria. It is a prophetic proclamation that invites us to appreciate and participate in what God has done, is doing and will do in Nigeria. Therefore, this song leaves the citizenry with the puzzle about the dynamic interaction between seeing a new Nigeria and becoming a new Nigeria.

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Competing interests

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