Small Christian Communities and Development in Cameroon

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Abstract

The aim of my study was to answer the research question and sub questions, in other words, to find out the relationship between Small Christian Communities (SCCs) and development; their vision of development, as a mission of the church or a secular task? According to SCCs, the mission of the church is to impact faith, to evangelize the people, to proclaim the Word of God or to make Him known, to bring peace and salvation, to help the poor and to practice charity. Her most important mission is to dispense peace, love, unity and salvation. However, this does not exclude her from engaging in development work and practice. Cases abound where the Church is involved in developmental issues: poverty alleviation, health care services, education, and provision of clean portable water.

Contrary to some assumptions, mindsets, practices and views, therefore, development is an essential aspect of the mission of the Church. This is rooted in the mission of Christ which was characterized by the concern he showed to those who were suffering. Consequently, as John Paul II has said, " It is impossible to accept that in evangelization one could or should ignore the importance of the problems so much discussed today, concerning justice, liberation, development and peace in the world" (John Paul II, 1995, *Ecclesia in Africa*, paragraph 68). Because of human dignity, people should not live in sub-human social, economic, cultural and political conditions. In her evangelizing mission, therefore, the Church should defend human dignity; strive for justice and peace, for the promotion, liberation, and integral human development of all individual human beings (John Paul II, 1995, *Ecclesia in Africa,* paragraph 69).

On the strength of this evidence, my conclusion is that the church has something to do with development: it is her mission to be involved in developmental issues.
From the activities of SCCs and the answers to the interview questions, it is evident that there is a relationship between the perspective of SCCs and the secular perspective on development. It is a relationship of similarities and dissimilarities.
 On the one hand, since the SCCs recognize the importance of human dignity, respect for human rights, and the need for participation, their perspective on development is similar to the human development paradigm which includes the basic needs, capabilities and freedom-centered and enlarging people's choices approaches.

The basic needs approach sees development as a moral imperative aimed at satisfying the basic needs of human beings such as food, shelter, access to clean drinking water, health care, sanitation, education, and to participate in decision-making processes. The human development approach also envisages development as a process of expanding people's

capabilities and freedom. In this sense, the end of development is to give people the opportunities to reach their human potentials, that is, to be educated, to be healthy, to participate in the life of the community, to engage in relationships, to live in a peaceful environment, and to enjoy nature.

Another commonality lies in the area of sustainable development (gender-centered and environmental approaches). SCCs are concerned with social justice in the form of poverty alleviation and gender equality and women empowerment as evident from the activities of the women's affairs commission. They also affirm the importance of environmental sustainability. In this sense, SCCs bear some similarity with the conventional perspective on development.

On the other hand, there are some fundamental differences from the point of view of the anthropological vision of a human being, and the aim of development.For the SCCs, the human being is a composite of body and soul, created to live in communion with other human beings and with God; he/she finds ultimate fulfillment in God. This conception of the human person introduces a more integral or holistic vision of human development, what is commonly referred to as integral human development. Since human development is integral and is open to the transcendental or spiritual aspect of life, the end of human progress is eternal life. Without this dimension, economic and material development is insufficient to bring about genuine development.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AMECEA	Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa
BEPHA	Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province Health Assistance
BNA	Basic Needs Approach
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
GAD	Gender and Development
GCAs	Gender-Centered Approaches
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
HDAs	Human Development Approaches
HDR	Human Development Report
ILO	International Labor Organization
IHD	Integral Human Development
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NECC	National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
OP	Order of Preachers
SCCs	Small Christian Communities
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNMDGs	United Nations Millennium Development Goals
WAD	Women and Development
WED	Women, Environment and Development
WID	Women in Development

1. General Introduction.

1.1. Introduction.

Religion as a social phenomenon has existed for a very long time, and has had a tremendous influence on many people's lives, worldviews, thought patterns, behaviors, and activities (social, intellectual, cultural, etc.). Before the advent of the Age of Enlightenment, religion in the West enjoyed the monopoly of providing answers to human problems. It was a key actor in the public sphere and was regarded as the only beacon of light in the world of darkness. However, with the Enlightenment and its subsequent products of modernity and secularism, religion came under heavy attack as the "opium of the mind" (Karl Max). It was now perceived from a different perspective: as a stumbling block to progress and the process and work of development, encouraging the masses to remain in their poverty while promising them an imaginary paradise in the future. The secularization theory argued that religion will lose its popularity and significance in the public sphere in the advent of modernization (Deneulin, 2009: 52).

Haynes has observed that in the decades after the Second World War Western governments and development agencies at first denied the importance of religion in development. For them, while development per se is concerned with material improvements, religion is only concerned with mere spirituality which is irrelevant to the achievement of developmentgoals. Truman sought to achieve development through aid to poor underdeveloped countries (Haynes, 2007: 2). We are informed that

> According to this emphatically secular doctrine of salvation, people living in underdeveloped countries should be saved from their backwardness through the application of both capital and modern western technology (Holenstein, paraphrased by Haynes, 2007:2).

Religion had no role in such a perception of the understanding of development. That notwithstanding, secular development failed to achieve the reduction of poverty, inequalities and injustice in the developing world. Consequently, there was a growing awareness that religion is not part of the development problem, but rather a potential important component of achieving its gains (Haynes, 2007:1f).

Now, religion is one of the concepts that have recently occupied the central stage of intellectual discussions among social scientists and in international relations. These discussions and debates hinge on the complex interplay between development and religion. The main concern here includes, inter alia, the following: how are development and religion conceptualized? Are religious actors and secular actors partners in development? Or better

still, does religion play a role in development? Does development constitute an integral part of evangelization?

Turning our spotlight to the countries in the developing world we see a similar expectation especially in the aftermath of the Cold War in 1980s. It was speculated that as nations modernize they would secularize. The belief was that technological development and the application of science to combat social problems such as poverty, environmental degradation, hunger, and disease would bring about human progress. However, this was not the case. It is more convincing to infer that paradoxically the failure was one of the factors that led to the focus of the role of religion in development in developing countries (Berger in Haynes, 2007:214).

In many parts of the developing world religion has had a considerable impact on development. For example, it was often used as a political weapon by means of opposition. The emergence of faith-based organizations in most parts of the developing world is due partly to the failure of their governments to succeed in attaining development goals. These organizations have their own ideology of solidarity and development, for instance, the Basic Christian Communities in Latin America (Haynes, 2007:214).

It is good to note that what is said above holds true in the Western world, and therefore cannot be generalized. In Africa, for instance, the situation is different because Africans are notoriously religious (Mbitti,). Religion cannot be separated from their entire being because it permeates the main aspects of their lives (cultural, social, political, economic, and health). Hence, religion per se has never disappeared from their public sphere, or come under heavy scrutiny as the opium of the people's mind as was the case in the West.

Many faith-based initiatives have emerged in developing countries over the years taking the lead in the support for development priorities in civil societies (Haynes in Haynes, 2007:67). In the Third World, there is less division between the secular and the religious as compared to most Western countries. In this regard, and talking about the role of religion in development in the developing world, Essat notes,

> There is no way we can understand the logic, strategies and dynamics of civil society anywhere in the Third World unless we bring the transcendental dimension back into our analysis. Religious devotion is a fundamental motive for many social movements in the South, from Latin America to Africa and South Asia (Ezzat in Haynes, 2007:67).

In this thesis, I shall examine religion from the perspective of Small Christian Communities (SCC) in Cameroon. The aim is to find out the relationship between SCCs and development;

if their activities promote development work; how do they strike a balance between evangelism and development work? and social service delivery in development practice? After this introduction, I shall now explain why I am interested in the topic.

1.2. Motivation

The reason why I intend to carry out research on the relationship between Small Christian Communities (SCCs) and development stems from the fact that, from my personal observation, it seems there are some conflicting conceptions, mentalities and practices within the Church concerning her mission in the society. Some concrete examples will help to shed light on this point.

It would seem that the early missionaries, who brought the Christian faith to mission territories like the Sub-Saharan Africa, were fully aware of the context and needs of those they set out to evangelize. They were conscious of the many and varied challenges facing them ahead such as illiteracy, poverty, low standards of living, lack of portable water, health facilities, food security, and economic activities to boost the income of their target group, etc. Consequently, they were equipped not just with the Bible, but with skills, technical knowhow and strategies necessary to transform and improve the social lives of the local people. Hence, they established schools, health centers/hospitals, and adult literacy centers. They introduced the cultivation of cash/food crops, the eucalyptus which has a high economic value though with an adverse effect on the ecosystem, pipe born water, a new technology of building houses, the credit union, etc. Many of them had first aid knowledge and could treat some simple ailments, and wounds. It could be said that their approach to evangelization was holistic - meeting both the material and spiritual needs of the people. However, this general perception has been challenged and put to question by some particular cases.

Now, the era of the old missionaries has given way to that of the new missionaries. This is because the local Church has come of age to the extent that it now flourishes with indigenous men and women who have taken up leadership positions as priests, pastors, religious men and women, and bishops. However, they have been under serious attack from the laity who accuses them of not following the good old tradition of the Western missionaries. Instead, they focus their attention only on preaching the Word, and are specialized in asking for collections from the lay faithful. They cannot build church houses and schools like the old missionaries did. One pastor lamented bitterly when a woman challenged him to repair the leaking roof of a church house, something his financial situation could not warrant him to do. Asked for financial support for a village water project, an

indigenous priest angrily retorted in these words "I am not a development officer." Does this have a bearing on or parallel with the dispute in the primitive Church over the allocation of the tasks of preaching and distribution of food? (Acts 6:1 - 6); that is, caring for the welfare of widows and the preaching of the Word of God? Where do we draw the line between mission work and development work?

Once, we were playing football. Suddenly, the wife of the catechist invaded the pitch full of tears and shouting for help. She said her husband is lying in the church dead. He collapsed while teaching children doctrine. The match instantly came to a halt, and we followed her to the church. There we met the parish priest (European) stooping over the catechist but carefully keeping a considerable distance. He was circling the catechist, who fortunately was still alive but unconscious, saying in Pidgin English " *Erasmus, you di see me*? (translation: Erasmus, are you seeing me?). There was no reply, after asking the same question several times. Turning towards us the priest said "*Go with'am for him house, you put'am for him bed* (meaning "Take him to his house and lay him on his bed).

The assistant parish priest (European) had no vehicle, so he asked the parish priest to let him use his car to convey the catechist to the hospital. The request was not granted. Fortunately, one of the closest neighbors of the priests opted to bring Erasmus to the hospital in his car. What can we say about this incident and the parable of the Good Samaritan? Was it the duty of the parish priest to translate this parable into action by caring for the welfare of the catechist, for example, conveying him to the hospital?

From these and many other examples, I realized how necessary and urgent it is to put things in their right perspectives. This requires an investigation of the perception of key concepts such as mission, evangelization, and development, and to find out the type of relationship that exists between them: one of tension, opposition, or cooperation? Now we shall proceed to one of the most important components of the general introduction, that is, the research questions.

1.3. Research Question and Sub Questions.

Matthew Clarke informs us that about eighty per cent of the world's population professes religious belief, thus suggesting that religious belief is a common human characteristic. Primarily, religion is concerned with a personal relationship with a Supreme Being or an unseen order, but most often this depends on "ensuring rightful relations with fellow humans and our immediate community". Religious beliefs and practices thus have a material dimension relevant to day-to-day living (Clarke, 2013:1). Furthermore, he says that adherers

of religion interpret their own life situations and "decide on how to act and interact within wider society based on religious teachings that contain precepts on how to live a righteous life, including responding to those who are materially poor." Therefore, he concludes that "religion is not simply concerned with the private circumstances of an individual and their rightful relationship with a supernatural deity, but rather it has a social realm that has relevance for wider society" (Clarke, 2013:1).

Although religion is an important aspect of culture and human existence, it has not been fully appreciated within the literature of development studies or within the main development practice (Clarke, 2013:1). Ironically, there has been recent growing interest in examining the possible involvement of religion and faith-based organization in development; there is interest to find out how Christians interpret their life events in the light of their belief, how they apply Christian teachings to various concrete situations in order to determine if these have a relevance to development, or if they can be considered development. According to Gary Thomas (2011: 27-28), research begins with a purpose and a question which determines the method used to answer it. With this in mind therefore, my guiding question is "What do I want to find out?" or "What do I want to research on?" To begin with, my research will target individual persons, groups within the church, and the church as a whole. Briefly put, my main preoccupation is on evangelization and development in Cameroon: the case of Small Christian Communities. I will examine their activities to find out if they have any parallel with the Millennium Development Goals. The following questions will thus serve as a guide in my quest:

- What is the relationship between Small Christian Communities (SCC) and development?

Sub Questions.

- What are the goals of Small Christian Communities?
- How do the members perceive the mission of the Church?
- What is their understanding of development?
- Can the Church be involved in development work?
- Have the SCCs achieved their anticipated//desired goals? Or better still, what is the impact of SCCs on the lives and faith of the laity?
- What challenges and obstacles do SCCs face?

1.4. Scope of Study.

I am not going to do research on development or on the Christian understanding of, and teaching on development. These will be examined in the theoretical section. Rather, I shall investigate the Small Christian Communities in order to get what people say and think concerning the praxis of the Christian faith at the grassroots, precisely the relationship between evangelization and development. In other words, I shall study their goals and activities, and find out what they think about development: as a secular task or as a constituent of their mission. The aim is to get the contribution of theology from below in relation to theology from above.

Given the limitations of time, space and resources, it is impossible for me to investigate all the Small Christian Communities in Cameroon. For that reason,I shall choose one Catholic diocese in Cameroon, and then I shall select three Small Christian Communities from the same parish.

1.5. Research design

According to Bryman (2012:46, 47), research design "provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data." He identifies five main research designs, namely, the experimental, cross-sectional or survey design, longitudinal, case study, and comparative designs. However, in this study, I am going to use the case study research design.

1.5.1. **Case Study design.**Bryman observes that the case study design entails the detailed and intensive examination and analysis of a single case, for example, a single community, school, family, organization, or person (2012:66-67). I shall use the representative case, what Bryman calls an exemplifying case (2012:70). This will help me know what the impact of SCCs has been. The case will provide an apt context for the working-through of my research questions.

1.6. Research Method.

Research method answers the question "How?" It refers to the method, technique or strategy used to answer the research questions. It has to do with the means employed to collect data and evidence, and how to interpret and analyze them thereafter. For example, data can be collected through the techniques of self-completion questionnaire or a structured interview schedule, or participant observation (Bryman, 2012:46). My research methods consist of literature research and qualitative research, which are explained in the following paragraphs.

1.6.1. **Qualitative research method**. The emphasis of this method is on words rather than numbers in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman 2012:714). It entails empirical or field work studies, and its main features include induction (drawing a conclusion from the

particular to the general), observation and interpretation. This method has many ways or strategies of collecting data which are often referred to as tools or instruments.

1.6.2. **Research tools**. I shall use two main strategies in collecting data, namely, ethnography/participant observation, and interviews (semi-structured and the unstructured interview types.

1.6.3. **Literature research.**

I shall look at what other social scientists, theological scholars, and Catholic Church documents have said in relation to my topic and other related issues. This will help me understand the concept of development, and their contributions to my prima facie questions, and thus it will enable me to refine and reformulate them. Among the books I shall review are the following:

Bruce Bradshaw, (1993), *Bridging the Gap: Evangelism, Development and Shalom.* The author talks about the bridge between development and evangelism, and Education: liberating and empowering people (chapters 1 and 5 respectively)

Chris Sugden (2000), *Gospel, Culture and Transformation.* Chapters 1 and 3 are crucial to my topic because of their informative character in relation to mission and development. Specific areas and themes of interest are: reflection of development, religious and secular approaches to development, spiritual evaluation of development, holistic mission, and mission as transformation.

Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the church, (2004), will provide a reference source on the Church's social teaching in relation to integral human development, the Christian anthropological vision of a human being, the ultimate goal of development, and the conditions necessary for development.

Jeffrey Haynes, (2007), *Religion and Development: Conflict or Cooperation?* Haynes highlights the role of religion in development, and especially the rise of faith-based organizations.

Severine Deneulin, (2009), *Religion in Development: Rewriting the Secular Script.* Chapter two of this book is important because of its treatment of the economic and the human development approaches to development.

Paul Hopper, (2012), *Understanding Development.* The book will be invaluable because it deals with some key topics in development thought such as understanding development, approaches to development, and sustainable development.

Cynthia Moe-Lobeda et al., "Moral Power at the religion-development-environment nexus", in Matthew Clarke, ed.,(2013), *Handbook of Research on Development and*

*Religion.*Lobeda charts the connection between religion, environment and development, and explains why religion needs to be brought into the scene when addressing ecological issues in development theory, planning, and practice. This stems from the fact that human wellbeing depends upon ecological wellbeing which is largely determined by how human beings treat their environment.

Severine Deneulin, "Christianity and international development", in Matthew Clarke, ed., 2013, *Handbook of Research on Development and Religion.*Deneulin examines the role of religion in development and the challenges faced in engaging religion in development, for example, from the perspective of the anthropological vision of the human being.

Michael Redclift, "Sustainable development", in Vandana Desai et al., eds., (2014) , *The Companion to Development Studies.* His discussion of sustainable development will be beneficial to me.

Robert B. Potter, "The Nature of Development Studies" and "Theories, strategies and ideologies of development: An overview", inVandana Desai et al., eds., (2014), *The Companion to Development Studies.* These chapters will be a source of reference for understanding the nature and the different theories of development.

These books will provide the theoretical framework for my analytical discussion. After having collected data through the above mentioned techniques, I shall then assess, evaluate, and analyze my findings in the analysis and discussion chapter. I shall discuss the analysis in the light of my research questions, development theories, the Millennium Development Goals, and some of the issues highlighted in the literature review. This will enable me to formulate my own theory. Then in the conclusion I shall draw together the threads and assess how well the research question has been answered by my inquiry. Before we continue, it is good to clear the ground by defining our key terms. This will give us an orientation of what we shall be discussing.

1.7. Concepts
1.7.1. Mission

Ahonen (2006:263) sees mission as evoking a sense of "being in motion, traveling towards a certain destination". Compelled by Christ's love, God's people are on the move "to go out and tell others about Christ." As ambassadors of Christ they travel overseas, crossing cultural, linguistic, ethnic, racial, and geographical frontiers (Ahonen, 2006:263). However, Ahonen rightly points out that "it is not always necessary to seek out a foreign environment to demonstrate the love of Christ" (Ahonen, 2006:263). Basically, mission "consists of making

Christ known everywhere in the world. Christ often meets us as the neighbor who offers bread to the hungry and water to the thirsty. The love of Christ embraces the whole person with all his or her needs and expectations" (Ahonen, 2006:264).

According to Ion Brian (in Ahonen, 2006:134) there is a difference in the ecclesiological understanding of mission between the Roman Catholic, the Protestant, and the Orthodox Churches. While the Orthodox Church has stressed the importance of "the church as communion", the Catholic "has emphasized the universalistic nature of the church and the Protestants the individualistic understanding of salvation" (Brian, in Ahonen, 2006:134).

For Deneulin, mission lies at the heart of Christianity since God's message of salvation has to be proclaimed to the ends of the world (Deneulin, 2009:74). After his resurrection, Jesus told Mary Magdalene to go and tell his disciples what she had seen (John 20:17-29). Before his earthly disappearance, Jesus commissioned his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew28:19).

1.7.2. Evangelization

It is a pivotal component of mission, and has to do with proclaiming and preaching God's Word /salvation to mankind (Bosch, 2004:10). Among Protestant circles, the term 'evangelism' is more common, and has the same meaning as evangelization. They can be used interchangeably. Salvation is not only concerned with transcendental or spiritual matters, but also addresses human flourishing on earth; it is thus, integral. As Bosch has rightly observed, since evangelization is always contextual it remains inseparable from struggles of justice (Bosch, 2004:417).

In 1975, Pope Paul VI wrote an encyclical on "Proclaiming the Gospel" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*) in which he underscored the intimate connection between evangelization and social justice. He made it clear that evangelization involves a clear message about the rights and duties of every human being, about life in society, about international life, peace, justice and development (Paul VI, in Deneulin, 2009:75). Deneulin informs us that this encyclical echoes what the synod of Catholic bishops said in 1971 in a letter entitled "Justice in the World." They reiterated the links between evangelization and development, and stated that "action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world" is "a constitutive dimension of preaching the gospel" (Catholic Bishops, in Deneulin, 2009:75-76).

Some cases in the history and mission of the Church are concrete illustrations of this link. For example, Bartolome de las Casa, bishop of Chiapas in Mexico, "was the first person in history to speak about human rights and the freedom of religion" (Deneulin, 2009:76), Cardinal Sin of Philippine masterminded the people's revolution that toppled a dictator

regime, William Wilberforce, the Anglican bishop, led the campaign for the abolition of slave trade (Deneulin, 2009:78). These and many other examples point to the fact that "missionary work is always an attempt to express the fundamentals of the Christian faith in the concrete historical, social, economic and political reality of human living, for better or worse" (Deneulin, 2009:78).

1.7.3. Development

The term development is contested in both its meaning and how it is achieved. There is no single measure of development, and several indicators are required in its assessment (Clarke, 2013:1). There is also a controversy surrounding when development started. According to Wolfgang Sachs, development saw its birth in the inaugural discourse of President Truman in which he "called for assistance to improve 'underdeveloped' areas so that they might equally benefit from scientific and industrial progress that the countries of their previous colonizers enjoyed (Sachs, in Deneulin, 2009:28). Cowen and Shenton contest that "development started with the industrial revolution in Europe and the concern to mitigate the negative social consequences of industrialization and economic progress" (Cowen and Shenton, in Deneulin, 2009:28). For Preston, development started with the emergence of the social sciences in the eighteenth century, explicitly with the writings of Adam Smith and in political economy (Preston, in Deneulin, 2009:29). I shall comment on this debate in the discussion/analysis section.

According to Clarke, the fundamental goal of development is "to advance human dignity, freedom, social equity and self-determination." Conversely, "social exclusion, poverty, ill-health, powerlessness and shortened life expectancy" are characteristics of a lack of development. He argues that "Good development outcomes are best achieved when communities have ownership of the goals and processes of development and where there are participatory representation, transparency and accountability mechanisms." Furthermore, in order to achieve development, the importance of gender and diversity must be considered (Clarke, 2013:1-2).

Development thought has witnessed an evolution over the years resulting in the following dominant theories: modernization and economic growth, basic human needs, human rights, multi-dimensional poverty and human development (Deneulin, 2009:29-48).

1.8. Thesis layout and Chapter Summary.

Chapter two gives us the geographical location of our study, that is, where the research was conducted, while chapter three is about the background information of what we are going to investigate – the Small Christian Communities. Then in chapter four I shall examine theories of development and what the Catholic Church says about development. The main task of chapter five shall be the presentation of the research findings, and in chapter six I shall analyze and discuss the findings within the context of the theoretical framework. This will be followed by the conclusion in chapter seven, and then an appendix and the bibliography.

2. Context

2.1. Brief History of Cameroon

The name Cameroon originates from the Portuguese word,*Camaroes,* which means shrimps. When Ferdanando Poo, a Portuguese sailor, arrived in 1472 at the Wouririver in Doula, he discovered so many shrimps in the river and decided to call it *Rio Dos Camaroes*(River of shrimps, in Portuguese). From this word, the then territory derived its name which is now written in various forms: Cameroes (Spanish), Kamerun (German), Cameroon (English), and Cameroun (French). In 1884 the Germans colonized the territory and gave birth to the German colony of Kamerun. When Germany lost the First World War its territory (Kamerun) was shared between Britain and France under the mandate of the League of Nations. France took the lion's share which was formerly known as East Cameroon, while Britain took responsibility over former West Cameroon or Southern Cameroons known then as "Cameroon under British Administration" (source: Cameroon Embassy in the Netherlands available in http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/cameroon.htm), which now comprises the North West and the South West Regions where English is spoken.

From 1916 – 1945, it was a mandated territory under the League of Nations and from 1945 – 1960 it was placed under the United Nations trusteeship. On January 1st1960, East Cameroon or the French Cameroon gained independence as the Republic of Cameroon. This provoked agitation for independence by the Southern Cameroons. Before the name was changed to West Cameroon, a plebiscite was held on February 11th 1961 under the supervision of the United Nations. British Cameroon or Southern Cameroon voted for reunification (233,571 against 97,741) to merge with the Republic of Cameroon to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon. Consequently, on 1st October1961 Southern Cameroon gained automatic independence and unification, and became West Cameroon (State of?)In May 1972, after the referendum, a new constitution replaced the federation with a unitary state called the United Republic of Cameroon. And in 1984 it became the Republic of Cameroon by a Presidential Decree.(Source: Cameroon Embassy in the Netherlands, available in http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/cameroon.htm ; http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cm.html).

Thus, Cameroon has a triple German, French and Anglo-Saxon colonial legacy.

2.2. Geography

Cameroon is located between the coast of West and Central Africa bordering the Bight of Biafra, that is, part of the Gulf of Guinea and the Atlantic Ocean. It lies between Equatorial

Guinea and Nigeria and is sometimes referred to as the hinge of Africa. The country is boarded to the east by the Central African, to the west by Nigeria, to the north-east by Chad, to the north by Lake Chad, and to the south by Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Congo Brazzaville. It has an area of 475,650 km2, slightly larger than the US state of California or almost the size of Spain (Source: http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cm.html), with a total population of about 23.7 million people and a life expectancy of only 53 years, due to HIV/AIDS and other diseases. French and English are the official languages, though not spoken by all Cameroonians. According to Dr. Suh Joseph Che(2011), Associate Professor of Translation Studies, Terminology and Comparative Stylistics at the university of Buea in Cameroon , there are " over 280 different Cameroonian ethno-linguistic and cultural groups". Cameroon is ranked 153 of 182 UN Human Development Index (2009), with a literacy rate of 75% males, and 52% females.

2.3. Religion

Concerning religion, Christianity and Islam are the two main religions in Cameroon. However, Christianity is the dominant religion nation-wide with a percentage of about 69 of the population. 21 percent is Muslim, and about 6 percent practice traditional indigenous religion or African Traditional Religion (ATR). There are other religious groups with less than 5 percent of the total population. These include Orthodox Jews, and the Baha'is. The Christian population is divided between the Roman Catholics (38.4 percent), Protestants (26.3 percent), and other denominations like the Jehovah Witnesses and Pentecostals (4 percent). Though towns and cities have significant populations of both Christians and Muslims, the Christians are concentrated mainly in the southern and western regions, while the Muslims are in the northern regions.

2.4. Government

The official name of the country is "La Republique du Cameroon(in French)" or "The Republic of Cameroon (in English)". It is a republic with a multiparty presidential regime, and a strong central government. The president is the head of state, and the prime minister is the head of government. The legislative branch of the government, that is, the Parliament, consists of the Senate (introduced in 2013) and the National Assembly. There are many political parties. Cameroon has a mixed legal system of English common law and the French Civil law.

Administratively, Cameroon is divided into ten regions: the Adamaoua, the Centre, East, Far Nord, Littoral, North,North West, West, South West, and the South. Yaounde is the political capital city located in the Center region, while Douala is the major seaport and

commercial capital. Other major cities include Bafoussam, Bamenda, Garoua, Maroua, Nkongsamba and Ngoundere.

English and French are the official languages, though majority of the people speak French. There are about 270 national languages.

2.5. Production.

Cameroon's agricultural products include coffee, cotton, rubber, cocoa, banana, palm oil.timber, and livestock. Her industrial products include crude oil and petroleum products, aluminum, and cotton.[1]

2.6. The Catholic Church in Cameroon

The Catholic Church in Cameroon is part of the universal Catholic Church under the leadership of the Pope. It is structured into five Ecclesiastical Provinces each headed by an Archbishop. The provinces are Bamenda, Bertoua, Douala, Garoua, and Yaounde . Each province is divided into dioceses which are governed by bishops, and the dioceses are further divided into parishes run by parish priests, and the parishes are divided into Small Christian Communities spread throughout the various mission stations.

The next chapter will provide a background material to our study; in other words, it tries to explain what Small Christian Communities are.

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[1] . Source : https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/tthe-world-factbook/geos/cm.htm , and http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/cameroon.htm

Source: http://www.emapsworld.com/cameroon-location-map-in-africa.html

CAMEROON
Political Map

N

FAR NORTH
□ Maroua

NIGERIA

CHAD

□ Garoua

NORTH

www.mapsofworld.com

□ Ngaoundéré

ADAMAWA

CENTRAL
AFRICAN
REPUBLIC

NORTH WEST
Bamenda □

WEST
SOUTH □ Bafoussam
WEST

CENTRE

Bertoua □

Gulf of
Guinea

Buea □ LITTORAL
□ Douala

YAOUNDÉ
■

EAST

Bioko Island
(E. Guinea)

Ebolowa □

SOUTH

LEGEND
–·–·– International Boundary
– – – Regional Boundary
■ National Capital
□ Regional Capital

GABON

CONGO

| 0 | 100 | 200 Km |
| 0 | 50 | 100 Miles |

EQUATORIAL
GUINEA

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(Updated on 25th April, 2012)

Source: http://www.emapsworld.com/cameroon-location-map-in-africa.html

Divisions of Northwest Region, Cameroon
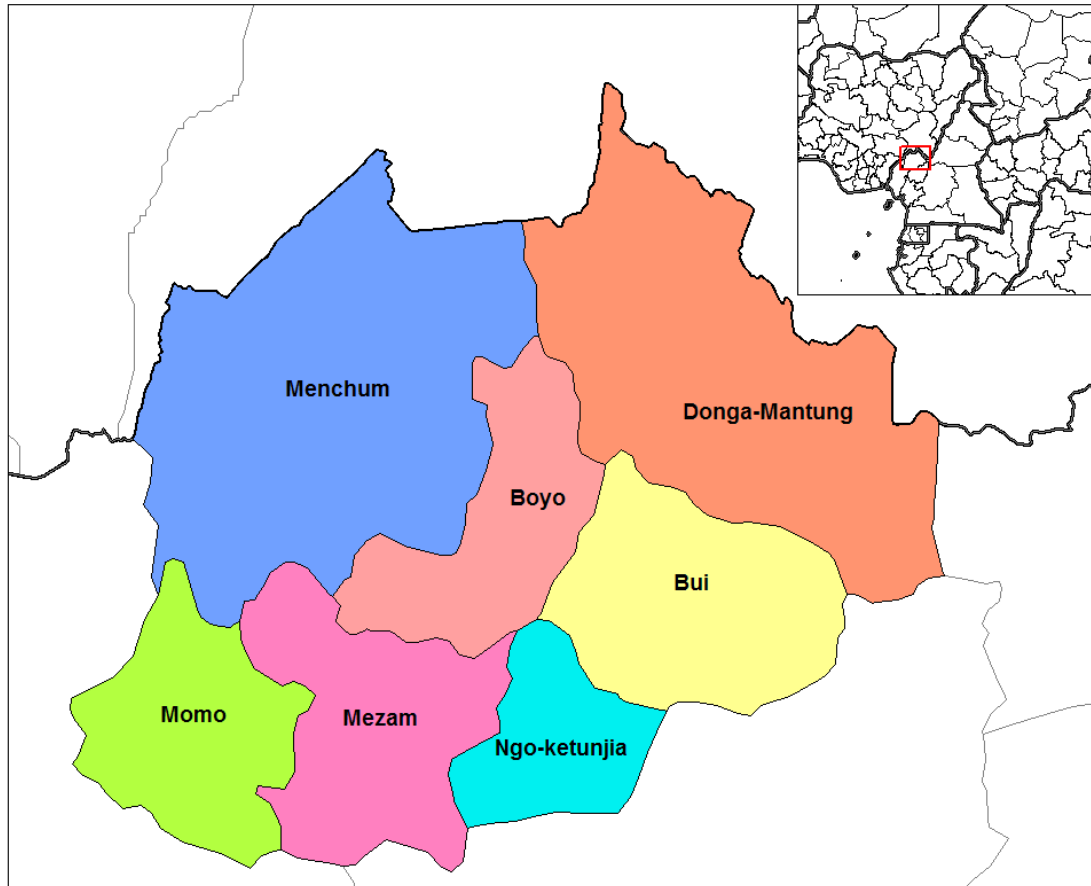
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northwest_Region_(Cameroon)

3. What are Small Christian Communities?

3.1. Meaning.

Small Christian Communities (SCC) is a new phrase that looms large on the lips of many African Catholic Christians, for example, in Cameroon, Ghana, South Africa, and East Africa, notably in kenya. Other terminologies commonly employed to refer to Small Christian Communities include the following: Basic Christian Communities (BCC), Living Base Ecclesial Communities – in French *CommunautéEcclésialesVivantes de Base (CEVB),* Small Church Communities (SCCs), Living Christian Communities (LCCs), Small Faith Communities (SFCs) (Healey,2013:1-2). The term 'base' indicates from the grassroots,thatis, the base of society, the poor and marginalized, the foundations where people can exercise some influence on the structures and established order, or where change can be initiated from below. 'Ecclesial' expresses the idea that these communities are 'church' at the local level (cf. Healey, 2013:1-2). This echoes the Second Vatican Council understanding of the Church as the people of God, the Body of Christ (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 'The Dogmatic Constitution of the Church' No. 17). No. 26 of the same Constitution states that

> This Church of Christ is truly present in all legitimate local congregations of the faithful which, united with their pastors, are themselves called churches in the New Testament. . . In these communities, though frequently small andpoor . . . Christ is present.

From Brazil SCCs spread to other parts of Latin America "focusing on community development through the application of group effort, drawing on Christian principles". It was practiced in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Chile. In Colombia, conservative bishops vigorously attacked liberation theology.

Liberation theology is a radical liberalism often mixed with Marxism – Leninism values. As Haynes states, it is

> an intensely political concept, essentially a radical religious response to poor socio-economic conditions. Central to the idea is the notion of dependence and underdevelopment; the use of a class struggle perspective to explain social conflict and justify political action; and the exercise of a political role to achieve both religious and political goals (Haynes, 2007:69).

Small Christian Communities are a new way of being church which originated from the new model of Church (as the people of God) and the communion ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council. Before Vatican II, the Catholic Church had a pyramidal structure, in a descending order, with the pope at the top, followed by bishops, priests and religious, and

then the laity right at the lowest rung of the ladder. It was more or less the church of the clergy, while the laity was at best passive observers and carriers of orders from above. Vatican II injected a new ecclesiological awakening or renaissance into the church according to which the parish is seen as a communion of communities. Each individual christian belongs to a christian family, a number of families together form a Small Christian community or the Church in the neighbourhood with a Bible sharing group, and then the different small Christian communities constitute a parish which becomes a communion of communities.

Hence, the Small Christian Communities represent the communitarian model of the church, which is a new way to build up the parish community from within. According to Genevieve N. Ihenacho, 'They are vibrant, spontaneous groups with little hierarchical structure. They are the faith-response of the poor and marginalized people in the Catholic Church and society (Ihenacho, 'Small Christian Communities as a New Way of Evangelization in Africa' available in http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org , accessed on 28.08.13).

When we read the Acts of the Apostles, we see that the early Church lived as a community. However, this awareness of being a community began to fade drastically as time went on. Azevedo has observed that 'the Church became more highly structured as a religion of the Roman Empire. It also became more hierarchically stratified, reflecting the stratification of power and authority in civil society. All these factors contributed to the eclipse of any sense of community' (Azevedo, quoted by Ihenacho, 'Small Christian Communities' available in http://www.smallchristian). In the spirit of Vatican II, therefore, Small Christian Communities are

> groups of christians who, at the level of family or in a similarly restricted setting, come together for prayer, scripture reading, catechesis and discussion on human and ecclesial problems with a view to a common commitment. These communities are a sign of vitality within the Church, an instrument of formation and evangelization (Ihenacho, available in http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org , accessed on 28.08.13).

There is a controversy concerning the origin of SCCs. Some say they originated from Latin America while others maintain that they originated from somewhere else, maybe from Africa. In the next section, we are going to look at the origin of SCCs.

3.2. Historical Origin of Small Christian Communities in the Catholic Church.

3.2.1. **The Episcopal Conference of the Democratic Republic of Congo**. In 1961, the Episcopal Conference of former Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) held their 6th Plenary Assembly during which they drew up a pastoral plan to promote 'Living Ecclesial Communities.' According to their logic, these communities were the only strategy to make the church more 'African' and close to the people. Thus this marked the beginning of the first Small Christian Community in Africa (Healey, "Historical Development", 2013).

3.2.2. **The Second Vatican Council (1962-65).** As I have pointed out already, Small Christian Communities originated as a result of the implementation of the pastoral and missionary vision, that is, the new communion ecclesiology of Vatican II (Healey, "Historical Development", 2013). On the same vein, John Baur says that SCCs originated from Vatican II's ecclesiology of the church as People of God. This "… implies that all the faithful fulfill their vocation and mission in the Church, implying a change from the priest-based apostolate to a people-based apostolate that demands that the priest assumes the role of a community-minded inspirational minister" (Baur, 1994:319-20).

Though the documents of Vatican II do not mention specifically the term SCCs, some of the theologians who took part in the council stressed them in their writings. Healey has given two examples: Fr. Yves Congar (OP), a French theologian in *Lay People in the Church* referred to SCCs as "little church cells wherein the mystery is lived directly and with great simplicity…" Karl Rahner, SJ in *The Shape of the Church to come* said: "The church in the future will be one built from below by basic communities as a result of free initiative and association. We should make every effort not to hold up this development, but to promote it and direct it on the right lines." (Congar, quoted by Healey, in "Historical Development…", 2013)

After the Second Vatican Council some areas of the Catholic Church in the Global South began to put in place the SSC model of church. These areas include Africa (especially Eastern Africa), Asia (especially the Philippines), and Latin America. According to Healey, the

> very beginning of SSCs in Eastern Africa can be traced back to the parishes started by the Maryknoll Missionaries in the Luo-speaking Deanery. . . in North Mara in Musoma Diocese in Northern Tanzania in 1966. This began with research on the social structures and community values of the African Independent Churches among the Luo Ethnic Group carried out by . . .

Marie France Perrin Jassy. The first terms used were *chama*(meaning 'small group') and 'small communities of Christians' (Healey, 2013:3)

This therefore dispels the claim often made by attributing the origin of Small Christian Communities "to the Latin American model only and their value solely judged according to their involvement in the fight for social justice." (Baur, 1994:319). In the same vein, Healey has refuted such a claim, and strongly argues that "the African experience did not come from Latin America, but developed on its own."[2]

3.2.3**. Other African Episcopal Conferences**.

 In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the actual launching of SCCs took place between 1971-1972 following a confrontation between President Mobutu Seseseko and the Catholic Church. Mobutu embarked on an "authenticity campaign" which suppressed missionary institutes and associations. This made the work of evangelization difficult for the Church. Thus, to solve the problem, the Church gave priority to the creation and organization of SCCs (cf. Baur, 1994:318). Then the bishops of the Republic of Congo followed suit during their meeting in 1973 in which they declared SCCs "a vital priority for the Church", built upon the extended family. Their task was not only to be engaged in prayer and apostolate, but to be committed to the "nation's development drive" as well (Baur, 1994:318). Still in 1973, the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA)[3] Study Conference on "Planning for the Church in Eastern Africa in the 1980s" was held in Nairobi, Kenya. The aim was to build the life of the Church on social groups characterized by solidarity and a strong sense of belonging:

> We have to insist on building church life and work on Basic Christian Communities in both rural and urban areas. Church life must be based on the communities in which everyday life and work take place: those basic and manageable social groups whose members can experience real inter-personal relationships and feel a sense of communal belonging, both in living and working . . . We are convinced that in these countries of Eastern Africa it is time for the Church to become truly local, that is, self-ministering, sefl-propagating and self-supporting. (Healey,2013)

Thereafter, as Baur testifies, the Episcopal Conference of Cameroon followed in 1974, giving priority to local communities "in which the individual would not feel lost and which would be capable of autonomy". The expatriate missionaries in Northern Cameroon and Chad began to

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[2]. Healey, "How African Small Christian Communities Implement the Pastoral and Missionary Vision of Vatican II" in *Tangaza Journal of Theology and Mission*, No. 2, 2013, Tangaza University College, Nairobi, Kenya.
[3] . AMECEA consists of National Episcopal Conferences of Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. Somalia and Djibouti are affiliate members.

direct the first evangelization into SCCs (Baur, 1994:318). Next was the turn of Francophone West Africa with Burkina Faso taking the lead in 1975 by opting for the creation of SCCs on the model of Church as family? The aim was to make each and every one feel truly part of and fully responsible for the Church as a family. In 1976 Burundi and Rwanda conceived a six-year renewal plan aimed at uniting people on every hill into "community meetings."   In the same year, the AMECEA Study Conference on "Building Small Christian Communities" took place in Nairobi, Kenya. It emphasized that "Systematic formation of Small Christian Communities should be the key pastoral priority in the years to come in Eastern Africa." As stated above already, the Catholic Bishops in Eastern Africa considered SCCs as a pastoral priority because they are the best way to build up the local churches to be truly self-ministering (self-governing), self-propagating (self-spreading), and self-supporting (self-reliant and self-sustainable). Then 1978 saw the beginning of Bible Sharing/Gospel Sharing at the LumkoMissiological Institute in South Africa with training manuals for SCC containing the Lumko "Seven Steps" Method of Bible Sharing/Gospel Sharing. So far, there are 8 Gospel Sharing methods that can be adapted to the local context and situation (Healey, "Historical Development of Small Christian Communities").

Thus in the seventies, the Catholic bishops of Africa had already taken the necessary steps to outline and initiate the new way of being Church based on Vatican II's communal ecclesiology. This was a great achievement considering the fact that the ". . . inherited church structures had two major faults: a too clerical personnel and too extended parish units. Hence more lay ministries and smaller communities were the obvious remedy." (Baur, 1994: 317)

3.2.4. **The African Synod, 1994**.

 A major step in the development of SCC was the First African Synod of bishops which took place in Rome in 1994 on the theme "The Church in Africa and Her Evangelizing Mission towards the Year 2000." It approved the creation of Small Christian Communities in the parishes so that by the year 2000 they will have a new model of being a community of communities (Healey). From the very outset of the synod, participants recognized that "the Church as Family cannot reach her full potential as Church unless she is divided into communities small enough to foster close human relationships." (*Ecclesia in Africa*, No. 89). The characteristics of such Christian communities are described as follows:

> Primarily they should be places engaged in evangelizing themselves, so that subsequently they can bring the Good News to others; they should moreover be communities which pray and listen to God's Word, encourage the members themselves to take on responsibility, learn to live an ecclesial life, and reflect on different human problems in the light of the Gospel. Above all, these communities are to be committed to living Christ's love for everybody, a love which

transcends the limits of the natural solidarity of clans , tribes or other interest groups (*Ecclesia in Africa ,*No. 89)

Among the interventions on SCCs made during the synod were the following: 1) from Bishop Francisco Joao Siloto of Chimoio Diocese, Mozambique. He said "these communities are an expression of African communitarianism and the only true way of inculturation for the African Church." 2) Archbishop Cornelius FontemEsua of Bamenda, Cameroon emphasized that " it is necessary and urgent to put Sacred Scripture into the hands of the faithful so it can be the source and inspiration for the life and activities of Small Christian Communities." (quoted by Healey,in "Historical Development of the Small Christian Communities" available in http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org)

Small Christian Communities, therefore, are a "follow-up and implementation of the recommendations of the First African Synod" (Healey, 2013:4). The following are the marks of the SCCs: 1) they meet in the neighbourhood regularly (once a week); 2) they share the Scriptures together (Bible sharing); 3) they carry out Christian activities (practical action in response to the Gospel); and, 4) they are linked to other SCCs, to the parish, the diocese (Local Church) and through this to the Universal Church (cf. http://dioceseofbuea.org). These four marks distinguish SCCs from sects, Independent Churches, or New Ecclesial Movements.

3.3. Small Christian Communities in Cameroon.

Here, I will talk about Small Christian Communities in the Catholic Ecclesiastical Province of Bamenda in Cameroon, which comprises of the four suffragan dioceses of Buea, Mamfe, Kumbo, and Bamenda. Its geographical demarcation is almost the same like the civil, thus forming what is commonly known as Anglophone Cameroon, or the former Southern Cameroons, that is , the English-speaking part of Cameroon which is made up of North West and South West Regions. I have chosen this area for two main reasons: 1) I know the area very well, having lived and served there for long; 2) the Catholic Church in this area has gone a very long way in the follow- up and the implementation of the communion ecclesiology and the Family model of Church, through the creation of Small Christian Communities, as recommended by the Second Vatican Council.

The Catholic Church in Cameroon has vigorously embarked on a new evangelization in a bid to stop the on-going loss of her members to new churches. In an interview on Vatican Radio conducted by Fr. Moses Hamungole, Archbishop Joseph Atanga of Bertoua, current President of the Cameroon Episcopal Conference, said:

"Many of our parishioners leave our churches and go to new churches. We have to do something to keep them in our churches, and not let them go. If they are leaving our churches, they must have reasons, and we are trying to know the reasons. . . and see what we can do." ("Church in Cameroon begins a New Evangelization", available in http://en.radiovaticana.va/storical/2012/10/25/church_in_cameroon_begin).

 This and many other problems were discussed during the 2009 Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops. After this meeting, the archdiocese of Bamenda decided to build community in the church. In this respect, Archbishop C.F. Esua said:

> We decided to use the Small Christian Communities as a pattern, a pastoral approach, within which the Christians know one another, they live together, they share the Gospel. Knowing one another, knowing the capacities of one another, they invite the different members of the community to play a specific role in one of the aspects of evangelization. We call these pastoral commissions." ("Church in Cameroon begins a New Evangelization ,http://en.radiovaticana.va/storico/2012/10/25)

It is worth mentioning that, as regards SCCs, the Catholic Church in Cameroon, to a great extent, has learned from the East and South African experiences.

3.4. Activities of the Small Christian Communities.

One of the aims of SCCs is to give the laity the room to play their role and take on responsibility in the Church. They are first and foremost, places of evangelization. (Cf. *Ecclesia in Africa* No. 89, and Esua above): that is. "platforms on which the Christian Faith is lived" (" The Small Christian Community" in http://dioceseofbuea.org/P_4SCC.html). All the members are therefore involved in the various aspects of evangelization, not leaving everything in the hands of the priest as was the case before: the lay people evangelize themselves in collaboration with the clergy. These aspects include: proclaiming the gospel in word and action (bible sharing); preparing people for sacraments (baptism, first Holy Communion, confirmation and marriage); visitation of the sick and the prisoner; work as agents of promoting reconciliation, justice and peace, healing and forgiveness; they bury the dead, and comfort one another (cf. Healey, 2013). As Archbishop Esua said above, all these aspects of evangelization are divided into what is called "pastoral commissions." For the purpose of this study, I shall mention and briefly explain those that pertain to development:

1. The Finance Commission helps the mission stations, parishes and the diocese to be self-reliant. It is in charge of all financial issues and the organization of financial collections in the church.

2. The Women's Affairs Commission: its work is to assist the women realize their dignity, their rights and duties in building the family and the society so that they can fully participate and play their role in the development of the church and the society. They are encouraged in their human, spiritual, economic and political development. Furthermore, it brings men and women together in discussions.

3. The Education Commission aims at fostering Catholic education for Catholics and non-Catholics alike at the primary, secondary, post secondary and professional schools. It sensitizes the Christians about their responsibilities to bring up their children in the Catholic way, and encourages them to open Catholic schools in their locality. It is the responsibility of this commission to look for ways of supporting Catholic schools, to ensure that those heading Catholic schools are committed and devoted, and to ensure that the schools have a good environment for learning.

4. The Health Commission provides healthcare services by identifying the sick members of the community, visit them, and educate the Christians on Catholic medical ethics. In addition, they educate the public on certain health issues from the Christian point of view.

5. The Justice and Peace Commission: it helps in building a just and peaceful society which promotes the dignity of the human person; it mediates in conflict resolution assisting the parties to take the right action; it also ensures that justice and peace is practiced in all the structures of evangelization such as the family, school, parish, and diocese. Furthermore, the commission organizes seminars to educate the Christians on their rights and obligation, and to form their consciences according to the teachings of the Church; it identifies and addresses cases of human rights violations. In a nutshell, the justice and peace commission promotes all that enhances human dignity, and combats and denounces what destroys it.[4]

From the above mentioned activities, I am going to explain Biblesharing because it is the heart of SCCs. When the members of each community gather together, they read the Bible, reflect and meditate on it, and then respond to it accordingly. This enables them put into practice its precepts and teachings, and by so doing they evangelize through their words and deeds. For example, the text may talk about forgiveness, reconciliation, tolerance, sharing and caring, solidarity, and unity.

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[4]. Gleaned from JosephAteh et al. eds., 2009:38,44,46,50,74 respectively, *The Pastoral Plan of the Ecclesiastical Province of Bamenda,* unpublished.

3.5. Bible Sharing in Small Christian Communities.

The aim of the Biblical Apostolate Commission is to "make Christ known in and through the Scriptures and to make the Bible the first and preferential Handbook and Prayer book of the Christians" (*Ecclesia in Africa* N. 58). It therefore sensitizes the communities on the importance of owning, reading, sharing, praying and living the Bible; it also helps the Christians to respect the Bible as the Written Word of God. This is done in many ways, for example, by organizing Bible Services, seminars, and congresses; by forming Bible Study and Sharing Groups; by encouraging the enthronement, reading and veneration of the Bible in the homes of Christians; organizing Bible quizzes , recitations, drama, sketches and processions, as well as Bible narrative cessions for children; promoting Biblically inspired music and plays; by translating the Bible into local languages in collaboration with other Christian Churches and the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL); by promoting the publication of Biblical calendars and diaries, etc. (cf. http://dioceseofbuea.org).

Each SCC has at least one Bible sharing group which meets once every week in one of the member's home for Bible sharing; the meetings rotate. Sometimes food and drink is served. There are trained animators who facilitate the meetings. I said above that there are many methods of Bible sharing used in SCCs. In the Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province in Cameroon, the most common method of Bible/Gospel sharing is the Seven-Step Method of Lumko[5] in South Africa.

3.5.1. The Seven Step Method of Bible Sharing.

Bible sharing is a way of reading the scriptures in groups "prayerfully to hear what the Spirit is saying to us, individually and corporately" (cf. *LectioDivina*, available in http://www.liturgy.co.nz/lectionary/readings.html). All the members of the group are given the opportunity to read the Bible together, to meditate on it , connect it with their lives, and to put it into practice (cf. "Catholic Biblical Federation – Lumko Seven Step Method", available in http://www.c-b-f.org). This method was developed by the Lumko Institute.

- **First Step: Inviting the Lord**. Once the group has assembled and settled down, the facilitator asks any member to volunteer "to invite the Lord" either through prayer or a hymn, or in any other liturgical way. The group wants to meet the risen Lord, remembering Jesus' promise : "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I shall be there with them." (Mt. 18:20).

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[5] . Lumko is theMissiological and Pastoral Instituteofthe Southern AfricanCatholicBishop's Conference.

- **Second Step** :**Reading the Scripture passage.** The facilitator announces the selected text, and when everyone has found the passage, he or she then invites someone to volunteer to read the text. It is first read aloud, with the others just listening. A moment of silence follows, and afterward it is quietly read again.

- **Third Step: Listening to words (or dwelling on the text).** From the passage, participants choose words (thatis , single words, or short sentences, or short phrases) which are important for them. The facilitator asks: "Which words strike you in a special way?" One by one, participants spontaneously read the word or words that have impressed them aloud in a prayerful way. They are encouraged to repeat those words silently to themselves three or four times, thus allowing the message to "soak in". No explanations and no comments are given.

- **Fourth Step**: **Silence.** After spending time on the individual word or phrases, the entire passage is read again aloud and slowly. Then the facilitator announces a time of silence, maybe 3 – 5 minutes, during which participants listen to God in quiet and meditate the text.

- **Fifth Step**: **Sharing.** After the time of quiet, the facilitator announces the next step: "We share with each other what we have heard in our hearts." The members then tell the group why they chose certain words or sentences, what they discovered in the text, what they find important, what they wonder about, what they acclaim, what they feel angry about, what associations they have, what thoughts and experiences have come to their minds. At this stage, there are no direct responses from others and no discussions. The aim is to share with one another your own faith experience and to help each other to grow in the faith.

- **Sixth Step: Conversation.** The facilitator announces: "We search together." Which aspects of mission are mentioned in the text? How does the text speak to the participants about their church and their mission? To what kind of engagement concerning mission does the text encourage the participants? Now the time has come for the participants to examine their lives in the light of the Gospel. At this stage, a small Christian community might discuss everyday problems such as:
  - ➢ Someone needs help in the neighbourhood
  - ➢ Children need instruction in the faith
  - ➢ Who will lead the Service of the Word next Sunday, since the priest will not be there?

> ➤ How can we settle a discord that has arisen, or reconcile people and make peace, or fight for the cause of justice, or solve the problem of water crisis, or tackle the issue of HIV and AIDS?

The important thing here is that the group connects, relates and applies the Bible (Gospel) to daily lives and experiences. The **See-Judge-Act** process is used. Normally, a practical action or task is chosen to be carried out during the next week, as a response to the Word of God. This will depend on the text which, may exhort the people to welcome strangers, feed the hungry, cloth the naked, for example, the text on the Last Judgement (Matthew 25: 31f), or the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 30-37). It may be connected to or flow from the Gospel text that was read, and may be related to the pastoral priorities and activities of the parish.

- **Seventh Step: Conclusion.** At this stage, the facilitator invites everyone to pray. Through a prayer the Bible Sharing session is summarized and concluded. The words of Scripture, the various experiences of God's Word, the daily problems, all become fuel or the building blocks for prayer.[6]

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[6] . Source : I have takenthesevenstepsmethod from twosources : 'CatholicBiblicalFederation – LumkoBibleSharing Method' available in http://www.c-b-f.org , 2002; and 'BibleSharing', available in http://www.unsere-mission.de/fileadmin/user .

4. Theoretical Framework

After looking at the geographical location of my research interest in the previous chapter, I shall now proceed to the theoretical framework, that is, my dialogue partner which constitutes this chapter. In other words, it aims at providing a theoretical basis which will serve as a guide and mold in analyzing, interpreting and discussing my research findings. In this respect, and since my research question is on the relationship between Small Christian Communities (SCCs) and development, this chapter will be composed of two main parts: theories of development, and what the Church in Cameroon says about development.

4.1. Theories of Development

At various epochs and in different geographical settings, the history and the practice of development has been marked by different theoretical and conceptual trends, or models/approaches. Suffice to note that the concept of development is complex in nature and can be considered from different approaches: anthropological, economic, geographical, political, and social. Liberals, conservatives, and socialists may not see development in the same way (Payne et al., 2010:3, 5).

According to Hopper (2012:13-14) the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) give us an idea about the nature and purpose of development. The goals are a summary of statements and targets from international conferences which were held in the 1990s with the intention of pursuing development and eradicating extreme poverty. As Hopper has noted, the MDGs were adopted in September 2000 and consist of eight goals that were to be achieved by 2015. Theyare:

a) Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.
b) Achieve universal primaryeducation.
c) Promote gender equality and empower women.
d) Reducechildmortality.
e) Improve maternal health.
f) Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.
g) Ensure environmentalsustainability.
h) Develop a global partnership for development.

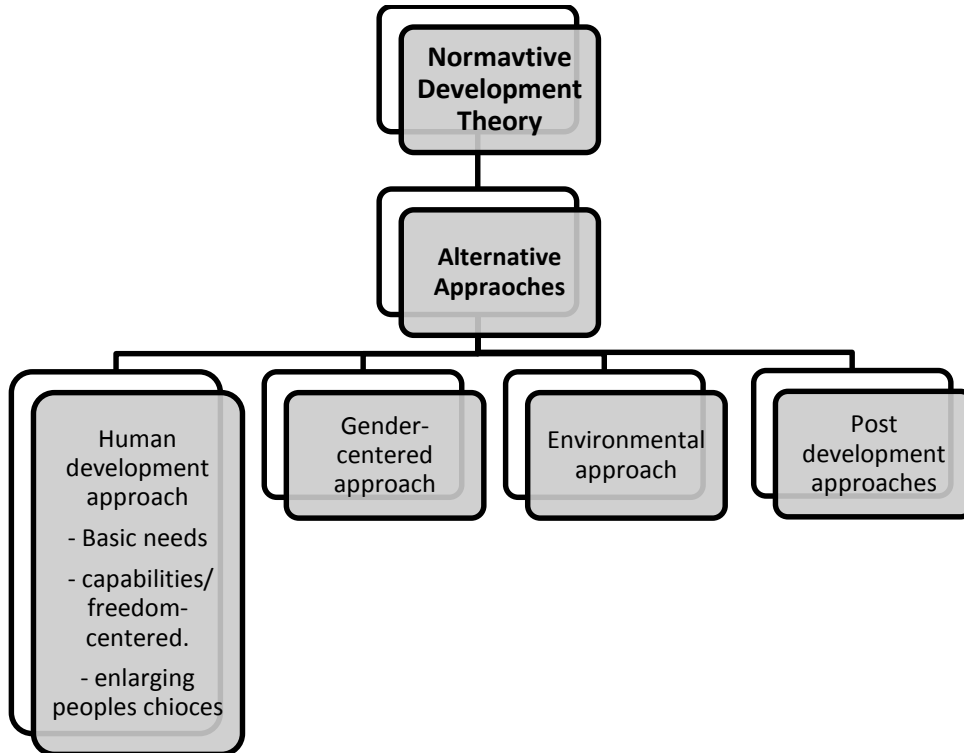Different authors adopt different approaches, conceptualizations and categorizations which are put within broader theories of development. For example, Hopper (2012: 29-40) discusses the major economic approaches to development, namely, the economic growth theory, modernization theory, structuralism, dependency theory, and neo-liberalism. Payne and Phillips (2010) examine development from the perspective of political economy. Hence,
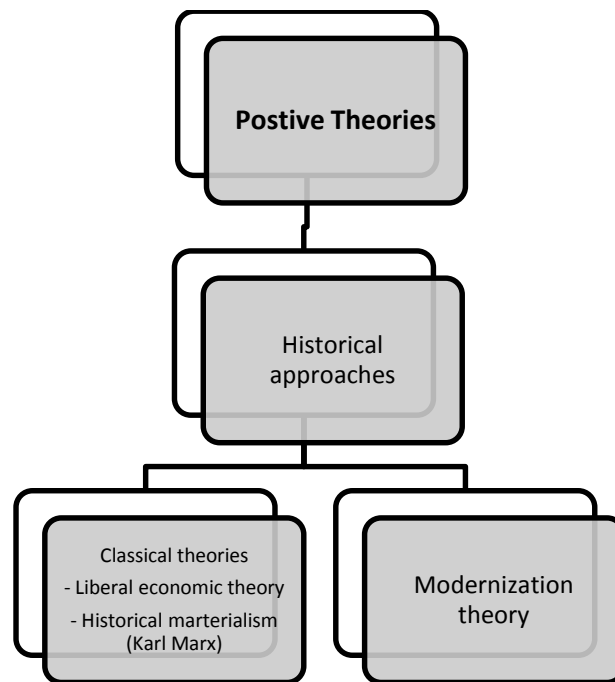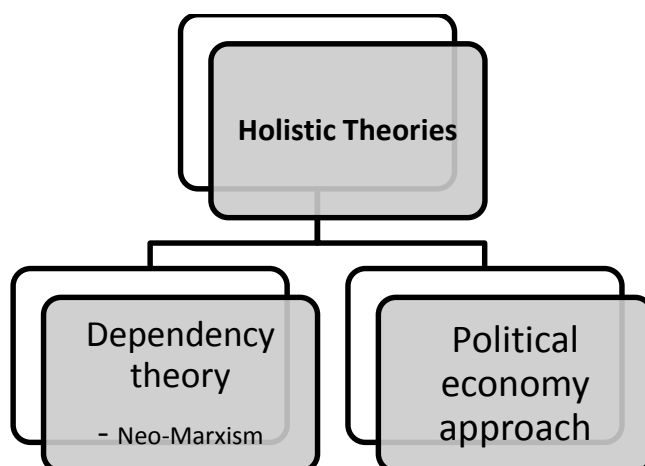
they talk about 1) the classical theories of development (with focus on the writings of Adam Smith, Karl Marx and Max Weber) which include the classical liberal economic theory, the classical historical materialism, and the classical economic sociology; 2) the catch-up theories focusing on the contrast between the nationalist and the communist versions of development with particular reference to the experiences of the United States, Germany and Russia ; 3) the Golden age theories comprising of the growth theory, the modernization theory, and the underdevelopment (dependency) theory; and 4) the alternative theories that we have mentioned above.

According to Robert B. Potter[7], the trends of development hinge on four main axes: normative development theories which focus on what should be the case, that is, the norm in development practice, or how should it be done, what ought to be the focus; positive theories which reflect on what has actually been the case in development, in other words, how has development been done in the past; the holistic theories which sought to define development from a complete, rounded perspective; and the partial theories with emphasis on the economic dimension. By virtue of their characteristics in relation to these axes, he distinguishes the following theories: - The classical-traditional approach (modernization and neoliberals); the historical-empirical approach; the political-economy-dependency approach (neo-Marxism); and the alternative approaches which emphasize the ideal or what should be the case. The last category includes concepts such as basic needs, environmental (or eco) development, and sustainable development (Potter, 2014:84, 86). They represent the various approaches under the normative theory.

Anthony Payne and Nicola Phillips (2010:6) have observed that all these theories of development emerged out of particular historical situations and have changed as a result of particular historical events. Each of the theories can be regarded as an expression of a particular ideological position. They have some commonalities and differences. For example the partial theory exists midway between the normative and positive poles whereas the dependency approaches are more holistic (Robert B. Potter in Desai et la. Ed., 2014:86). For the dependency theory attention is focused on the state, while the neoliberal advocates emphasize the importance of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the private sector (Hopper, 2012:12). The gender-centered approach (WID) falls back on the economy and borrow from Marxists ideas (WAD). In the below figures, I have synthesized the different theories according to their categories, and based on Potter's four axis.

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[7] Robert B. Potter, "Theories, strategies and ideologies of development" in Vandana Desai et al., eds., *The Companion to Development Studies,* Third Edition, Routledge, London, 2014:86.

1ˢᵗ Axis

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                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │   Normavtive    │
                    │   Development   │
                    │     Theory      │
                    └────────┬────────┘
                             │
                    ┌────────┴────────┐
                    │   Alternative   │
                    │   Appraoches    │
                    └────────┬────────┘
         ┌───────────┬───────┴───────┬───────────┐
┌────────────┐ ┌────────────┐ ┌────────────┐ ┌────────────┐
│   Human    │ │  Gender-   │ │Environmental│ │    Post    │
│development │ │ centered   │ │  approach  │ │development │
│ approach   │ │ approach   │ │            │ │ approaches │
│            │ └────────────┘ └────────────┘ └────────────┘
│- Basic needs│
│            │
│- capabilities/│
│  freedom-  │
│  centered. │
│            │
│ - enlarging │
│peoples chioces│
└────────────┘
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- Basic needs

- capabilities/ freedom- centered.

- enlarging peoples chioces

2nd Axis.

3rd Axis

4th Axis
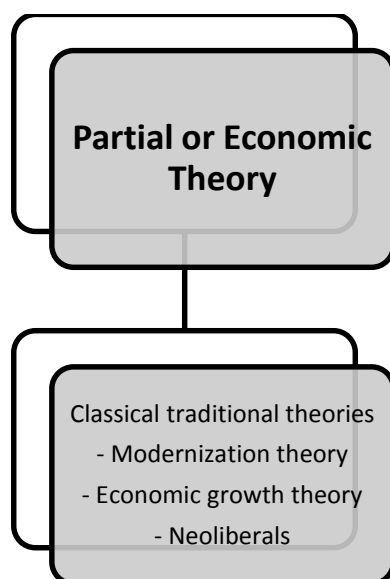
The above figures show the framework and summary of development theories.[8]

    In view of my research topic, and considering the limitations of space and time, I shall dwell on the alternative approaches, and I shall highlight some of the debates and discussions that have animated and shaped their evolution. I shall devote more attention on human development approach particularly the basic needs, and on the gender approaches. This is because of the emphasis of human development in recent developmental debates and endeavors.

    The alternative approaches emerged as a challenge to neoliberalism as a development theory whose emphasis was on economic growth. Proponents of the alternative approaches therefore set out to propose "alternative visions of development" based on the following concerns: the goals, objectives and values of development; agents of development; and the methods of pursuing development (Pieterse in Payne et al., 2010:118). What the alternative approaches shared in common was "their collective rejection of the emphasis on economic growth", and a proposal to replace it "with a more encompassing conception of development" with focus on "human" or "people-centered" development, or what later became known as "sustainable human development" (Payne et al., 2010:118 -19).

    According to Payne et al. (2010:119), sustainable human development comprises four main characteristics, namely, human development approaches; gender approaches;

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[8]Sources: adopted from Robert B. Potter, in Vandana Desai et al. ed., 2014:86.

environmental approaches; and post-development approaches. Due to the limitations of time and space, I shall examine only the first two approaches.

4.1.1. Human Development Approaches.

The agenda of the human-centered development approaches has undergone a series of changes, strategies, perceptions, and articulations. In this section, I shall examine some approaches to human development. The first articulation is in the form of "basic needs" approach. From 1967 to 69 development practices and outcomes became more and more disappointing in many developing countries where income inequality and rising poverty were on the increase. According to Elliott, this necessitated a redefinition of development as a broad-based and people-oriented process. Hence, the basic-need approach emerged as "a critique of the modernization and as a break with past development theory."[9]

Proponents of the basic-needs approach argue that "economic growth was clearly not associated with beneficial outcomes for the poor, either in incomes or in employment opportunities;" Consequently, it was necessary to device effective strategic measures in order to target the poor and unemployed (Payne et al., 2010:119,120). This approach was first conceived and championed by the World Bank and the International Labour Organization (ILO) (Hopper, 2012:161). The basic needs approach aimed at shifting development agenda from a solely growth and material dimension to the flourishing of individual human beings, improvement of their lives, giving them equal opportunities, and helping them realize their human potentials (Payne et al. 2010:120). Thus, according to ILO, the following are the focal point of the basic needs approach:

> (a) the need for food, shelter, clothing and other necessities of survival, (b) the need for access to services such as clean drinking water, health care, sanitation, public transport, education facilities, . . . and (c) the need for people to be able to participate in political and decision-making processes that affected their lives" (ILO 1976, in Payne et al., 2010:120; also see Hopper, 2012:160-61).

From this perspective, therefore, development was conceived as a moral imperative whose priority should be the satisfaction of the basic needs of all human beings (Payne et al., 2010: 120).[10]

Secondly, in the 1980s human development was understood by Amartya Sen as "the enlargement of people's choices and the development of people's 'capabilities'". In other words, human development should give people equal opportunities and increase their chances

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[9] Jennifer A. Elliott, "Development and Social Welfare/human rights" in Vandana Desai et al., eds, *The Companion to Development Studies,* Routledge, London, 2014:29-30.

[10] For more information on the basic needs approach also see Elliott in Desai and Potter, eds., 2014:29.

to enhance their capacities, abilities, talents and potentials. In the 1990s he shifted from the capabilities-centered approach to that of freedom-centered, that is, to the notion of "development as freedom". In other words, development was defined as "a process of expanding the real freedoms that people can enjoy" (Sen in Payne et al., 2010:122). Here, the notion of agency is highlighted in the sense that when people are equipped with "adequate social opportunities" they would eventually become "the primary agents of their own development" (Sen in Payne et al., 2010:122).

Another landmark in the evolution of the human development approach was the launching of the *Human Development Report* (HDR) by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1990 (Payne, 2010:123). According to this report, human development is defined as "'a process of enlarging people's choices', including the ability to live a long and healthy life, to be educated and to enjoy a decent standard of living, political freedoms, human rights and self-respect. . ." (UNDP in Payne, 2010:123).[11]

Although it was envisaged that development would be achieved through the basic needs approach, unfortunately this strategy did not work for two main reasons. In the first place, the issue of development became caught up in the polarization of the Cold War. Funds for development were not destined for those in need of development as such, but rather to the nations which supported the ideologies of the donor countries, either capitalism or communism. In connection to this, Haynes says

> . . . the developmental issue became subsumed into the wider Cold War ideological division, with government-disbursed development funds not necessarily going to the most developmentally deserving cases – but often instead to allies of the key aid providing countries; (Haynes ,paraphrasing Taylor and Shaw, 2007:7).

Secondly, in many developing countries governments were unwilling to facilitate the necessary financial transfer on which the provision of basic needs depended (Taylor and Shaw in Haynes, 2007:7).

4.1.2. Gender-Centered Approaches.

The aim of this section is to examine briefly the relationship between gender and development by highlighting how development is seen and experienced by women. The most common feminist criticism of the theory and practice of development is that it has a masculine nature and orientation (Hopper, 2012:93). According to Emma Tomalin, the publication of Ester Boserup's book *Women's Role in Economic Development* in 1970 marked the "beginnings of

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[11]See also SeverineDeneulin, "Christianity and International Development", in Matthew Clarke, ed., 2013:58, *Handbook of Research on Development and Religion,* Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd, Cheltenham, UK.

the development process from a feminist perspective". Boserup, a Danish economist, argued that since women are under subordination in most societies, it will be difficult to eradicate poverty unless this situation is addressed. Therefore, they have a central role to play in the development process.[12]Hopper (2012:93) corroborates this point by maintaining that because "women face forms of discrimination and exclusion in most societies, tackling gender inequality can empower women and contribute to their sense of well-being". In this regard, a crucial aspect of development as freedom is the political, social, and economic participation of women within development (Amartya Sen in Hopper, 2012:93). This had an impact on their social status thus creating a form of exclusion and deprivation. Payne sheds more light on this point as follows:

> . . . women had been marginalized in both development policy and the productive economy, gaining less than men from their activities as workers in rural production. This marginalization in turn affected women's social status, reinforcing patterns of exclusion and deprivation and leaving basic needs unsatisfied in very particular, gendered ways (Payne et al., 2010:126).

The marginalization of women from development led to the emergence of feminist and gender-based approaches to development from the 1970s focusing on the role of women in development and the promotion of gender equality. These approaches include Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD), Gender and Development (GAD), Women, Environment and Development (WED), women empowerment, and gender mainstreaming (see Hopper, 2012: 105-103). These approaches highlight the various debates and discussion on the relationship between women and development.

4.1.2.1. Women in Development .

The Women in Development (WID) approach stemmed from the awareness that women were not included in many aspects of development. They were viewed by development planners in terms of their domestic role as housewives and mothers rather than as employees who earn money. Consequently, the assumption was that if the household is provided with more money the lives of women would be improved. In line with this, Hopper paraphrasing Young says

> WID writers complained that development planners continued to see women's primary role as housewives rather than as earners, and implicitly assumed that their lives would be improved by more money going into households (Hopper, 2012:105).

Hopper observed that in order for women to be involved in development, advocates of WID focused on women's employment and participation in the productive economy (labour force) by giving them equal access to educational opportunities and technology (Hopper,2012:105). Through this strategy, the problem of gender inequality would be tackled and women's needs

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[12]. Emma Tomalin, "Gender, religion and development" in Matthew Clarke, ed., 2012:183, *Handbook of Research on Development and Religion*, Cheltenham, UK: Edward Edgar Publishing Limited.

(such as food aid, advice on health and nutrition) could be met (Tinka in Payne et al., 2010:126).

WID adopted the strategy of increasing women's representation in development institutions so that they can have more access to funding and participation in development programmes (Hopper, 2012:105). Attempts were also made to increase the earnings of women in view of alleviating poverty within the household, rather than achieving gender equality (Young in Hopper, 2012:105).

Another concern of WID was on the impact of modernization on both men and women. In her above mentioned book, the Danish economist Boserup argued that modernization affects them differently and that women were more and more marginalized in the face of industrialization and urbanization. For her, since women's role had been limited to domestic labour and childcare, new technologies, training and education were reserved only for men. Women could easily combine their house work and their farm work, but with a decline in agricultural production and a growth of larger industries overshadowing domestic industries in business, women could lose their jobs. Hence, it was better to involve women in development and to harness their capabilities (Boserup in Hopper, 2012:105 – 6).

4.1.2.2. Women and Development

This position emerged in the late 1970s and was championed by Marxist feminists who attacked the WID approach for not addressing the real source of women's oppression and the need to change power structures. As Mies tells us, global capitalism was oppressing women by using them to produce children to become the next generation of workers. Capitalism also exploited women who served as a cheap source of labour, in poor working conditions and with salaries lower than those of men (Mies in Hopper,2012:106-7) . Women's work and earnings were considered as merely supplementary to that of men. Another feature of WAD was its focus on the diverse nature of women's experiences which the mainstream development failed to recognize. In particular, women were marginalized from developing societies (Hopper, 2012:107). WAD was criticized for ignoring the challenges that women face in daily life and the nature of gender inequality. It was ideological rather than addressing real life issues. Instead it focused on economic production, thus neglecting the importance of biological reproduction to the lives of women, and the significance of gender relations (Kabeer in Hopper,2012:108).

4.1.2.3. Gender and Development

The GAD scholarship sought to move the focus away from women to gender. Its aim was to address all aspects of women's lives especially in the areas of education, health and

reproduction, sexuality, labour and the household. Within this approach, the word gender indicates the fact that women's position cannot be considered in isolation from that of men (Moser in Hopper, 2012:108). For advocates of GAD, women should rely on their own self-help organizations and local communities for support, rather than on the market economy. GAD also wanted to remove gender discrimination by changing the power relation between men and women, especially the sexual division of labour, and by tackling issues such as patriarchy, racism and capitalism (Hopper, 2012:108-109).

However, GAD did not focus on meeting the practical needs of women but tried to give a broad analysis of gender within development. Worthy of note is the distinction between women's practical and strategic needs. Practically they need to be provided with good and adequate health facilities in their reproductive activities (reproductive health facilities) ; and strategically, they need to be emancipated and empowered by enhancing their ability to undertake new roles, giving them equal opportunities, and by eliminating other forms of social inequality (Moser and Hunt in Hopper, 2012:109).

Moser further argues that practical needs alone do not necessarily solve women's problems. Tomalin summarizes this argument as follows: ". . . while development ought to cater for practical needs, such as access to employment, education or health care, this alone will not necessarily enable women to enhance their strategic position within the gender hierarchy" (Tomalin in Clarke, ed., 2013:185). Based on this premise, Moser concludes that

> strategic gender needs are the needs women identify because of their subordinate position to men in their society . . . They relate to gender divisions of lobour, power and control and may include such issues as legal rights, domestic violence, equal wages and women's control over their bodies (Moser, quoted by Tomalin in Clarke, ed., 2013:185).

GAD's approach was more critical and radical than WID's and, therefore, could not easily be adopted by development agencies and planners (Moser in Payne et al., 2010:127).

4.1.2.4. Women, Environment and Development (WED).

This approach came into being in the 1970s when some women who critiqued the dominantmodel of development by focusing their attention on the environment. They argued that men's domination of women was similar to their control over nature, and consequently industrialization and science have been determined by masculine values without considering the spiritual and holistic perspectives. In the same vein and in a succinct manner Hopper (2012:109) says

> Broadly speaking, the WED approach equates men's domination of women with their control over nature. From this perspective, industrialization and science have been shaped by

>masculine values since the Enlightenment and have been guilty of excluding spiritual and holistic thinking. It has led to the pursuit of economic development that has effectively constituted a war against the earth's ecosystems, which are usually portrayed as female by eco-feminists.

There is a connection between women and the environment, what Hopper describes as "an organic link between women and nature", especially from the perspective of their "characteristics or traits, their nurturing and caring capacities, and their ability to manage limited food supplies" (Hopper, paraphrasing Vandana Shiva, 2012:110). Eco-feminists like Shiva and Ruth Pearson therefore argue that in view of such a linkage it is reasonable to gear environmental programmes towards women, in other words, to prioritize women within development projects that are related to the conservation of the environment (Shiva and Pearson in Hopper, 2012:119).

However, the organic link between women and nature has been challenged by some critics who argue that it is an interpretation of women's biological make-up and their relationship with nature (Agarwal in Hopper, 2012:110). For some, the biological claim in reference to women can instead be used to reduce women's roles and influence in the society (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter and Wangari in Hopper, 2012:110). Still for others, WED's emphasis on women's connection to rural life does not give a true reflection of their lives because the number of women living in urban areas is increasing progressively. Another criticism of the WED paradigm is that it ignores and excludes men who are aware of the environment and who may chip in with valuable inputs for the debate (Hopper, 2010:110).

4.1.3. Environmental Approach.

In the past, development thinking and practice paid much attention to economics in the development equation, and very little or no emphasis on the relationship between the environment and development. However, as Vandana Desai has noted, in the last two decades the environment has become a major dimension and important component of development with increasing attention being focused on the concept of sustainable development (Desai et al., ed.,2014:129). According to the Brundtland Commission, sustainable development means "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".[13]

Jeffrey Haynes corroborates the concern for, and importance of environmental sustainability in the following words "Concern for the natural environment, including

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[13]. Brundtland Commission, 1987, quoted by Michael Redclift, "Sustainable Development" in Vandana Desai and Robert B. Potter, eds., 2014:333, *The Companion to Development Studies*, Third Edition, Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, London; see also Anthony Payne et la., 2010:135, *Development,* Polity Press, Cambridge, UK.

appropriate management of natural resources, is rightly regarded as crucial to the development prospects of the developing world" (Haynes, 2007:124). Natural environment embodies the eco-system and the natural resources or what some writers refer to as 'natural capital'. [14] In this connection, some writers define the natural environment as "including all natural features of land, water, flora and fauna that support human life and influence its development and character" (Mitchell and Tanner in Haynes, 2007:124).

Environmental issues of major importance include "climate change, pollution, animal species protection, and deforestation and desertification" (Haynes, 2007:125). In addition to this list, some people include other issues such as the process of democracy and governance within the framework of sustainable development, as well as human rights and identity.[15] Concerns about the environment have been manifested internationally through conferences, conventions and treaties that have created environmental regulatory policies. The United Nations (UN) conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972 is considered the first international conference on the environment (Vogler in Haynes, 2007:125-26). It established that the environment is a legitimate area of concern for both national and international governance (Cadwell in Hopper, 2012"213). As Haynes notes, the 113 countries in attendance agreed on 26 principles calling "upon governments to cooperate in protecting and improving the natural environment" (Haynes, 2007:126).

Next was the Rio Earth Summit of 1992, organized by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Top on the agenda were two pressing issues: environmental degradation and poverty and underdevelopment. They are interconnected and affect millions of people especially in the developing world. This summit adopted a plan of action to save the planet known as 'Agenda 21' (Haynes, 2007:126). Five agreements were signed on issues such as "the prevention of species extinction, deforestation and climate change". Agenda 21 formulated a sustainable development programme for the twenty-first century (Hopper, 2012:213).

For the environmentalists, the Rio Earth Summit was a disappointment because the ecological modernization agenda was not different from an economic growth (Pelling, in Hopper, 2012:214). In addition, Hopper tells us that there were no binding agreements on issues like population control and the flow of technologies and funding from the developed to

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[14]. See, for example, Pearce in Michael Redclift, "Sustainable Development" in Desai et al. eds., 2014:334, *The Companion to Development Studies,* Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, London.
[15]. cf. Michael Redclift "Sustainable Development" in Desai et al., eds., 2014:335, *The Companion to Development Studies,* Third Edition, Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, London.

the developing world. Furthermore, there was no attempt to consider the relationship between development and environment (Hopper, 2012:214).

According to some critics, Agenda 21 was an inadequate response to public concern devoid of the legally binding force to ensure the required progress in the protection of the environment especially in the developing world. However, it provided the framework for the convention on climate change. In this regard, Haynes says

> Critics argued that Agenda 21 was an inadequate, merely aspirational response to public concern, lacking teeth to ensure necessary progress in relation to environmental protection in the developing world (Tucker and Grim 2001) . However, despite failure to produce an agreement on tropical rainforest destruction (one of Rio's main concern), the Earth Summit did give rise to a Framework Convention on Climate Change (Haynes, 2007:126 - 27).

The significance of the Earth Summit lies in the fact that it was the beginning of a systematic attempt at the international level to deal with the problem of "global warming", a significant threat to the human race (Vogler, in Haynes, 2007:127). Measures were taken to control the emissions of greenhouse gases considered to be responsible for global warming (Haynes, 2007:127).

4.2. The Concept of development, a Catholic perspective.

The Catholic Church's understanding of development has been well articulated in her social teaching (encyclicals), and in the document of the Second Vatican Council. The term "social teaching" refers to a body of doctrines or teachings of the Catholic Church concerning social issues and questions (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, No.87, 2004:49). It is " a rich treasure of wisdom about building a just society and living lives of holiness amidst the challenges of modern society" (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops , " Catholic Social Teaching", 2005, in www.usccb.org). It dates back to the publication of the encyclical letter *RerumNovarum* of Pope Leo XIII which signaled a new beginning and development of the church's teaching on social matters. This implies that the church has always shown concern for social matters throughout her history. Her teachings on social issues are rooted in the Bible, especially the Gospels and apostolic writings (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church,* No. 87, 2004:49).

4.2.1. Integral human development

I would like to mention that Catholic conceptualization of development can be appreciated better from the standpoint of integral human development, that is, with focus on the entire human person in both its material and spiritual dimensions. It is the main axis on which

theCatholic teaching on development sits. The first document that directly addressed development per se was the encyclical *PopulorumProgressio*of Pope Paul VI promulgated in 1967. It is structured around two main axes: integral human development and development in solidarity with all humanity. Here, Paul VI conceives development as "the transition from less humane conditions to those which are more humane" (Paul VI in *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, No.98, and 2004:57). He argues that this transition goes beyond economic and technological progress, leading the human person to respect the dignity of other human beings, to be open to the transcendence, and to recognize that in development justice and peace are important to attain an integral humanism. In conjunction to this, the *Compendium* says

> This *transition* is not limited to merely economic or technological dimensions, but implies for each person the acquisition of culture, the respect of the dignity of others, the acknowledgment of "the highest good, the recognition of God Himself, the author and end of these blessings". Development that benefits everyone responds to the demands of justice on a global scale that guarantees worldwide peace and makes it possible to achieve a "complete humanism" guided by spiritual values (No. 98:57).

In 1988, Pope John Paul II took up once more the theme of development in his encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis.* He discussed two main aspects: the situation of the modern world under the aspect of the failed development of the Third World; and the meaning of, and the conditions and requirements for real development. He brought out the spiritual and moral dimensions of development, distinguished between progress and development, and insisted that "true development cannot be limited to the multiplication of goods and services – to what one possesses – but must contribute to the fullness of the 'being' of man. In this way the moral nature of real development is meant to be shown clearly". According to him, peace is the fruit of solidarity, and based on the principle of solidarity (of friendship, social charity, civilization of love), he shows that the church's social teaching is built on a reciprocal structure between God and man. In other words, to recognize God in every human person and every human person in God is the condition of authentic human development (John Paul II in *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church,* Nos.102-103, 2004:58-59).

It is good to note that the Catholic Church is not alone in talking about integral human development. Other Christian Churches use the appellation "integral mission" which is understood as the "indivisible proclamation and demonstration of the Gospel that results in the transformation of the whole person" (http://www.tearfund.org).

In the 1970s Paul VI reflected on the complex problems of post-industrial society and noted that ideologies were insufficient and unable to respond to social challenges such as urbanization, the condition of young people and of women, unemployment, discrimination, immigration, population growth, the influence of the means of social communication, and the ecological problem (*Compendium,* No.100, 2004:58).

The social teachings of the Church hinge on themes with development consequences as explained in the following paragraphs.

4.2.2. Life and dignity of the human person. The human person is created in the image of God (*Imago Dei*) and, therefore, human life is sacred and possesses an inherent dignity which constitutes the starting point for a moral vision for society. Thus the human person is not just something, but someone; every person is precious and more important than things (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church,* No. 108, 2004:62). However, in the society human life faces direct attack from abortion and euthanasia, and its value is threatened by cloning, embryonic stem cell research, death penalty, and wars (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCBs), 2005, in www.usccb.org). Thus, economic, scientific and technological progress should not overshadow human development. They should rather aim at promoting and protecting the life and dignity of the human person.

4.2.3. Rights and Responsibilities. According to the teaching of the Catholic Church, "human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be realized only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met". Thus, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to the things necessary for human decency, such as food, shelter and clothing, employment, health care, and education. They equally have corresponding duties and responsibilities to one another, to their families, and to the larger society (USCCBs, 2005, in www.usccb.org).

4.2.4. The dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers.

Leo XIII's *RerumNovarum* was prompted by the Industrial Revolution which had a social, political and cultural impact on the society, thus raising serious problems of justice and posing the labor question (conflict between capital and labor). Worker's conditions were distressing as they languished in inhuman misery, under poor working conditions and with low income. Consequently, Leo talked about the errors that generate social ills, and explained the "Catholic doctrine on work, the right to property, the principle of collaboration instead of class struggle as the fundamental means for social change, the right of the weak, the dignity of the poor and the obligations of the rich, the perfection of justice through charity, on the right

to form professional associations" (Leo XIII in *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, No. 88-89, 2004:49-50).

In the Catholic tradition, work is viewed not just as a way to make a living, but more so as a form of continuing participation in God's creation. The economy must aim at serving people, not the other way around. All workers have a right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to safe working conditions, to organize and join unions, to private property, and economic initiative. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then these basic rights of workers must be respected (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church,* 2004:157f, 172f).[16]

4.3. Vatican II

Another document of the Catholic Church that deals with the concept of development is the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II). It emphasized the duty to "scrutinized the signs of time and interpret them in the light of the Gospel" (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *GaudiumetSpes,*paragraph 4). The issue at stake was of a pedagogical methodology, that is, how to respond to the "signs of time" characterized by "massive poverty, growing inequality and social exclusion?" (Deneulin, 2009:138). The Council encouraged the Christians to carry out their duty of promoting human welfare and to participate in "the political, economic and social world to build a more just social order" (Vatican II paraphrased by Deneulin, 2009:138).

Furthermore, the Council stated that there is no opposition between the professional and the religious life of the believer, for the Christian "who neglects his temporal duties neglects the duties to his neighbor, neglects God". It also argued that in a world where progress has widened the gap between the haves and have-nots, economic and social relations should be guided by equity and justice. Thus the rich are urged to share with the poor, to use their wealth to assist those in need and those who suffer in order to facilitate and enhance their self-help and self-development (*GaudiumetSpes* in Deneulin, 2009:138-139).

4.4. Liberation Theology

Liberation theology is a theological movement that emerged in Latin America in the late 1960s (Deneulin 2009:142). It underscores in another perspective how the Catholic Church understands development – liberating people from oppressive rule and from unjust social and economic structures. It is good to note that this movement was an accidental yet logical consequence of the endeavour of the bishops of Latin America to implement the deliberations

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[16]See also United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, " Catholic Social Teaching" in www.usccb.org ; and Catholic Charities Office for Social Justice in www.cctwincities.org

and teachings of Vatican II. In their first regional meeting in 1968 in Medellin, Colombia, they sought to scrutinize the signs of the time and enter into dialogue with the world in the light of the invitation of the Council. In the 1960s Latin America was "marked by massive poverty, economic dependency, large inequalities, and non-democratic rule" (Deneulin, 2009:143).

There was also the impact of the Cuban Revolution and the Cold War. In some countries "there had been an alliance between the military, the elite and the Church . . ." The political authorities limited the Church's role to "consoling the souls of the oppressed and comforting the souls of the elite. It was not invited to pronounce any judgement on the economic, social or political order of the time" (Deneulin, 2009:143). The speech delivered by the Peruvian priest, Gustavo Gutierrez, deeply influenced the deliberations and the outcome of the bishops' conference. It was later on transformed into a book, published in 1971 entitled *A Theology of Liberation* (Deneulin, 2009:143).

One of the main characteristics of Liberation Theology is "a preferential option for the poor". It is a command "by God who, throughout the Bible, has a special relationship with the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized" (Deneulin, 2009:143). The fundamental option for the poor and vulnerable also constitutes one of the major themes of the social teachings of the Catholic Church. She is concerned about

> how the most vulnerable members of society are treated and how personal decisions, policies of private and public institutions, and economic relationships affect the poor and marginalized, that is, those who lack the basic necessities of nutrition, housing, education, and health care. The option for the poor stems from Jesus' command to love one's neighbor as one's self (Catholic Charities Office for Social Justice, 2012, in www.cctwincities.org).

At the 69th UN General Assembly on the eradication of poverty held in New York, November 04, 2014, Archbishop BernarditoAuza, Apostolic Nuncio and permanent observer of the Vatican to the United Nations underscored the importance of participation in sustainable development and the barriers to it. He argued that sustainable development

> . . . requires the participation of all in the life of families, communities, organizations and societies. Participation is the antidote to exclusion, be it economic, social, political or cultural. Structures and practices that exclude and leave behind members of the human family will always be barriers to full human development (Auza, in www.zenit.org).

He also pointed out that the exclusion of women from equal and active participation in the development of their communities is another obstacle to sustainable development. When women and girls are excluded from education and subjected to violence and discrimination, their dignity and fundamental human rights are violated. Furthermore, he discussed the

multifaceted and multidimensional nature of poverty. It is not the mere exclusion from economic development but "also manifests itself in the educational, social, political, cultural and spiritual dimensions of life. Individuals and communities experience these dimensions of poverty when they are excluded from or deprived of the social, cultural, political and spiritual benefits that should be accessible to all" (Auza in www.zenit.org).

Since the realities of poverty and development are complex, poverty cannot be equated with economic poverty alone. Hence its eradication cannot be reduced to "merely increasing the amount of money a day a person lives on". This is because development "is more than the sum total of resources invested into development projects and their measurable material results;" It equally includes elements that contribute to life - transforming and greater human flourishing, though at times they may not be tangible and perceptible (Auza, in www.zenit.org).

4.5. The Catholic Church in Cameroon and Development

According to the organigram of the Catholic Church, the local churches throughout the world represent the universal church. Hence, whatever the local church says, concerning issues of faith and doctrine, is said in the name of and on behalf of the universal church. The context, the circumstance or situation may differ from place to place, but it is the same principle and teaching that is applied. This means that what the Church in Cameroon says about development is what the universal Catholic Church teaches on the same subject. The local church in Cameroon therefore teaches, upholds, reiterates, explains, interprets, and applies the Church's teaching on development in the Cameroon context. With this understanding, I shall present some of the official statements of the Catholic Church in Cameroon on development issues.

When there is a serious social problem affecting the sustainable or durable development of the people, especially the poor, vulnerable and marginalized, the bishops often react in their capacity as pastors, prophets, teachers, and the voice of the voiceless. Events such as the presidential, parliamentary and municipal elections, as well as social problems such as bribery and corruption, embezzlement and capital flight, tribalism, wars, assassinations and insecurity have a great impact particularly on human development. Faced with such concerns and issues, the bishops would publish a pastoral letter or communiqué to Christians and men and women of good will.

In September 2000 the bishops of Cameroon wrote a Pastoral Letter on corruption pointing out its destructive outcome on the society, economy, country, and more importantly on human beings. Among other things, they said

> Corruption is destroying our country. It is destroying our economy; it is destroying our social life; more importantly, it is destroying our consciences. Cameroon has been wrecked by this scourge . . . It is a tragedy . . . a serious illness that . . . touches us all . . . children of our country are now being born and bred in an atmosphere of corruption, which perverts their consciences at a very young age by making them believe that success is achieved, not by studies and honest work, but rather by trickery and theft. Corruption causes harm, it kills the human being in us. It breeds an unjust society, which can no longer guarantee equal rights and chances to its citizens. It creates a climate of suspicion and distrust among people, condemning them to live in fear and insecurity. . . Corruption is the root cause of the present economic crisis and of the huge amount of the external debt (http://www.leffortcamerounais.com/2009/08/pastoral-letter-of-the-bishops-of-cameroon-on-corruption.html).

On June 26, 2001, the National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon (NECC) issued a declaration on the insecurity in the country. They examined some situations in the country concerning the fundamental rights of the human person, particularly the security of persons and their property. They vehemently condemned acts that jeopardize or violet the security of persons and their property

> That is why we cannot remain silent when we observe . . . that serious incidents continue to upset human rights and justice and put in peril the security of all . . . We are thinking primarily of acts of banditry which have multiplied in the country: burglaries, highway robberies often accompanied by assassinations, rapes, armed robberies . . . We strongly condemn such acts and ask that justice officials pursue and punish the perpetrators, according to the law. . . We are particularly anxious, with all the citizens of our country, when we learn that bandits sometimes operate with the assistance of some members of police force who rent their arms out to criminals, or engage prison convicts to accomplish these acts. . . We do not desire anything other than peace, security and the prosperity of our nation (http://www.leffortcamerounais.com/2008/07/some-declaratio.html)

Concerning the presidential election in 2011 the Episcopal Conference of Cameroon recommended the setting up of transparent structures and the use of a single ballot paper during elections (BisongEtahoben, "Catholic Church's roadmap on Cameroon's presidential election", 2011, in http://www.africareview.com/Special-Reports/Catholic-Church-roadmap-on). The aim was to ensure a fair and transparent election.

5. Findings

5.1. Relevance of Small Christian Communities?

I would like to mention that the interviews were conducted in the local language because most of the interviewees could not speak English. Hence, the quotations that feature in this chapter are my translations. Based on the interviews that I conducted, there is a general consensus that SCCs are relevant. According to one member of the first community interviewed this is because "when the members go to church they listen to the Word of God and the preaching, and then back in the community they spread and put it into practice". To another member SCCs are relevant because they provide the framework and the arena for decision making. They are a liaison between the Christians and the parish. She said

> a Small Christian Community is the church in the neighborhood where things are deliberated upon and then implemented at the mission or parish level. Without SCCs the church will not exist nor function. For example, when there is an up-coming event like a priestly ordination, SCCs will do the planning and execution of activities. This entails contributing money and food items for the occasion as well as cooking the food. After Bible sharing, the members visit the sick persons in their community and inform the parish priest or the catechist in case the sick person needs the sacraments such as reconciliation, anointing of the sick, and Holy Communion.

According to the Catholic Church there are seven sacraments instituted by Christ. In addition to the above mentioned three, the other sacraments are baptism, confirmation, holy orders, and matrimony. The sacrament of reconciliation was formerly known as penance, but because this word evokes the connotation of punishment, it has virtually lost its popularity in preference to reconciliation which brings out the idea of making peace, reuniting, healing the wounds of division caused by sin, acknowledging one's failures and asking for pardon. In this case the penitent reconciles with God, the neighbor and with the community. Anointing of the sick is aimed at strengthening, comforting and healing the sick person with the power of Christ. Holy Communion represents the Body and Blood of Christ given as spiritual nourishment to the recipient.

In the second Small Christian Community, a participant said their community serves as a tool for the growth of the church. For example, there the members register children for baptism. In addition, they help the members to know and understand themselves better. Another participant explained that

> When a member is absent the others will easily notice it and then enquire why. It is easier for the members to know each other better, know the problems they are facing, and to seek appropriate solutions to them. This is different from the parish set up, which is a larger community where it is difficult to notice an absent member. It is very difficult for a parishioner to know all the other parishioners.

Concerning their plans to quit or stay in the community, the members strongly stated that they will remain committed members till death. This is because, as one member explained, SCCs have replaced the quarter structures. They were members of the quarters and did not run away.[17] Now they are members of SCCs and will not run away as well. They will continue till the end of their lives. Then, they will no longer be members since membership ends with the death of each person. Another member added that

"the church of today no longer depends on the whites. We are the Church meaning that if we leave, the church will collapse or cease to exist. The expatriates (whites) are no longer there. So if we leave who then will take care of it?" It is no longer the church of the clergy, as it was the case in the past, but their church. Hence, SCCs help the Christians know that the church is theirs; it belongs to them and not to the person appointed to lead and guide them, that is, the priest or bishop.

Asked why there are SCCs in the Church, one interviewee said it is because

> the church started in the cathedrals but, since it was realized that it was very big, parishes were created and later on they were turned to deaneries, then to mission stations, and now to small Christian communities due to increase in population. Without this division it will not be easy for the bishop who is at the top to identify his Christians. There is an easy flow of information from the SCCs to the bishop and vice versa. He will know that he is there because of the Christians who are in the various communities. They are under his leadership; else they will be independent churches.

A second person added that if in the parish everybody went to the priest for their individual problems and concerns he will be overwhelmed by the influx of people; he will not be able to know them. With the SCCs he is able to know who is doing what and where.

For another interviewee, the relevance of Small Christian Communities lies in the fact that

> they exist for easy administration in the Church, that is, for decentralization in the church. For instance, a member can invite the parish priest to baptize his/her child, or to bless their marriage in the small Christian community and not necessarily in the parish church. This helps to encourage and attract lapse Christians to church. It is a form of power sharing in which the laity are given the opportunity to play leadership and participatory roles in the Church. Coordinators work in collaboration with the parish priest through planning and the flow of information. This is evident in the

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[17]. At first Christians were divided into ecclesial units called quarters. These have been replaced by SCCs.

activities of the different pastoral commissions such as justice and peace, finance, family life, etc. When there is a parochial meeting involving any of the commissions, each small Christian community sends a representative. Each member of the Christian community belongs to a commission wherein he/she is active.

The creation of SCCs is a way of waking up lazy and lapse Christians from slumber. Some of them do not go to church because of distance. Thus, when the priest comes to meet the Christians in their own community for Mass and the sacraments, many are encouraged to attend. The priest's visit also creates a forum to meet and listen to problems and concerns of individual Christians.

In the third Small Christian Community, a participant stated that SCCs are "a new way of being church", in other words, a new way of living and bearing witness to the faith. Another added that SCCs are

> the birth place of our faith; faith originates from here before it extends/expands to the parish. Hence, we do not intend to leave our Christian community because it comes immediately after our families before the parish. We cannot do anything in the parish without passing through the community first. We will remain members till death.

Concerning the raison-d'être of SCCs in the Church one interviewee said,

> for me, at some point the church of the past realized that things were not working effectively, so they decided to start from below, that is, from the grass roots. I can compare it with technology: modern technology is different from the one of the past, hence technology has undergone some change. For example, at first the priest celebrated Mass facing the altar and backing the congregation. May be the Church has therefore realized the necessity to start from below, from the people going up, in other words bottom-up rather than top-bottom, that is, from the SCCs.

Another member threw more light on this point by alluding to the Post Synodal Exhortation of John Paul II entitled *Ecclesia in Africa*, in which the Pope talked about enculturation in Africa that is, helping the African Christians understand better the Catholic faith and doctrine by employing the good elements of their cultural values and traditional practices in the church. SSCs have been created therefore as vehicles of enculturation

In this chapter, I have put together the aims of each Christian community represented by the views of their respective individual members. The aims of the First Christian Community are:

1. To bring back lapsed Christians into the fold
2. To help them regularize their sacramental life by abandoning the practice of cohabitation.
3. We want our members to present their children for the sacraments of initiation (baptism, first Holy Communion and Confirmation).

4. We want to re-kindle the faith of the lapsed Christians by showing them love and sympathy, so that they will not remain occasional or Christmas church-goers.
5. Furthermore, we would like to achieve peace and unity among our members and to help them practice their faith by living as Christians.
6. Most importantly our aim is to achieve love of neighbor, Christian unity, and Christian living.

The second Christian community has relatively fewer aims similar to those of the first:

1. To bring back lapsed Christian into the fold.

2. To deepen the faith of our members.

3. To be good practicing Christians living in peace and harmony".

On their part, the third Christian community wants:

1. To build our own Small Christian community.
2. To sensitize members to attend and be active in our Christian community.
3. We want to achieve free-will donation, in other words, we want our members to contribute money for the development of our Christian community, that is, to be responsible.
4. The most important aspect of our community is participation in the liturgy, and mutual love within the community.

From the above findings it can be seen that some of the aims overlap while others do not. The third Christian community has additional aims that are not common to the first and second. This may be due to the specific needs of each Christian community.

5.2. The mission of the Church.

This section brings out the perspectives of SCCs on the mission of the church. This is reflected in the different views of the individual members of each community. According to the members of one small Christian community the mission of the church is "to impart faith, help people know God so that all believers might go to heaven, or have eternal life. Without the church there would be chaos and disorder in the society". As one member said,

> Church sermons and exhortations are very touching and challenging. They transform our lives and restrain many Christians from indulging in bad and evil acts such as murder, and from behaving like animals. The Church instills in people the fear of God. Were it not for the Church, some members like me would have committed suicide due to hardship and suffering. Her main mission therefore is to bring peace and salvation. Without peace the entire world would be plunged into war.

In another Christian community members stated that the mission of the Church is "to make Christ known so that his followers may imitate him, and to strengthen our faith in him; to bring peace into the world through Christ; to spread the Word of God. Central to her mission

is the dispensation of peace, love, unity, and salvation; to help the poor and to practice charity".

5.3. Small Christian Communities and the Mission of the Church.

This section shows how SCCs participate in the mission of the Church. SCCs testified that they do take part in the mission of the Church. For example, Small Christian community *A* explained their participation in the church's mission thus

> We visit and comfort the sick, and see to their spiritual and material needs (such as food); encourage and help the Christians to receive the sacraments; present our deceased members to the parish priest for Christian burial in the mission cemetery which cannot take place without the knowledge and intervention of the Small Christian Community. Furthermore, we advise and counsel those who have problems, and comfort those who mourn. In brief, we offer material, financial, moral, and spiritual support where necessary.

In Small Christian community *C,* they participate through prayers, contribution and dialogue: "We pray and contribute money for the work, activities and growth of the church; we clean the church and its surroundings; we also advise our stray members; in addition, we contribute by promoting dialogue among ourselves and with other religions (inter-religious dialogue)".

5.4. The Church and development: what Small Christian Communities say?

5.4.1. Meaning of development.

In the same small Christian community the members understand development differently. One member sees it " as change, progress, to set or bring about positive change"; another sees it as " leaving behind the world of darkness, to change the way of life or behavior and character, to grow morally"; to another member development means "change in the way of worshiping God, for example, in the context of enculturation. This is also development". Still one member perceives development as "road construction, building of markets, the expansion and growth of the parish through the creation of new mission stations and small Christian communities". Furthermore, according to another member, development means "taking up responsibility in the church, for example, feeding the priests .That was not the case before during the time of Whiteman Father".

The scenario is not different in another small Christian community. The individual members understand development in varied ways: "making the environment clean, for example, the church house; growth and acquisition of wealth; road construction and provision of water; mutual help such as working in the farms".

5.4.2. What has the Church to do with development?

The members of the SCCs interviewed were of the consensus that the Church has a lot to do with development, and that she should be involved in development issues. However, each had his/her view about the Church's specific involvement in development. One member said "the church has always been a great agent of development especially in areas such as health care service, education, poverty alleviation, and the provision of pipe-born water". A second interviewee added the elements of road construction, new settlement areas, and the establishment of business activities:

> Many villages have developed thanks to the Church. Where ever she establishes herself, a road follows, she builds schools, health centers, and provides pipe born water.[18] This attracts people to buy plots, build houses, start a business and settle in the area. It is good for the Church to be involved in development as this brings joy and happiness to the people. Some SCCs take part in digging roads at the village level.

The second Christian community emphasized the Church's involvement in poverty alleviation, for instance, by introducing a health insurance plan called the Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province Health Assistance (BEPHA). The third small Christian community understands the Church's involvement in development from an experiential point of view. That means

> the Church herself has experienced some growth and expansion through the creation of many parishes, mission stations and SCCs, as well as a flourishing of vocations. Many religious congregations are there to fortify and revamp the diocesan work force. Many priests are available to attend to the spiritual needs of the people. They no longer have to come from afar. The laity has been formed to take up responsibilities in the Church. All this falls within the framework of development.

Furthermore, another member explained that the Church is involved in development "through the announcements made in Church concerning village community work, for example, digging of roads and trenches for the pipe-born water". To yet another interviewee, "to insist on the cleanliness of the place of worship is also an involvement by the Church in development. This is because it will be big disgrace for us to welcome our special guests in a filthy church".

Concerning the care and protection of the environment, a member of the First small Christian community talked about drought and tree planting. He said

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[18] In Cameroon the Church dominated the educational landscape for a long time. Confessional schools were the most common until 1972 when the government seized most of them at the primary level.
In most rural areas of the North West Region, pipe-born water was first brought by missionaries. Even now some villages enjoy clean pipe-born water thanks to the largess of the Church through her missionaries. The case in point here includes but not limited to the following Catholic parishes in Bui Division of the North West Region of Cameroon: Djottin, Sop, Nkar, and Tatum.

drought is a very serious problem that brings about untold suffering. Without rain our crops will not crow and there will be famine. If the church therefore asks us to plant trees why should we refuse? With these trees the rain will fall at the right time. This is good for the people. Through this the Church can gain more people, or win more souls.

Furthermore, another informant focused on environmental degradation and the disposal of refuse, as well as what the Church can do:

our market squares, road junctions, and neighborhoods have become dumping grounds for refuse. In general, people dispose of their refuse anywhere and anyhow. Some dispose it in other people's farms. This often creates problems since the owner will not appreciate it when a neighbor or any other person uses his/her farm as a place for refuse knowing fully well that some garbage destroys the environment. In some areas garbage containers are small or limited in number to contain the big volume of garbage. The Church can therefore be involved in development by providing cans for the garbage. She can sensitize and educate people about the correct and proper disposal and treatment of refuse, about environmental protection.

In respect to the question of who should empty the trash cans this informant suggested that the Church can work in partnership and collaboration with the local council that can provide workers or agents to empty the garbage bins at the right time and in the right places. In addition, he also suggested that the Church can also educate people on when and how to apply manure to their farms particularly cow dung, and other animal droppings. Most of these contain life warms which might destroy the crops if the manure is put into the farm immediately. Hence, it is necessary to keep the manure for some time to try up and for the warms to die before it is applied to the farms.[19]

In the third Christian community, one interviewee stated that it will be good if the Church is concerned with protecting and taking care of the environment. According to him,

the church can discourage people from burning their farms, and educate them on the dangers and consequences of this practice. She can encourage them to plant trees that will preserve the water table; give advice on how to rear and care for animals, as well as on how to protect the environment

Concerning health care services the Church can continue to provide health posts, health centers, and hospitals as she has been doing. However, one informant pointed out that the health services provided by the Church are not at affordable prices. Another retorted that in order to handle this particular concern the Church has introduced a kind of health insurance scheme known as Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province Health Assistant (BEPHA). This scheme covers 75% of the hospital bill of the patient. In addition to what has been said, a member of the third Christian community talked about blood donation. For her, "the church can inform

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[19] . The account of this informant needs to be verified.

the Christians through church announcements about the need to donate blood in order to save someone's life".

Another member of the same community cited the cardiac center in the St Elizabeth General Hospital Shisong , in Kumbo of the North West Region of Cameroon. According to him,

> this is a veritable example of the Church's engagement in the healthcare of the people because the aim is to provide quality service especially to the local people at affordable price. It is the only cardiac center in West and Central Africa, thus people do not need to travel out of Cameroon to undergo heart surgery.

According to one interviewee, the Church has been involved in the fight against poverty by establishing schools which have created job opportunities. She has recruited teachers to teach in these schools. However, the situation is no longer as it was before. In the past decades Catholic schools, especially in the primary sector, have suffered acute financial crisis which left the teachers in a situation below poverty level. To him this is due to failure on the part of the government to grant subventions. Consequently, teachers could not be paid their full salaries and in most cases their meager salaries were delayed for a considerable length of time.

Another person suggested that the Church can equally organize seminars and workshops for vocational training, and self-employment education such as animal farming, agriculture, carpentry, building construction, technical work such as electricity. Furthermore, the Church can talk about laziness and its dangers; teach and help people realize that an idle mind is the devil's workshop. Many people complain of poverty and unemployment hoping for help and employment to come from somewhere else without realizing that they themselves can do something to change or improve upon their situation. For example, they can rear animals, fowls and fish.

Asked if the Church should be involved in the provision of pipe-born water, one member of Small Christian community C objected; "It is our duty", he said, meaning the duty of "the village community and not of the Church or government. They only come after us. That is how I see it". Another speaker said "it is the duty of the government". And still to another, "it is the duty of both the government and the Church". However, at the end of the day, the general consensus of the majority was that it is still the Church's mission to provide portable water to the people .The provision of pipe-born water is another way by which the church contributes to poverty alleviation. In most villages where the Church has provided water, the inhabitants do not pay water bills, as it is for free. And in rare cases where they pay,

the financial impact and burden is very minimal as compared to that paid to state-owned water bills.

Concerning the Church's involvement in education, one speaker in Small Christian Community C said, the church should take the lead while the government assists her:

> This is because, in the Cameroon context, education was first brought by the Church, hence, it should be her duty and concern. She emphasizes the teaching of morality which is very important to the up-bringing of the citizens, and to the proper, smooth, and peaceful functioning of the society.

5.5. Impact of Small Christian Communities

Small Christian Communities have an impact on members, neighbourhood, and the society. There is a remarkable change in the moral and spiritual lives of the members: they have become more generous, they support the Church financially, and actively participate in the life of the Church. This has been testified by an interviewee in Small Christian Community C thus

> They are more engaged and involved in church activities now than in the past. For example, in the 1960s Sunday alms could be around 360 Frs. CFA, but now it could amount to more than 10.000 FRS. CFA, thanks to the change brought about by SCCs.

Another remarkable change concerns the possession and reading of the Bible by the laity, something that was forbidden in the past. In Small Christian Community B a speaker said

> In the past Christians could not touch the Bible or even have/keep it around them. They were not allowed to open it; it was not even available. But now, with SCCs there is Bible reading and sharing which has helped the Christians understand the Word of God better.

Many Christians have regularized their situation in the Church through church weddings: no more cohabitation.

SCCs have encouraged and brought about dialogue between Catholics and other denominations. It has galvanized Christian unity through mutual understanding and collaboration, the use of the same Bible translation, exchange of invitations, and participation in the events of their counterparts. With SCCs people are now more responsible and consider the church as their own and not something that belongs to the leaders (priests and bishops). They are now aware of their responsibility to support the church and to play their roles in the church: "without contribution there can't be development".

According to Small Christian Community A, the introduction of Bible sharing has helped their members to read the Bible, meditate on it, and then put it into practice. Hence, the faith is propagated and people know God better.

Community B also recognizes the impact of SCCs: good planning, reduction of financial burden through division of labour. To illustrate this point, one member said

> when there is a big occasion like priestly ordination or the celebration of the parish Feast Day, or the visit of an important person, SCCs contribute money for the occasion, and are assigned different tasks such as logistics, cleaning, cooking, transportation, reception, entertainment, and security. This makes it easier and lighter for the Christians.

In addition, another member talked about improvement in liturgical celebration and participation. This includes singing and reading in church, as well as preparing the prayers of intercession. It is no longer the work of the catechist alone to read in the church. Each SCC has a choir that animates the liturgy at the parish level according to the given schedule. Hence, the parish does not have to depend solely on the main choir for the animation of the liturgy. There is healthy competition among SCCs as each strives to produce the best choir.

For Community C, SCCs have improved the relationship between neighbors; introduced and encouraged the spirit of sharing;

After presenting the findings of my data collection, in the next chapter I shall focus on the discussion and analysis of the findings against the backdrop of the theories of development, and the social teachings of the Catholic Church on development as presented in the previous chapter.

6. Analysis and Discussions

After presenting the theories of development and the research findings, the main task of this chapter is to critically examine the relationship between SCCs and development. In so doing, I shall compare development theory and the understanding of SCCs in order to see how they go together or differ; compare the different perspectives of SCCs on development; and then discus the influence of worldviews on their perspective.

My presupposition here is that SSCs are not the only players, and in some respect, may not be the best players in the crowded arena of development. For example, humanitarian organizations, Not-for-profit and Non-Governmental Organizations are also involved. What, therefore, is distinctive about their identity in development thought and practice? Do they bring something substantive and different? What additional value(s) do they bring, if any? What motivates their engagement? Will something be missing if they were not development players? These questions will guide us in our analysis and discussion.

6.1. Analysis of the perspectives of the SCCs on Development

In the previous chapter, we saw how the SCCs understand development. From a critical point of view, it would seem that their views are contradictory, disjointed, irrelevant, and lack a common ground. Why? When they envision development differently as change, progress, increase in wealth, participation (being involved); or when they associate it with morality and worship, does that pose a problem?

This situation reflects the multidimensional nature of development and, to some extent, how development is measured. Their understanding touches some of the different aspects of development such as bringing about positive change, construction of roads, building of markets, keeping the environment clean, acquisition of wealth, and the provision of portable water. This has to do with the material aspect of development. On the other hand, some members understand development from the moral and spiritual perspectives: as change of behavior and character, and change in the way of worshipping God. Still others stress the participatory aspect of development, for example, taking up responsibility in the Church. We can put them into different categories or schools of thought, that is, those who look at the material/economic aspect of development, those who focus on the moral and spiritual dimensions, those who look at the environmental aspect, and those who talk about the participatory aspect of development.

Each member understands development in his or her own way, but when we put the various views together we have a general understanding of each community. However, it can be argued that they do not have a clear - cut systematized and comprehensive understanding of development because the various schools of thought do not mention the ultimate goal of development which is human wellbeing and flourishing. Though this may be due to lack of adequate knowledge, it is safe to say that the SCCs have an idea of what development is about, or what can be identified as development work. That is why they could recognize development as part of the mission of the church. Hence, the lack of a single comprehensive definition of development is complimented by the recognition of the Church's engagement in development work.

That notwithstanding, one can also argue that there is a connection between the environment and human wellbeing. In other words, keeping the environment clean will benefit the human person and will contribute to his/her wellbeing. Environmental care and protection is both a civic and moral duty having a direct impact on human life and wellbeing. Indiscriminate burning of farmlands, hills and grazing fields is a common phenomenon in the area where I carried out my research, and in the North West Region of Cameroon as a whole. Other common phenomena include indiscriminate throwing away of plastic wastes (bottles, bags, shoes), dumping of metal wastes and things such as computers, mobile phones, radios, and refrigerators. These practices have an adverse effect on the soil fertility and productivity, as well as on the food security of the local people. This highlights the idea of environmental degradation and damage which constitute some of the key issues in development thinking.

Hence, to view development as moral change is relevant and logical since it points out the damaging effect of human activities on the environment. It becomes a moral and ethical issue. Such a view highlights the interplay between the moral, ethical, and ecological values. Haynes (2007:132) corroborates this point when he talks about environmental sustainability and religious traditions. He notes that

> . . . when environmental damage is clearly the result of discernible human influence then the issue moves beyond the realm of scientific and policy issues and enters the domain of moral and ethical concerns; and . . . they are very often informed by religious traditions. Each of the four religious traditions focused upon in this book feature teachings that centrally reflect the idea that environmental sustainability is a crucial priority for each, highlighting the interaction of moral, ethical and ecological values.

Malaria is one of the main causes of mortality in sub Saharan Africa. This is due partly to poor, filthy environments with dirty stagnant water, a favorable breeding place for mosquitoes

that cause malaria. Another issue is about food sold along the streets besides dirty gutters, beer parlors and restaurants with dirty surroundings. This affects the food quality and causes diseases such as diarrhea, dysentery, typhoid, and cholera. Thus, there is a connection between the environment and health which is a fundamental element to human flourishing and wellbeing.[20]

What about morality and spirituality, what connection do they have with development? Do they play a role in development? Should they be considered important aspects of development? It can be argued that, in a way, talking about moral change and spiritual growth has some relevance to development. This can be seen if we consider some of the obstacles to development in developing and poor countries; in other words, what hinders development? Bribery and corruption, embezzlement, mismanagement, laziness, bad governance, lack of opportunities to youths, mentality/culture, attitude towards work and environment (human activity) are some of the obstacles to development. To pave the way for development, therefore, requires the removal of these obstacles which in turn requires a change of behavior and character, in other words, moral growth.

Spirituality has something to do with development. This argument is in consonant with the teaching of the Catholic Church as reflected by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis.* As we saw in chapter 4 which deals with the theoretical framework, he talked about the spiritual and moral dimensions of development. He argued that openness to the transcendent is a fundamental condition to authentic human development. This explains why in developing countries, despite their poverty, the poor consider good relationship with the transcendent as an important factor in their wellbeing. It gives meaning to their lives, complements other aspects of human flourishing, and gives them a sense of serenity. To this effect, Haynes (2007:55), talking about a coping mechanism among poor religious practitioners, has observed that

> . . . adherence to religious practices can complement other intrinsically valued aspects of human flourishing, such as: safety, health, knowledge, meaningful work and play, self-direction, culture and so on. A key value of religious faith in this context is that it can facilitate achievement of a degree of serenity, providing a meaning to life that would otherwise be absent or lessened. In this way, even when someone is very poor, lacking conventionally recognized development goods to a considerable extent, religion can comprise a hugely important – yet difficult to quantify – dimension of

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[20] . For more information on this topic, see Cynthia Moe-Lobeda et al., "Moral power at the religion-development-environment nexus", in Matthew Clarke, ed., 2013:206-209, 216, *Handbook of Research on Development and Religion,* Edward Edgar Publishing Limited, Cheltenham, UK.

human well – that contributes significantly directly to a person's thriving and/or contentedness (Haynes, 2007:55).

Furthermore, paraphrasing Narayan et al., and based on the findings of the World Bank's research on well-being, Haynes demonstrates how religion helps many poor people in the developing world to cope with poverty or a lowly material position:

> For example, the recent Voices of the Poor study by the World Bank, which collected notions of well-being expressed by around 60,000 people in 60 countries, who considered themselves poor and were also judged to be poverty-stricken by their community, discovered that 'harmony' with transcendent matters (such as, a spiritual life and religious observance) was often judged to be a factor in well-being (Haynes, 2007:55).

According to him, these views explain why many poor people in developing countries deem it important to belong to a religion. They equally give a clue of the importance that religion can play in development (Haynes, 2007:55-56).

6.2. Development theory and the understanding of SCCs: a comparison?

Looking at the SCCs' perception of development, we see that it bears some similarity with the mainstream development theories in many ways, for example, the economic growth theory, the human development and environmental approaches. As I said above, some members of SCCs see development from the material perspective, that is, construction of roads, acquisition of wealth, and building of markets. This is similar to the economic growth theory which equates development with economic growth. That means, development is measured according to the income per head of the population, in other words, in terms of economic growth by means of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and Gross National Product (GNP) per capital (Potter in Desai and Potter, eds., 2014:56).

The SCCs understanding of development is in line with the conventional from the perspectives of participatory development, agents of development, and what ought to be the focus of development. This is reflected in the alternative approaches, specifically the basic needs and the environmental theories.

6.2.1. Human Development Paradigm.

In chapter four, we saw that there are three main models under the human development approach: 1) the basic needs which shifted the development agenda from a material dimension to the flourishing of individual human beings. In this case, the priority of development should be the satisfaction of the basic needs of human beings such as food, shelter, clothing, access to clean drinking water, health care service, sanitation, education, and the need to participate in

political and decision-making processes that affect people's lives; 2) the capabilities and freedom-centered model which envisions human development as giving people opportunities to develop their capabilities, abilities, talents and potentials so that they can enjoy the freedom of being the primary agents of their own development; and 3) the model of enlarging people's choice that sees development as a process of enlarging people's choices in order to enable them live a long and healthy life, to be educated and to enjoy a decent standard of living, political freedom, human rights and self-respect.

From the activities of SCCs and based on our findings, we can say that the SCCs also follow a similar approach in their involvement in development: in other words, their approach is human-centered. For example, they are also concerned with the basic needs of human beings as reflected in the finance, education, health, social welfare, women's affairs, and justice and peace commissions. Through these commissions, they are directly engaged in development process and practice, and from this perspective they are equally involved in the pursuit of the UN Millennium Development Goals: eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, reduction of child mortality, improvement of maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, and to develop a global partnership for development (Haynes, 2007:10). [21]

As I said earlier, SCCs are the Church in the neighborhood, they are agents of evangelization amongst other agents like the laity, catechists, the family, the youth, religious men and women, seminarians, deacons, priests, and bishops (*Ecclesia in Africa,* Nos. 89 – 98). They are the means through which the Church as Family can reach its full potential (*Ecclesia in Africa,* No. 89). From my findings, I saw that the Church is involved and should be involved in development. There are many primary schools, secondary comprehensive and technical schools, and now a university college for health sciences in the Diocese of Kumbo in the North West Region of Cameroon. These provide opportunities for the youth to acquire knowledge, develop their skills and capabilities, realize their potentials, and pursue a career. Hence, there is proximity of educational facilities. The outcome of this is a high increase in the level of scholarisation, and a significant contribution to the achievement of universal primary education.

The Shisong Hospital run by the Tertiary Sisters of St Francis at Shisong, the many health centers and health posts , as well as the BEPHA scheme provide good quality health

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[21] . cf. Robert B. Potter, "Measuring Development: From GDP to the HDI and wider approaches", in Vandana Desai and Robert B. Potter, eds., 2014:58-59, *The Companion to Development Studies,*Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, London, UK.

services and facilities to the local populace at short distances. The Church embarked on a vigorous and aggressive fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic through seminars, workshops, sensitization talks and preaching at various levels such as schools, parishes, Small Christian Communities, families, youth movements, and prayer groups. This has remarkably reduced the rate of infection and the spread of the disease. Furthermore, the health services that the Church provides has improved maternal health and reduced child mortality. Good health ensures a long and healthy life, a decent standard of living, as well as a sense of satisfaction and a feeling of fulfillment. The absence or lack of good health incapacitates a person and prevents him/her from carrying on with activities and exploring other avenues that could improve his/her quality of life.

The health services also provide employment opportunities for young people who occupy various positions ranging from ward attendants and cleaners, resource persons and facilitators, liaison agents, relations officers, human resource managers, cashiers, nurses, to doctors. The BEPHA scheme makes it possible for patients who are registered members to afford treatment at very affordable prices with the added advantage of undergoing a surgical operation once a year. This is an eloquent and more practical way of tackling the problem of poverty and improving upon the wellbeing of the people many of who could not even pay a consultation fee or buy drugs/medication for their illnesses. This approach to poverty and wellbeing constitutes one of the cornerstones of the human development approach rooted in the works of Amartya Sen (Deneulin et al., 2009:45).

Poverty is one of the major obstacles to human development, and it is highly responsible for social concerns such as idleness, bribery and corruption, embezzlement, prostitution, banditry, drug addiction, school drop-out, and insecurity. The provision of employment and health care assistance, therefore, go a long way to help curb these problems.

The justice and peace commission of the SCCs deals with issues of human rights and dignity, justice and peace, and democracy which are component elements of the understanding of human development according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). For the Catholic Church, human rights are "one of the most significant attempts to respond effectively to the demands of human dignity (*Compendium,* paragraph 152).

From the above points therefore, it is evident that the end of development from the perspective of SCCs is similar to the one of the mainstream perspective on human development. In other words, the end of development is to provide opportunities for people so that they can be educated, healthy, creative, able to participate in community life, enjoy the

environment, and make decisions about their lives. Deneulin expresses the same point in a more succinct and broad manner:

> The end of development is to provide opportunities for people to reach their potential as human beings: to be educated, to be healthy, to be creative, to participate in the life of the community, to engage in relationships, to live in a peaceful environment, to enjoy nature, to express themselves, to make decisions about their lives, and so on.[22]

6.2.2. Environmental Approach (Relationship between environment and Development).

From my findings, I realized that the SCCs consider environmental care and protection not only as an element of development but also as part of the mission of the Church. The members acknowledged the adverse effects of droughts on the lives of humans, and the need to plant trees as a concrete measure of tackling the problem of desertification and loss of environmental resources; they also confirmed the damaging effects of improper disposal of garbage to the farms – soil infertility and loss of biodiversity. These are environmental concerns which correspond to the UN millennium development goal of ensuring environmental sustainability (Hopper, 2012:216).

Cynthia Moe-Lobeda and Frederica Helmiere have argued that human wellbeing depends on ecological wellbeing because human beings cannot live and flourish if the natural environment or ecosystem is destroyed and nature in turn fails to provide essential goods and services. Environmental destruction caused by human beings is a consequence of how they relate to their environments. Hence, ecological wellbeing depends to a great extent on how humans treat their environment. [23]

The respect for human life implies the respect for God's creation by using the environment in a responsible and sustainable way. We are stewards of the environment and will render an account of our stewardship. Hence, care for the environment is a requirement of our faith as well as a moral duty (cf. *Compendium,* paragraph 466). Human beings need to protect people and the planet which is a resource and home for humanity. In this respect, the Church affirms that

> The Magisterium underscores human responsibility for the preservation of a sound and healthy environment for all. "If humanity today succeeds in combining the new scientific capacities with a strong ethical dimension, it will certainly be able to promote the environment

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[22] . Severine Deneulin, "Christianity and International Development", in Matthew Clarke, ed. 2013:58, *Handbook of Research on Development and Religion,* Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd., Cheltenham, UK; see also Severine Deneulin et al., 2009:45, *Religion in Development: Rewriting the Secular Script,* Zed Books Ltd., London.

[23] .Moe-Lobeda et al., "Moral power at the religion-development-environment nexus", in Matthew Clarke, ed., 2013:206-7, 216, *Handbook of Research on Development and Religion,* Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd., Cheltenham, UK.

as a home and a resource for men and for all men, and will be able to eliminate the causes of pollution and to guarantee adequate conditions for hygiene and health for small groups as well as for vast human settlements (John Paul II, in the *Compendium,* paragraph 465).

From the Christian understanding of environment it therefore follows that nature cannot be reduced to a mere object to be manipulated and exploited by humankind with impunity as s/he wishes and according to his/her economic needs (*Compendium,* paragraph 466). Thus the objective of economic programs on development should not only be to maximize profits but to respect the integrity of nature as well. To this effect, the Church writes

An economy respectful of the environment will not have the maximization of profits as its only objective, because environmental protection cannot be assured solely on the basis of financial calculations of costs and benefits. The environment is one of those goods that cannot be adequately safeguarded or promoted by market forces (*Compendium,* paragraph 470).

However, despite the fact that SCCs are conscious of the relationship between the environment and development much still needs to be done especially in the area of environmental protection as evident from concrete and practical examples. For example, the burning of the farms and bushes is a phenomenon common to both farmers and hunters. Nearly all the farmers in the SCCs and in the villages of the region do burn their farms before the planting season. The hunters burn the bushes and forest as a hunting strategy for economic reasons and to meet the basic need of food. Other people fell trees for artisan work, fuel, farming, settlement and building construction without a corresponding replacement by reforestation. Many species of animals have disappeared. These people do not consider their activities as a threat to, and destruction of the ecosystem despite the devastating impact. For example, on the soil fertility and biodiversity, on the ozone layer, on the water table, on desertification and on global warming.

Some brooks, wetlands and streams have tried up completely and the survival of the few remaining ones is not guaranteed. Many villages are experiencing acute water crisis , for example, in Nkar, Jakiri and Kimbo in the Bui Division of the North West Region. To a great extent, this is a consequence of the above mentioned human activities. Water is an absolute necessity of life on which human beings depend for their survival and wellbeing. Water crisis is a crisis of development, a crisis that renders people poor and threatens their very dignity and existence.

From this perspective, it can be argued that SCCs do not promote development work since they fail to protect the environment as a collective good. It contradicts the idea of

sustainable development and what John Paul II says about the responsibility to protect the environment as a common good:

> Forests help maintain the essential natural balance for life. Their destruction also through the inconsiderate and malicious setting of fires accelerates the process of desertification with risky consequences for water reserves and compromises the lives of many indigenous peoples and the wellbeing of future generations. All individuals as well as institutional subjects must feel the commitment to protect the heritage of forests and, where necessary, promote adequate programs of reforestation (John Paul II, in *Compendium,* paragraph 466).

6.2.3. Participatory Development.

When SCCs envisage development as taking up responsibility in the Church and the community they reflect the idea of participatory development. As we saw from the activities of SCCs, and as testified by their members, the local people are involved at the grassroots; they identify what needs to be done, and decide on a plan of action based on their resources. This means that the local people are involved in the development process and have a say in the decisions that affect their lives. In this way we can say that they are empowered. Talking about participatory development, Hopper says that though there are numerous conceptions and variations it is possible to identify certain common themes, for example, "an emphasis upon localism, self-determination, grassroots activity, empowerment and popular agency" (Hopper, 2012:160). He has observed that contemporary development debates hinge on participation and representation. They raise issues about "power, self-determination, empowerment and the purpose of development" (Hopper, 2012:159). Furthermore, he says that

> … participatory development entails involving local peoples at all stages in the development process, including identifying what needs to be done and the policies that need to be formulated, so that they have a greater say in the decisions that affect their lives (Hopper, 2012:160).

According to the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (2004)*,* men and women must work together to develop the community in which they live with the purpose of attaining the common good. It is also necessary for human beings living in different societies to create relationships of solidarity, communication and cooperation for the service of humankind and the common good (*Compendium,* paragraph 150). This can be done through participation which takes place within the framework of solidarity. Everyone is called to contribute, either directly or through representation, to the cultural, economic, political and social life of his/her civil community. Consequently, participation is a duty to be fulfilled by everyone, with responsibility and with a view to the common good. It is absolutely necessary to encourage

the participation above all of the poor, vulnerable, marginalized, or the disadvantaged (*Compendium,* paragraph 189). This will enhance their empowerment.

The participatory approach to development is perceived as bottom-up (development from below) in contrast to top-down (development from the top) that was characteristic of conventional approaches or the old paradigm for development, for example, the imperialist and capitalist development. Participatory development originated from what was termed 'another development' with emphasis on "self-reliance, endogenous or internal growth, and being in harmony with the environment" (Potter et al in Hopper, 2012:161). In turn, another development which later on became known as alternative development, paved the way for "development from below" (Chambers in Hopper, 2012:161) or bottom-up strategies (Stöhr and Taylor in Hopper, 2012:161), and the Basic Needs Approach (BNA) (Hopper, 2012:161).

From the participatory perspective, it is evident that SCCs are involved in development process at the grassroots and community level. There is close cooperation which can lead to project effectiveness and collaborative planning. In this vein, Desai argues that since "people themselves know best what they need, what they want and what they can afford, only close cooperation between project implementers and the community can lead to project effectiveness"(Desai in Hopper, 2012:160).

Since SCCs provide the framework for local and individual participation, a greater investment in development can be guaranteed, and the people are likely to be committed. There is psychological satisfaction due to active engagement, and this can enhance a feeling of self-esteem. In this regard Hopper says

> Furthermore, local and individual participation can help to ensure that people have a greater stake or investment in development, and in turn they are likely to have greater commitment to it. In addition, there is the psychological satisfaction that comes from active engagement and in shaping one's destiny, which potentially can enhance our feelings of self-worth and self-esteem (Hopper, paraphrasing Rowlands, 2012:161).

Participatory development also takes advantage of local initiatives, insights and expertise including its cheap labor. Hence, it is economical.

However, notwithstanding the above arguments, participatory approach to development has its criticisms and shortcomings. For that reason, participation in the SCCs may encounter issues such as mismanagement, lack of technical knowhow, narrow-mindedness, and the inability to tackle the causes of underdevelopment that affect the lives of the poor. For example, in the event of a portable water project, SCCs can hardly provide the technical input of feasibility studies, plan, project estimate, management and realization.

Here, the assistance of development professionals is required. These are some of the problems that characterize development from below. As Hopper says

> The emphasis upon the local within participatory development should not disguise the problem that can exist at this level, including mismanagement, lack of technical competence, parochialism and even corruption. Furthermore, the focus upon the local will not address the wider structural and institutional causes of underdevelopment that profoundly affect the lives of the poor and need to be tackled on a global scale (Hopper, 2012:163-64).

Against this backdrop, and in a similar context, David Nyamwaya has argued that

> while in theory communities are supposed to play a leading role in the health-development process, the process is still largely controlled by government and NGO development 'experts' who do not allow communities to play major roles. 'Development from below' therefore remains at the level of rhetoric because there is an 'implicit assumption that communities can only develop once they have assimilated specialized technical and material inputs from the outside' (Nyamwaya in Hopper, 2012:164).

Secondly, there is disagreement over the level at which efforts should be made to ensure empowerment. For example, should efforts be concentrated on empowering communities or whole societies? Or, perhaps the focus should be on particular groups of people that are often marginalized in societies, like women and the poor (Cleaver in Hopper, 2012:165)?

Furthermore, there are conflicting views over what types of development interventions are required to achieve empowerment. In this regard, Hopper asks certain fundamental questions. For example, how should empowerment be more likely attained? Is it through Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) actively engaged in the development process or through grassroots organizations? Should empowerment be based on constructing democratic institutions and introducing certain rights in societies (Hopper, 2012:165)?

As mentioned above, the *Compendium of the Church* (paragraph 189) made it clear that empowerment absolutely necessitates local involvement in development, especially the involvement of the disadvantaged and less privileged. What it said above holds good here, in other words, that it is the duty of everyone to work for the common good by contributing to the social, cultural, economic and political life of the community in which s/he lives. And the surest way to contribute is through participation.

However, Cooke and Kothari have argued that involvement does not necessarily lead to empowerment because it is limited in nature and therefore questions the type of empowerment that participation can bring about:

> . . . involvement does not necessarily lead to empowerment because participatory approaches often only encourage or allow for limited popular participation . . . In turn, this raises doubts

about the type of empowerment that can be achieved through participatory development (Cooke and Kothari in Hopper, 2012:165).

Cheater carries forward the argument by contending that "participation in project decision-making does not address the issue of whether or not there is a need for wider structural change. . ." (Cheater in Hopper, 2012:165). To resolve this argument we need to turn to the goal of participation.

6.2.4. The Goal of Participation

It is widely acknowledged among many writers that the goal of participation is the transformation of the society and its power structures instead of empowerment. This is brought about through participatory governance. In the same vein, Hopper has noted that

> . . . the goal of participation is increasingly defined as transformation or social transformation rather than empowerment. More specifically, a growing number of writers are now examining participation as a means of transforming existing power structures (e.g., Hickey and Mohan 2004). In this vein, participation is discussed in relation to citizenship, democratic governance and direct popular involvement, rather than just local involvement in community projects (Gaventa 2004). In other words, transformation is pursued through participatory governance (Hopper, 2012:165-166).

In contrast, Frances Cleaver maintains that there is more to transformation than institutional change. That means, it necessitates the transformation of everyday life in order to eradicate the burdens of poverty such as unemployment and under-nutrition. Paraphrasing him, Hopper says

> . . . transformation must mean more than institutional design. Instead, it must also entail the transformation of everyday life so that the burdens of poverty, such as unemployment and under-nutrition, are lifted . . . it is difficult for individuals to operate as active citizens when they are living at subsistent level (Cleaver in Hopper, 2012:166).

Whatever the type of transformation we are talking about, I would like to point out that transformation occurs and can be pursued at different levels and in different contexts. I do not see a major difference between Hopper's position and that of Cleaver: in other words, between social transformation (institutional change) and the transformation of everyday life. They have a cause-effect relationship: to a considerable extent, the problem of poverty in Sub Saharan Africa, for example, is largely due to economic, political, social, and cultural structures. Hence, when you change such structures you transform everyday life. A good democratic government put in place will ensure employment and food security.

SCCs capture the goal of participation when they see development as moral change, or change in behavior and character. For any development to take place human beings need to be

transformed, that is, to change not only their perceptions and mentalities, but their attitudes towards each other and towards the environment as well; they need some ethics, moral values or guiding principles in relation to citizenship and democratic governance. Else, there will be no justice, respect for human rights, and no peace. Without moral values such as justice, truth, love, freedom, human rights, human dignity, respect, solidarity, commitment, integrity, transparency, equal distribution, and the common good, transformation truly speaking will not be possible whether as a political project that focuses upon institutional change, or as a socio-economic undertaking. In this vein, Scott M. Thomas has strongly argued in favor of the necessary partnership between character and social and economic change. In other words, for development to occur social and economic change need to go hand in hand with moral basis of the society. He has also pointed out the consequences of its absence such as political instability, civil war, revolution, terrorism and religious extremism. To add more flesh to the skeleton, he says:

> It is now more widely recognized that successful development, no matter how it is defined, can only occur if social and economic change corresponds with the moral basis of society. When this does not happen, and a country makes what Denis Goulet once called the 'cruel choice' for bread over dignity, development over authority, . . ., it can not only contribute to the kind of policies . . . such as problems of elitism, participation, local ownership of development programs . . . and the failure of foreign-funded NGOs to connect with the grassroots elements of a country's civil society. It can also contribute to political instability, civil war, revolution – and . . . to terrorism and religious extremism (Nash:1980). Clearly, character – an elusive quality – but also empowerment and participation must go together if there is to be long-term political stability, democracy and development in poor countries (Scott in Berma Klein Goldewijk, ed., 2007:70-71).

It is good to note that the key issue here is to chart a more holistic understanding of development, and the concept of authentic human development according to the social teachings of the Catholic Church. The Church and other writers like Paulo Freire and Denis Goulet try to connect culture, religion, and spirituality to both the meaning and methodology of development.[24]

According to the social teachings of the Catholic Church, participation in community life is not only a great aspiration of citizens but it is also a pillar of democratic government and ensures the permanence of a democratic system:

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[24] Cf. Wilber and Jameson, et al. in Scott M. Thomas, "How Shall We Live Then? Rethinking Religion, Politics and Communities in an Age of Global Terrorism", in Berma Klein Goldewijk, ed., *Religion, International Relations and Development Cooperation,* Wageningen Academic Publishers, Wageningen, The Netherlands,2007:70.

> Participation in community life is not only one of the greatest aspirations of the citizen, called to exercise freely and responsibly his civic role with and for others, but is also one of the pillars of all democratic orders and one of the major guarantees of the permanence of democratic system. . . It is therefore clearly evident that every democracy must be participative (*Compendium,* paragraph 190).

However, despite the similarities between the SCCs' perspective and the secular and conventional perspective on human development, there is a fundamental difference in terms of the understanding of human development, the motivation of human development, the conditions necessary for human development, and the ultimate goal of human development or what ought to be the focus of development. These have to do with the fundamental questions of the **what, why,** and **how** of human development, in other words, the pedagogy and methodology of human development. This brings to focus the conflicting worldviews on development between the secular and the Christian perspectives that we are now going to turn to.

6.2.4. Integral Human Development: Material and Spiritual?

Should the Church be involved in development process and practice? It is good to note that international development policies as well as conventional development theories were devoid of concern for spiritual issues (Haynes, 2007:111). For example, the human development and capability approach of the UNDP made no explicit reference to religion (Deneulin et al., 2009:45). However, there has been a growing realization that the faith dimension should be added to development work. According to MolefeTsele, in a study on poverty in the twenty-first century, the World Bank debated on the measurement and definition of poverty. There was a unanimous agreement among economists, cultural anthropologists, and sociologists that the measurement and definition of poverty would be inadequate if it does not include the religious dimension. This theoretical shift is very significant because it legitimizes the role of the Church in development that has been commercialized and professionalized, and thus has ceased to be about people and become a business of targets and measurable outcomes.[25]

Furthermore, Tsele argues that no matter the material advancement of a country, such a progress cannot pass for development without the dimensions of religious experience and values. This implies that there is more to development than material progress: it is about the balanced development of a country's people. For this reason, the churches need to save

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[25] . MolefeTsele, "The Role of the Church: Faith in Development", in DerykeBelshaw et al. eds., 2001:210 -211, *Faith in Development: Partnership between the World Bank and the Churches of Africa,* Regnum Books International, Oxford, UK.

development from its captivity by professionals.[26] What then is the added value generated by the churches? What will be missing if they are not players in development? [27] What is the driving force of their motivation? In the paragraphs that follow, I shall answer these questions within the context of SCCs by underscoring the redefinition of the content and goal of human development.

For the Christians, the human being finds ultimate fulfillment in God. Since the human person has many aspects and dimensions of life (social, economic, cultural, political, and spiritual), the pursuit of social and economic well-being is necessary to human development, but not sufficient. Development is not an end in itself but a means to an end. Thus, the end of economic and social development should be the development of each and the whole person. In the Christian tradition a person becomes more and more human when s/he is closer to God. In the same vein Deneulin says

> Christians affirm that the human being finds ultimate fulfillment in God. The pursuit of social and economic well-being is essential to human development, but not sufficient . . . economic and social development should have the development of each and the *whole* person as its end. Christians believe that humans become more human when they are closer to God (Deneulin, in Clarke, ed., 2013:58).

This means that human development is incomplete without spiritual considerations. This reality is reflected in the teaching of the Catholic Church on integral human development, that is, "the development of every person and of the whole person, especially of the poorest and most neglected in the community" (*Ecclesia in Africa,* No. 68; see also *Compendium,* paragraph 98).

What about the human development perspective? Is it not also opened to the transcendental or spiritual dimension of life, since respect for human rights entails respect for freedom of religion?[28] However, when the Church affirms that human beings find their ultimate fulfillment in God, her perspective does not just add another dimension to development alongside other dimensions. Rather, it introduces a different anthropology that brings about a different and deeper understanding of the meaning of development. Arguing along the same line, Deneulin says

> However, by affirming that humans find their ultimate fulfillment in God, a Christian perspective does much more than adding another dimension to development alongside the social, economic, cultural or political dimensions. It introduces a different anthropology that

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[26] . *Ibid.,*p. 211.
[27] . *Ibid., p.209.*
[28] . See Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

leads to a different understanding of the very concept and meaning of development (Deneulin, in Clarke, ed., 2013:58).

According to the Catholic understanding, the spiritual and material dimensions of life are inseparable. Salvation or eternal life is the end of human endeavors and progress. As Benedict XVI contends, development needs God; else it will be entrusted solely to man who may be tempted to think that he can bring about his own salvation, but ends up promoting a dehumanized form of development:

> Without the perspective of eternal life, human progress in this world is denied breathing space. . . . Institutions by themselves are not enough. . . . Development requires a transcendent vision of the person, it needs God: without him, development is either denied, or entrusted exclusively to man, who fails into the trap of thinking he can bring about his own salvation, and ends up promoting a dehumanized form of development.[29]

Furthermore, Benedict XVI points out the intimate link between the issue of development and the understanding of the human soul. The human being is a unity of body and soul, and the transformation of the material world is bound up with moral transformation.[30] He reiterates the point that development must include both material and spiritual growth, since the human person, who is body and soul, is destined for eternal life. He develops when he is in dialogue with God. Holistic development is only possible when people's spiritual and moral welfare is taken into account:

> The question of development is closely bound up with our understanding of the human soul. . . . Development must include not just material growth but also spiritual growth, since the human person is a 'unity of body and soul', born of God's creative love and destined for eternal life. The human being develops . . . when he enters into dialogue with himself and his Creator. . . . There cannot be holistic development and universal common good unless people's spiritual and moral welfare is taken into account, considered in their totally as body and soul.[31]

Human beings are called to be in communion with each other and with God. Their communion with each other is reflected in solidarity and responsibility. Deneulin, paraphrasing Sen, has observed that the conception of the human person as reaching fulfillment in God introduces a more integral or wholesome understanding of human development. According to the human development theory, the good of each human being is

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[29] . Pope Benedict XVI, 2009, *Caritas in Veritate*, paragraph 11.

[30] . Pope Benedict XVI, paraphrased in Deneulin, "Christianity and International Development", in Matthew Clarke, ed., 2013:61-62, *Handbook of Research on Development and Religion,* Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd., Cheltenham, UK.

[31] . Pope Benedict XVI, 2009, *Caritas in Veritate,* paragraph 76.

"determined by a process of public reasoning and democratic deliberation". While the end of development is "to enable people to live a life they have reason to value, to promote valuable freedoms. . . ." In contrast, for the Church solidarity and responsibility are important values in development. The human good consists in sharing in the divine life; and human freedom exercised in reasoning must take into consideration the common good; it is in view of reflecting God's glory. Freedom is to be exercised with responsibility (Deneulin, in Clarke, ed., 2013:60-61). In this regard, John Paul II says that solidarity and freedom make development genuine:

> In order to be genuine, development must be achieved within the framework of solidarity and freedom, without ever sacrificing either of them under whatever pretext (John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis,* paragraph 33).

The inseparability of the material from the spiritual dimension of life, and the fact that the human being is a composite of body and soul, bring out the fundamental difference between the SCCs and the conventional perspective on development.

The Catholic Church puts an accent on human development. She cannot be indifferent to people's needs and aspirations, nor should she neglect the fundamental duty of human charity. She has always stressed the duty to promote the growth of economic, cultural, social and spiritual well-being of peoples especially the poor.[32] From this stand point development is integral, it is about people and values.

6.3. Development, Mission of the Church?

As we saw in the section on motivation, church leaders had different approaches to developmental concerns leaving the Christians in a state of confusion as to whether development is a mission of the church. Is it not her mission to save people for God's kingdom? Some argue that her mission is to preach the Word of God and nothing more. Granted that it is not always clear in the minds of both some laity and clergy, this attitude is countered by the perception of SCCs and by official Church statements and pronouncements that strongly affirm that human, economic and social development is not alien to the Church's understanding of mission.

As Julius Oladipo points out, the Church is a legitimate player in development, and to define her role requires defining the goal and content of development, as well as an

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[32] . Cf. see Pope Paul VI, quoted by MolefeTsele, "The Role of the Christian Faith in Development", in DerykeBelshaw, et al, eds., 2001:203, *Faith in Development: Partnership between the World Bank and the Churches of Africa,* Regnum Books International, Oxford, UK.

understanding of the mission of the Church.[33] Development is part of the church's mission:
integral human development is at the heart of evangelization; there is a profound link between
evangelization and human advancement, and between development and liberation. The person
to be evangelized does not live in a vacuum or cut off from social and economic concerns.
Redemption deals with the fight against injustice and the restoration of justice. John Paul II
throws more light on development as a mission of the Church in the following words

> Integral human development . . . is at the very heart of evangelization. "Between
> evangelization and human advancement – development and liberation – there are in fact
> profound links. These include links of an anthropological order, because the man who is to be
> evangelized is not an abstract being but is subject to social and economic questions. They also
> include links in the theological order, since one cannot dissociate the plan of creation from the
> plan of redemption. The latter plan touches the very concrete situations of injustice to be
> combated and of justice to be restored. They include links of the eminently evangelical order,
> which is that of charity: how in fact can one proclaim the new commandment of love without
> promoting in justice and peace the true, authentic advancement of man?"[34]

Development is the work of God; it is part of God's mission to the world, hence to be
involved in development work is to take part in God's work.[35] This was translated through the
mission of Jesus Christ, sent to accomplish God's mission. At the beginning of his public
ministry, Jesus spelt out the roadmap of his mission:

> The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor.
> He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free
> the oppressed and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people (Luke
> 4:18-19; cf. Isaiah 61:1-2)

Jesus was thus sent to relieve human misery and combat every kind of neglect; to liberate
humanity from sickness, disease, structures of sin and what dehumanizes mankind. This
constitutes the basis for the Church's engagement in development. In her evangelizing
mission, therefore, the Church could not neglect the importance of contemporary issues such
as justice, liberation, development and peace in the world. The liberation that she proclaims in
her mission cannot be limited to the dimension of economic, social, political or cultural life
only. Rather, it envisages the whole person in all his aspect including his openness to the
transcendent or divine Absolute – God (John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa,* No. 68).

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[33] . Julius Oladipo, "The Role of the Church in Poverty alleviation in Africa", in DerykeBelshaw et al. eds.,
2001:222, *Faith in Development: Partnership between the World Bank and the Churches of Africa,* Regnum
Books International, Oxford, UK.
[34] . John Paul II, 1995, *Ecclesia in Africa,* No. 68.
[35] . MolefeTsele, "The Role of the Christian Faith in Development", in DerykeBelshaw et al., eds., 2001:214-
215, *Faith in Development: Partnership between the World Bank and the Churches of Africa,* Regnum Books
International, Oxford, UK.

6.4. Development work, Option for the Poor?

As we saw earlier, a preferential option for the poor is one of the major themes of the social teachings of the Catholic Church; it lies at the core of Liberation Theology. This brings out yet another fundamental difference between the SCCs and the conventional perspective on development: human actions are marked by sin. Human beings might use their freedom in a selfish manner by refusing to share what they have with those in need, that is, against the principle of the common good, and against God. That is why the Church's perspective on development takes into account the reality of sin which has a direct link with the reality of injustice and material poverty. They are the result of sin. (cf. Deneulin, in Clarke, ed., 2013:61 - 62).

Liberation theology talked about structures of sin in oppressive regimes, in human exploitation, in slavery, racism and other forms of discrimination. Situations of injustice and exploitation are rooted in sin. In the same light Gustavo Gutierrez writes:

> Sin is evident in oppressive structures, in the exploitation of humans by humans, in the domination and slavery of peoples, races and social classes. Sin appears, therefore, as the fundamental alienation, the root of situations of injustice and exploitation (Gutierrez, quoted by Deneulin, in Clarke, ed., 2013:62).

The many sinful actions of individual people create a structure of sin which influences the behavior of individuals. An economic structure of sin is created when many individuals pay more attention to the maximum profit that can be made from their investment than to the wellbeing of workers. That means that profit-making is given priority over the wellbeing of workers. This leads to the exploitation of workers. In connection to this, Deneulin writes:

> The numerous sinful actions of individual human beings create a structure of sin, which in turn influences the behavior of individuals. When numerous individuals are motivated by the prospect of maximum profit and returns on their capital investment and not the well-being of workers, this creates an economic structure in which the logic of profit-making has priority over the well-being of workers, often leading to their exploitation for the sake of maximum profit-making. The sinful actions of individuals have created a structure of sin, which then imposes a sinful behavior on economic actors who support the structure. (Deneulin, in Clarke, ed., 2013:62).

John Paul II takes up the notion of structural sin and reiterates that structures of sin are rooted in personal sin and are always "linked to the concrete acts of the individuals who introduce these structures, consolidate them and make them difficult to remove" (John Paul II,*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis,* paragraph 36).

For the SCCs's perspective on development, human action is interconnected: the acts of some people greatly affect the lives of others as, for example, in the case of environmental degradation. One of my informants mentioned that some people dispose their refuse in other's farms and thus destroy them. This often leads to friction and strain relationship between neighbours.

However, development is not reduced to the material project of changing structures; as I said earlier, it is integral. This implies that the changing or the establishment of structures to make it possible for people to live well has to be accompanied by moral transformation, that is, a change of heart. In this sense, development is also about people being more like Jesus Christ, or imitating him. In their development work therefore, the Christians do not rely on any privilege or power, but rather on Christ to whom authentic integral human development must be directed (Benedict XVI, 2009, *Caritas in Veritate,* paragraph 18). Furthermore, development cannot be reduced to a man-made enterprise. It is also seen as a journey of conversion, of coming back to God (Deneulin, in Clarke, ed., 2013:63).

6.5. Influence of Worldviews on SCCs' Perspectives on Development.

They focus more on the idea of salvation in the hereafter to the detriment of the now. Basic needs and other conditions necessary for human wellbeing and survival in the now are unjustifiably neglected. This is unavoidably and conspicuously evident in, for example, the poor situation and low standards of living of catechists, cooks, and primary school teachers. Majority of the catechists who have faithfully and assiduously worked for at least 15 and at most 40 − 50 years have never earned more than 8 − 10 USD per month in salary. They are not entitled to a leave, and go on retirement without social security like pension. In most convents, girls work for at least ten hours a day without remuneration save that they do not pay for food and lodging.

The scenario of primary school teachers is equally pathetic and worrying. Not long ago, their salaries were sliced by more than 50%. For example, those who were earning about 125 USD were now earning about 16 USD per month. The situation was further compounded by the fact that the salaries were very irregular to the extent that teachers went without salaries for at least 12 months. Yet, they had to continue their job with empty stomachs and, for some, making long distant treks. When they wanted to strike, they were told by church authority that it is illegal and, that teaching is a vocation, hence they should not focus so much on their remuneration; rather they should be ready to make sacrifices.

This is a consequence of the influence of religious worldview: the above mentioned categories of people are told that their work is a vocation; they are rendering services to God who in turn will compensate them in the hereafter. They are exhorted and conditioned to embrace poverty for, blessed are the poor in spirit, they shall inherit the Kingdom of God (cf. Matthew 5:3); they are compelled to live an austere, frugal life. These are people who need to educate their children, feed and clothe them, provide them with a good, decent shelter and healthcare service. This is impossible given their meager salaries. How can we talk about integral human development when, in this case, they are exploited and their rights and dignity are being compromised? And how can development be measured here? There is a general consensus that development ought to be measured by the ability to maintain a healthy and dignified standard of living without human abuse or environmental destruction. In this regard Julius Oladipowrites :

> There is also global agreement that the yardstick for measuring development ought to be a society's ability to sustain a healthy and dignified standard of living without abuse of others or destruction of ecosystems.[36]

If those in authority in the local Church fail to respect labor rights, human dignity is violated. If teachers are prohibited or prevented from being union members because some church authority and institutions fail to respect freedom of association and freedom of expression, human dignity is violated. This implies that to promote human rights is a central feature of respect for human dignity.

In some areas in Cameroon, the Catholic Church, like other Christian religions, in practice turns to put more emphasis on the eschatological dimension of salvation, that is, as a future event which will take place at the end of time with the *Parousia* or Second coming of Christ. Those who have been faithful to Christ will then inherit God's kingdom and share in His divine life and love: a live of happiness, joy, freedom, goodness, wellbeing, andfulfillment.

Religion can negatively affect the lives of the poor, and can instead promote poverty and gender inequality. For example, when we consider what is spent on sacred buildings, emphasis on non-temporal salvation, and protecting the vested interest of those in authority. [37]

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[36] . Julius Oladipo, "The Role of the Church in Poverty Alleviation in Africa", in DerykeBelshaw et al. eds., 2001:212 – 213, *Faith in Development: Partnership between the World Bank and the Churches of Africa,* Regnum Books International, Oxford, UK.

[37]. Matthew Clarke, "Understanding the nexus between religion and development", in Matthew Clarke, ed., 2013:5, *Handbook of Research on Development and Religion,* Edward Edgar Publishing Ltd, Cheltenham, UK.

The influence of worldviews on SCCs' perspective on development negates/contravenes the moral principle and values of sustainable development such as concern with social justice, eradication of poverty, and gender equality. Talking about the normative principles and behavioral guidelines of sustainable development Hopper says that "Sustainable development also incorporates certain normative principles or behavioralguidelines, as well as concern with social justice in the form of poverty alleviation and gender equality". Citing Jacobs, he therefore concludes that "sustainable development has been conceived of as a moral, not a market, concept" (Hopper, 2013:219).

7. General Conclusion

The most basic assumption underlying the mission of the church is that the raison-d'être of her existence is to dispense God's salvation to those who believe and accept her teaching. This includes preaching the Word of God (evangelization), administering of sacraments, and providing guidelines to the faithful on their journey to heaven where, hopefully, they will share in the live, love and happiness of their creator. However, it has not always been easy to determine practically what the Church's mission is. Has it anything to do with development? Will she not be interfering and drifting away from her mission if, for example, she engages in development thinking, planning and work?

There has been confusion both from within and without the church as regards her true mission especially in the twenty-first century, in a global, multicultural, and multidimensional society. This is evident from the different practical presumptions and assumptions of both some clergy and laity in their approaches to the mission of the Church.For some, the Church's mission, strictly speaking, is preaching, while for others it is multidimensional. Sometimes there is tension and even a clash between the government and the church over issues of development, the former accusing the latter of overstepping its bounds. All this creates a state of confusion that necessitates clarification.

This study set out to investigate the relationship between SCCs' and development. The basis of my motivation lies in the conflicting presuppositionsand practices within the Church concerning her mission in the modern society. This necessitated an investigation of how Christians at the grassroots or in SCCs perceive concepts such as mission, evangelization, and development.My research targeted individual persons, groups within the Church, and the church. Here, the main focus was on SCCs in Cameroon in relation to evangelization and development. The aim was to examine their understanding of development, what they say concerning the mission of the Church and whether, according to them, the Church should be engaged in development work and practice. In this regard, my main research question was: what is the relationship between SCCs and development? In addition to this, were the following questions: what are the goals of SCCs? Do the members think of development as a secular task? How do they view the tension between evangelization and development? What is the impact of of SCCs on the lives and faith of the laity?

To answer the above questions, I chose the case study research design as a framework for the collection and analysis of data. Three Christian communities were studied in one parish in the Catholic diocese of Kumbo, in the North West Region of the Republic of

Cameroon. My research methods consisted of database or literature research and qualitative research method. I examined what other writers and the Catholic Church documents have said in relation to my topic and other related issues. These helped me understand the concept of development and also enabled me to refine and reformulate my research questions. Furthermore, they provided the theoretical framework for my analytical discussion.

With regard to the qualitative research method, I conducted empirical studies as a strategy of collecting data. Two main research tools were employed, namely, participant observation and interviews (semi – structured and the unstructured interview types). After having collected data through these techniques, I assessed, evaluated and analyzed my findings in the light of my research questions, development theories, and some of the issues highlighted in the literature research.

The present study has been divided into seven chapters. The first chapter is the general introduction which features three essential sections that I have already talked about in the above paragraphs: the motivation, research questions, and research design and method. It ended with the thesis layout and chapter summary.

Chapter two provided the context of this study by mapping out its geographical location. It was carried out in one parish in the diocese of Kumbo whose territory is co-terminus with the civil administrative units of Bui and Donga Mantung Divisions of the North West Region of the Republic of Cameroon. I gave a brief description of its history and of the people from the cultural, social, religious, and political aspects.

The aim of chapter three was to answer the question "What are Small Christian Communities (SCCs)?" I explained that they are the church in the neighborhood, a new way of building the parish community from within, from the grassroots. This originated from the new model of church as the people of God, and from the communion ecclesiology of Vatican II. Thereafter, I talked about the historical origin of SCCs in the Catholic Church; SCCs in Cameroon and the activities they are engaged in. I pointed out that Bible sharing is at the core of SCCs because it is the source of their inspiration and the starting point of their activities.

A good qualitative research often makes some reference to how other theories and research works have contributed to the research question under study and to the interpretation of research findings. This was the focus of chapter four: to examine the theories of development from the secular perspective, and the concept of development from the Catholic perspective. They both provided the theoretical basis for analyzing, interpreting and discussing my research results.

Chapter five brought to light the results of my research studies: how relevant are SCCs? What is the mission of the church? What do SCCs say about the mission of the Church? How do they envisage development? What has the church to do with development? What is the impact of SCCs on the society? Then in chapter six, the focus of our spotlight was turned to the analysis and discussion of my findings within the framework of theories of development and of what the Catholic Church says about development. This is followed by the conclusion, an appendix containing the interview guide, and then the bibliography.

The aim of my study was to answer the research question and sub questions, in other words, to find out the relationship between SCCs and development; their vision of development, as a mission of the church or a secular task? This study and the methods I used in collecting qualitative data helped me answer these questions. According to my findings, SCCs are relevant to the members because they provide the platform to listen, share, meditate and put into practice the Word of God, that is , a new way of living and bearing witness to the faith; they are the tool for the growth of the Church; they create in the Christians the awareness that the Church is theirs and not of the bishop or priests; SCCs are the link between the Christians and the priest, and make it easier for him to know his flock. They are relevant because of decentralization and easy administration in the church; they are a source of encouragement and attraction to lapse Christians; Christians are given the opportunity to leadership and participatory roles in the church.

Their goal is to enable the growth of the church from the grassroots, enable the Christians live as a family of God's people, a community of believers who model their lives on the Bible; to help the Christians understand and propagate the faith; to practice the Christian values of love, justice, charity, solidarity, equality, option for the poor and less privilege; and to uphold and defend human rights.

From what I gathered, SCCs have the following aims:

1. To bring back lapsed Christians, re-kindle their faith through acts of love and sympathy, and to help them live their normal Christian life which includes the reception of sacraments.

2. To achieve peace and unity among members

3. To achieve love of neighbor and Christian unity

4. To promote the development of their communities by sharing responsibilities and participating in the life of their communities especially in the religious aspect.

Another issue worth investigating was about the mission of the church, that is, whether development is a constitutive aspect of the church's mission. According to the SCCs, the mission of the church is to impact faith; to evangelize the people; to proclaim the Word of God or to make Him known; to bring peace and salvation; to help the poor and to practice charity. Her most important mission is to dispense peace, love, unity and salvation. However, this does not exclude her from engaging in development work and practice. Cases abound in which the Church is involved in developmental issues: poverty alleviation, health care services, education, and provision of clean portable water.

Contrary to some assumptions, mindsets, practices and views, therefore, development is an essential aspect of the mission of the Church. This is rooted in the mission of Christ which was characterized by the concern he showed to those who were suffering. Consequently, as John Paul II has said, " It is impossible to accept that in evangelization one could or should ignore the importance of the problems so much discussed today, concerning justice, liberation, development and peace in the world" (John Paul II, 1995, *Ecclesia in Africa*, paragraph 68). Because of human dignity, people should not live in sub-human social, economic, cultural and political conditions. In her evangelizing mission, therefore, the Church should defend human dignity; strive for justice and peace, for the promotion, liberation, and integral human development of all individual human beings (John Paul II, 1995, *Ecclesia in Africa,* paragraph 69).On the strength of this assertion, we can therefore conclusion that the church has something to do with development: it is her mission to be involved in developmental issues.

From the activities of SCCs and the answers to the interview questions, it is evident that there is a relationship between the perspective of SCCs and the secular perspective on development. It is a relationship of similarities and dissimilarities. On the one hand, since the SCCs recognize the importance of human dignity , respect for human rights, and the need for participation, their perspective on development is similar to the human development paradigm as we saw in chapter four (1st Axis). The basic needs approach sees development as a moral imperative aimed at satisfying the basic needs of human beings such as food, shelter, access to clean drinking water, health care, sanitation, education, and to participate in decision-making processes.The human development approach also envisages development as a process of expanding people's capabilities and freedom. In this sense, the end of development is to give people the opportunities to reach their human potentials, that is, to be educated, to be

healthy, to participate in the life of the community, to engage in relationships, to live in a peaceful environment, and to enjoy nature.[38]

Another commonality lies in the area of sustainable development (gender-centered and environmental approaches). SCCs are concerned with social justice in the form of poverty alleviation and gender equality and women empowerment as evident from the activities of the women's affairs commission. They also affirm the importance of environmental sustainability. In this sense, SCCs bear some similarity with the conventional perspective on development.

On the other hand, there are some fundamental differences from the point of view of the anthropological vision of a human being, and the aim of development. For the SCCs the human being is a composite of body and soul, created to live in communion with other human beings and with God; he/she finds ultimate fulfillment in God. This conception of the human person introduces a more integral or holistic vision of human development, what is commonly referred to as integral human development.

For the human development approach, the good of each person is determined purely and solely by human reason. The end of development is to promote human freedom. On the contrary, from the perspective of SCCs, human good consists in eternal life, that is, in sharing God's life towards which human reasoning is geared. Since human development is integral and is open to the transcendental or spiritual aspect of life, the end of human progress is eternal life. Without this dimension, economic and material development is insufficient to bring about genuine development.

Human beings ought to exercise their freedom with responsibility and in conjunction to God's will. When this is not the case, genuine development becomes impossible. This explains why from the Christian perspective, injustice, inequality, exploitation and destruction of the environment are rooted in human rebellion against God; in failure to love; in lack of solidarity, in greed, and in lack of respect for human dignity. This implies that working for social justice go hand in hand with conversion of the hearth.[39]

Though the SCCs are involved in development they have their weaknesses and shortcomings. They are not yet competent to embark on a large scale development project due to lack of financial, human and material resources. Much still needs to be done in the area of educating and empowering the SCCs to be more efficient and capable of changing social

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[38]. cf. SeverineDeneulin, "Christianity and International Development", in Matthew Clarke, ed., 2013:58, *Handbook of Research on Development and Religion,* Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, UK.
[39]. On a similar note, see SeverineDeneulin, in Matthew Clarke, ed., 2013:64.

structures and practices that undermine human freedom, dignity and wellbeing. There is need to work in collaboration with other actors and stakeholders in development.

Appendix

QualitativeInterview Questions

1. What is your name? (Give the person a new name to maintain anonymity)

2. Gender: Male _____ , Female _____

3. Age?

   - 10 – 17 _____
   - 18 - 29 _____
   - 30 – 39 _____
   - 40 – 49 _____
   - 50 – 59 _____
   - 60 – 69 _____
   - 70 – 79 _____
   - 80+ _____

4. What is the name of your Small Christian Community? (keep it anonymous)

5. How long have you participated in the life of this Community (membership)?

6. In what capacity?

7. Why is the SCC relevant for you?

8. Do you plan to remain a member in future?

9. Can you tell me why there are SCCs in the Church?

10. Can you tell me in brief what your SCC wants to achieve?

11. What is the most import aspect or role of SCCs?

12. Surely, you are familiar with the phrase "the mission of the Church". What do you associate with that phrase?

13. What lies at the heart of the Church's mission?

14. How do SCCs take part in the mission of the Church?

15. What do you associate with development?

16. What do you think if the Church should be engaged in development issues?

17. What do you think if the Church is concerned with protecting and taking care of the environment?

18. What do you think if the Church should be engaged in the healthcare of the people and members of SCC?

19. What do you think if the Church should be concerned with the fight against poverty?

20. What do you think about the Church's involvement in the provision of pipe- born water?

21. What do you think about her involvement in education?

22. What was your life like before you became a member of the SCC?

23. What impact do you think SCCs have had on the society, neighborhood or village?

24. What do you think about the future of SCCs?

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