BULLETIN OF ECUMENICAL THEOLOGY

"CHURCH AND POLITICS IN NIGERIA"

PUBLISHED BY
The Ecumenical Association of Nigerian Theologians
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FOREWORD

THE ECUMENICAL ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIAN THEOLOGIANS (EANT)

The Ecumenical Association of Nigerian Theologians (EANT) is born out of a need to arouse discussions on a more or less permanent basis among Christian scholars deeply committed to the ongoing dialogue between the Christian living gospel and the evolving Nigerian context.

We live with the scandal of a 'divided people of God' on the popular-pastoral and administrative levels of Nigerian Christianity. And this inherited division (with its weight of 'tradition') is consistently preventing our scholars from fully hearing the word. Full reception of the word in Nigeria would necessarily involve hearing the objections to the word raised by contemporary Nigeria, being concerned by its problems and being partners in a common project of a solution. In this way a solid theological response can be given to our problems. The members of EANT, for the moment few in numbers but ecumenical in composition are committed searchers of this solid theological response. We believe that we can no longer afford to reflect on our faith in response to the challenges of our context as split/opposing bodies. Our common Christian heritage must be foremost in our minds when responding to contextual problems.

On the continental (African) level there exists already the Ecumenical Association of African Theologians (EAAT). Our nascent Nigerian Association (EANT) derives its inspiration from EAAT. EAAT believes that the theological enterprise in Africa today needs a broadening of areas of mutual contact and encouragement for the promotion of Christian unity. In this way it hopes to realise the fullest possible participation of our people in the Christian life and vocation, and the achievement of total salvation/liberation for African peoples (cf. Nairobi meeting 17-21 December, 1984).

Membership of EANT is open to all Nigerian Christian scholars. An on-going dialogue between our faith (response to the Christian Gospel) and our context does not leave any Christian scholar neutral at any given time. Whatever we say of the Nigerian person, discover,
think and project about him is material for Nigerian Christian theological discourse. Thus, linguists, men and women of letters, philosophers, social scientists are much a part of this Christian scholarly conversation as professional theologians. A theological reflection which does not grow out of this multi-disciplinary dialogue will be incompetent to speak to the Nigerian person who is today living in a pluralist, multi-ethnico-religious and evolving society.

The Bulletin of EANT presents papers which helped discussions during EANT meetings. These are edited to reflect feelings during the meetings. The Bulletin creates a forum where views or clarifications of subjects under discussion are heard. But these have to be presented in writing to an EANT meeting before publication.

The Ecumenical Association of Nigerian Theologians throws a challenge to all Nigerian Christians. We can no longer continue to divorce the prayer of Jesus, “that they may all be one... so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me” (Jn. 17:21-23), from Christian practice and reflection. A serious multi-disciplinary theological reflection, which clarifies the problems of the Nigerian context and proposes a courageous ecumenical solution is the only way to mediate the service of Christ to Nigerian peoples and the world through the Christian body.

Rev. Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, C.S.Sp
(Chairman EANT)
EDITORIAL

This volume of the Bulletin presents the Ecumenical Association of Nigerian Theologians papers read at its Fifth Seminar at the Brother Roman Pastoral Centre, Ekpoma, Bendel State of Nigeria on May 7, 1988. The theme of the Seminar was Church and Politics in Nigeria, an issue considered quite ad rem to the spirit of the times in Nigeria when the minds of most Christian leaders need to be conscientized on their role in the political era soon dawning on us, Nigerians. Father Eugene Uzukwu, in a Foreword to this issue attempts to situate the raison d’etre of the Association, its genesis and interests in the light of the Nigerian local situation. Dr. Manus’ article sets the scene with a probe into the New Testament basis for Christian contribution and role in politics come 1992. Fr. Uzukwu discusses the interaction between the Church and the State in the primitive Church. From such background history, he excavates the root-causes of the crisis contemporary christian churches in Nigeria are confronted with in trying to define themselves. In Ethics of Politics in Nigeria, Rev. Dr. Ejizu explores the factors condemning politics as “a dirty game” before some well-meaning Nigerian christians. Indeed, a theologumenon on Nigerian politics becomes quite pertinent at this time. Rev. Canon Omoera attempts, however brief, to provide this reflection. Bishop John Onaiyekan, the Catholic Bishop of Ilorin, true to his type and to the aspirations of EANT, discusses and clarifies the secularity of the Nigerian nation, an issue that often evokes passionate acrimony between christians and muslims. Finally, Fr. Anthony Erhueh addresses himself to a methodological en­quiry on The Contribution of Christianity to Politics in Nigeria. Among other things, the paper sketches some areas in which christianity has amply contributed to the quality of life in Nigeria.

This is the general overview of the articles in this volume. Their pertinency to the situation at hand in today’s Nigeria calls for sober reflections on the part of committed christians. EANT is happy to feed your reading passion with the papers.

DR. Chris U. Manus  
Member, Editorial Board
The setting of the whole of the New Testament literature is the Graeco — Roman world. The story — world of its narratives is plotted, among other things, on the political behaviours of Jews, Romans, Roman citizens, the incolae; that is, strangers inhabiting imperial cities and the peregrini who were essentially people without Latin citizenship among whom were Jews. Even though the Jesus — movement touched off from Galilee; that hill country was strictly speaking under the political hegemony of the Roman empire. Accepting the hypothesis of the priority of the Gospel of Mark, as the opinio consensus among Synoptic critics one observes that, inspite of a prominent absence of the historicizing account of Jesus’ setting in political and contemporary events in the Second Gospel; the author, nevertheless, presents us with, at least, the politics of Jesus and his first followers in a less fortuitous manner. It is from that Gospel we learn about such political incidents as the great fire which gutted down the city of Rome in 64 A.D during the reign of Nero who blamed it on Christians; the ruthless military campaign which saw the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the Temple under Titus in A.D. 70 and the Jewish revolt of 66 — 70 when Emperor Caligula wanted to set up his statue in the Temple at Jerusalem. What picture of the Christians emerges from these stories? According to Mark, they were in no way unpatriotic to Roman imperialism.

The Gospel of Matthew, written for the Palestinian — Syrian Christians in the Hellenistic world (ca 80 — 85 A.D) who themselves were under the same Roman imperial domination has its own fair share of accounts of political encounters which are redolent of reminiscences of secular and historical events in the Ancient world. As Matthew’s story unfolds from promise to fulfillment, the author does not fail to tell his readership (largely composed of Jewish — Christians who shared their faith with Gentiles) that the Messiah of
Israel is the teacher of the Gentiles. Indeed such a Christology has overt political implications in a world where the cult of the Roman Caesar stood intolerant to any other notion of "king", Christos, Masiah or the 'anointed one'. A conscious arrogation of the title to oneself could be construed as a pretention to the imperial throne. It is, perhaps, in the light of the seditious implications of the title that one may understand Jesus' witty response to the Pharisees and other Palestinian-based activists on the political and sensitive question of the exploitative taxation Rome collected from his people.2

"Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's" is by no means a dominical admonition to Christians to flee this world and its temporality, but an injunction with a double — effect; namely to fulfill their civic obligations in the city of man where they live and have their being now and a call to do works that help 'pile up' treasures of eternal reward in the city of God.3 Suffice it to make this cursory interpretation of this often misused text here. I will take it up again later in the paper.

And the Third Gospel written in the best Hellenistic literary tradition provides us wider information on the politics of the time and the conduct of the Christians in the vast Empire. Firstly, the author records that the nativity of Jesus approximates the enactment and promulgation of an imperial decree on mass census for purposes of taxation (Poll tax Census Decree) by Augustus Caesar (30 BC — 14 AD). And he dates the ministry of John the Baptist also by secular events; namely that it happened in the regime of Tiberius Caesar, the immediate successor of Augustus Caesar (19th August, 14 AD) and in the high — priesthood of Annas (6 — 15 AD) and Joseph Caiaphas, his son-in-law (18 — 36 AD). Apart from material reaching the author from the Double Tradition (Mk — Q), the Third Gospel transmits several encounter narratives relating serious political polemics between Jesus, his disciples and the Jews, Jewish political and religious leaders and the Roman officials.4

The Gospel of John in its polemic against Gnosticism, docetism and the Jews seems, at face value, to relegate political issues to the background except in so far as it concerns the Diaspora Jews and the confrontations and litigations with Christians such as we read in the trial of Jesus in John 19:12 — 15 — where Pilate was constrained to crucify Jesus on the grounds of false accusations that he claimed to be the king of the Jews.

Besides, many scholars have come to recognize the Acts. Luke’s second — volume work as an apologia politica directed towards the Roman authorities in order to persuade them of the political in-
nocence of Christianity and to impress the city — state magistrates. In an auspicious manner, some Lucan critics have asserted somewhat convincingly that Luke has a predilection for wishing to inculpate the Jews and exculpate the Romans.

This study could have yielded into a much bigger volume than the present size. But space and time have imposed their limitations on me and as such I have had to jettison a good deal of necessary background material. The present content is carefully styled to build up into a five — part paper. The first part is introductory. It situates the subject-matter within the context of the first five books of the New Testament literature. The second part explores Lucan ‘theological history’ and the import such hagiography has for discerning the political lifestyle of Christians of the first century. The third section is an historical enquiry. It studies the political activities of the Romans in Palestine and exposes the politics of Jesus and its probable agenda. The fourth adopts two sociological models developed by mainline sociologists of the New Testament (Theissen, 1978; Manila, 1986) to probe the social realia underlying the theocratic ideology manifest in the Jesus — movement. The fifth section is the concluding part of the paper. It recognizes the utility of the polymethodological approach in New Testament research; identifies their presuppositions and presses the points to their logical conclusions with the aid of the ‘holistic exegesis’. The paper assumes that politics is the actual organisation of the political, social and economic life of people within a state in order to create and maintain a society which is as meaningful, just and humane as possible. Given the period and area from which the New Testament documents come, there were various ways of concerning oneself with politics in the sense of this definition. Certain persons participated at some-level in the administrative set up of the Roman Empire or at the local administration where governance was left in the hands of natives or client ethnarchs as was in Palestine of Jesus’ time.

II

The Perspectives of Luke — Acts

Since the literature of the New Testament is so vast and its scope on first century Christian experience of the politics of the time could be so extensive for the search for a meaningful basis for Christian contribution in politics in Nigeria, I will devote a good deal of attention to Luke — Acts. I do not deny the possibility of sampling from a
few specific texts that addressed Church — state relations in the first century such as Paul’s quietist stance in Rom 13:1 – 7 and the post — Apostolic paraenesis of 1 Peter 3:11 – 17. That approach would be limiting in terms of the topic under study. Since Luke is one single author who has articulated fairly accurately much of the early Christians’ socio — political experience in the Graeco — Roman world of his day where the political ideology rested on emperor cult and the genius of the empire, I consider his works necessary Ausgangspunkten. I fully recognize that, among the evangelist, it is Luke who has circumscribed the history of Christianity into the social world of his age. In his own understanding and as Mark did before him, Christians are good and loyal citizens who violate no imperial laws. In Acts 27:31 — 32 Luke informs us proudly that Paul is adjudged innocent against vilifying charges brought against him by Jews; and that he in Acts 28:31 preached and taught the gospel in Rome” quite openly and unhindered”. In other words, Rome the hub of the ancient world was tolerant of Paul, his ideas and the assemblies (ekklesiai) that were formed around him. Could one not infer then that Luke’s communities enjoyed imperial edict of toleration granted to Judaism as a religio licita. This is an issue I shall presently discuss in this section. Luke describes the politics of Jewish authorities; namely the Herodian ruling princes as odiously anti — Christian. Herod Antipas is said to have been glad to meet with Jesus; submit him to a mock — trial and to allow his bodyguards to man-handle Jesus. In 41 A.D Herod Agrippa orders the death of James, the brother of John (Acts 12:1f). His enthusiasm having pleased the Jews, and to score further political gains, he arrests Peter (Acts 12:2 – 3). Luke further narrates that Agrippa II hears Paul’s defense, converses with him and eventually affirms his innocence (Acts 27:31 — 32).

What political interpretation can one give Jesus’ pragmatism as pointed out in the story of the cleansing of the Temple in Lk 19:45 — 48? Was that part of the zealotic militant and nationalist movement? How much of Jewish and Roman law did that action infringe upon? Whether the political implications of Jesus’ actions are obvious; the fact remains that Jesus re-acts quickly to the exploitative business interests of the local chamber of commerce in Jerusalem who had turned God’s house of worship into a demonic mercantile bureau and a den of thieves. On a more Liberation theological frame of mind, could it not be asked whether Jesus’ action had no serious political consequences for himself and those who had registered and identified with his cause? If so, what was their future when their
leadership and membership hailed from a region that was constantly suspected of subversive militant activities and revolutionary tendencies (Galilee)? Would Jesus’ age and domicile suggest that he engaged in any political violence? How may one interpret Jesus’ exhortation recorded in Lk 22: 36b – 38

...; whoever has a purse had better take it with him and his pack too; and if he has no sword, let him sell his cloak to buy one

vis a vis the Johnnine order to Peter:

Sheathe your sword. This is the cup the Father has given me; Shall I not drink it? (Jn 18:11; NEB).

Was Jesus preparing his disciples for any serious confrontation? And if so against who? Is the injunction to wear a sword not understandable in the light of another assertion in Lk 22:37

He let himself be taken for a criminal. Yes, what Scripture says about me is even now reaching its fulfilment (JB).

In other words, the author of the books dedicated to Theophilus tries haphazardly to eliminate Jesus’ involvement in political violence. Jesus is presented in the Third Gospel rather as one who teaches and acts assertively and aggressively on sensitive issues be they political or religious. Let me pick, once again, on the story of paying taxes to Caesar in Lk 20:20 — 26. The questioners were not trying to have Jesus help them set a norm for paying taxes to the Roman colonialists and their extortionist agents, the Publicani. They were trying to push him into a political quagmire. They were trying to see if he could incite a tax — strike in the Eastern part of the Empire. Jesus wrestles himself out of their political trap. He approves of the taxes for he recognizes that taxation is a reality of the Roman domination of the people. Further on, Luke presents Jesus’ passion as an encounter with Roman authorities, a theme which outstandingly runs through his two — volume work. In the Lucan Passion Narrative, Pilate is shown to express the wish to liberate Jesus (Lk 23:16,20,22/Acts 3:13). But the Jewish authorities twist his hands and they are blamed for the death of Jesus (Lk 24:20). For Luke, Jesus is quite innocent of any charge. This is graphically summed up in the confession of the Roman centurion: “Certainly this man was innocent” (Lk 23:47). Like Mark, his principal source (Mk 15,2,9,12, 18,26,32), Luke describes Jesus as king (Lk 23:2,3,37,38). Inspite however of the non — politicization of the term in both Mark and
Luke, the title "king" directs the believers' attention to Jesus' supremacy over any political power in the world. But was the title viewed in that sense by secular authorities? Sources available today from ancient texts reveal that the figure of Christ evoked much speculation and consternation in official quarters. Three extra — Biblical texts, Suetonius, Claudius, 25; Dio Cassius, History, 60:6.6; Orosius, History, 7: 6.15-16 confirm that Jews were expelled from Rome by Claudius ca. 41 — 49 A.D because of agitation against Chrestus (Christ). The name, prior to any post — Easter reflection on the person of Jesus, caused quite a stir wherever Jews of the Dispersion lived. It is probably in the context of information as this, that one may understand E.A. Judge's assertion that the Jews had Jesus crucified in order to maintain political stability _ad rem_; and that the Roman Government in its actions against Christians in the time of Trajan (98 — 117) and Pliny was motivated by matters of administration and public order rather than religion.

Inspite of the weight of the non — biblical evidence and E.A. Judge's asservation, I still like to maintain that Luke emphasizes the political innocence of Christians. Jesus and Paul had committed no breach of Roman law. Luke portrays the Roman officials in a positive light. In that form, he appeals to the officials of his own day to follow the examples of their predecessors because "faith in Jesus Christ and allegiance to Rome were not mutually inconsistent". In the Lucan perspective, the entire power and glory of all the kingdoms of this world are in the control of the devil (Lk 4:5-7). From this, one can argue that Luke's endorsement of the authority of the Empire is however not so pleasant as that given by Paul in Rom 13:1f. The behaviour exhibited by the apostles and the Church in Acts 4 and 5 demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt that in the Lucan perspective the Church could on occasion defy the state in preference of obedience to God and that they have God's approval to do so. Inspite of the fact that the interrogation of the apostles before the Sanhedrin in Acts 4:5-22 and 5:17-40 do not refer directly to Roman officials, Peter's declaration in 4:19:

_Is it right in God's eyes for us to obey you rather than God? Judge for yourselves_ (NEB)

which he apodictically reformulates in 5:29.

We must obey God rather than men

can be said to point beyond the immediate Palestinian situation. It, in
fact, indicates how Christians are to regard any authorities in the human society. And apart, however, from those universalist ideas, New Testament pages make no bones about informing us that Christians respect the state and seek to collaborate with its constructive policies. Christians are shown to have solid trust of their own security in the imperial, legal and constitutional justice. While they comport themselves docilely; they believe that only God can command man's total obedience. Luke auspiciously illustrates this idea more than any of his contemporaries. In the Acts he emphasizes that Paul, though accused of civil disturbance by both the Romans and Jews (Acts 16:20; 17:6; 24:5) and made the object of violent jealousy on the part of the Greeks (Acts 19:26-31) at Ephesus, he had always conducted himself with dignity and respect towards the state. What Luke is saying here, reading between the lines, is that from the beginning of the movement Christians have been made the object of vicious persecutions from Jews, Romans and the Greeks; and in no way did they retaliate.

Though the notion of suffering with fortitude and resignation had long been recognized as a Christian virtue in the New Testament church; Rom 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:11-17 (Titus 3:1-2) which deal with the relation between Church and state are quite indispensible for my present purposes. Were the letters not written to address Christians and to enjoin them to come to terms with the state in a positive way? The Pauline dictum "there is no authority except from God" is the locus theologicus for the argument. Those who exercise authority on earth, however, perform a divinely instituted function. As diakonoi and leitourgoi, politicians are servants who act for the community good. The thrust of the passages is that God exercises his authority against chaos and anarchy on earth through constituted authorities, their agencies and those elected and given the people's mandate. The texts are therefore concerned with Christian praxis in relation to earthly power structures presented in the context of state organized, often severe persecutions. The authors (Paul and the patronymic author) are concerned not merely to avoid the consequences of civil disobedience but to cultivate among Christians a sober and a humble life-style manifest in an attitude of loyalty towards the government. Truly this has continued to encourage religious quietism until recently when Liberation theology has come to introduce another modus vivendi in the relation between Church and state especially the oppressive regimes of the contemporary world. In fact, it has come to the awareness of modern exegetes that the pro-state injunctions of 1 Peter 2:13ff were given to discourage a fanatical desire for martyrdom
by second generation Christians (in the reigns of Domitian 81-96 and Trajan 98-117 A.D) who simply wanted to demonstrate their hostility towards Rome often regarded as the homeland of the ‘sons of darkness’.

If the foregoing is the context in which these often misinterpreted texts may be understood, I still wish to plead that it be recognized that Luke towers high above other New Testament authors in the effort to draw our attention to the political innocence of Christianity and a rather optimistic view of the imperial government. For Luke, Christian vocation includes *inter alia* the need to live at peace with those who manage the state — craft; Christians should not parade themselves as overlords. For him, Jesus and Paul exhibited this attitude towards the state, why should they not take a positive view of the regime.

**The Religio licita idea**

In the light of the foregoing, I will, at this juncture, ask: what exactly is this theory about? What may one learn from its principle that can help one understand the way Christians conducted themselves in the vast Empire where the Roman administration was tolerant of any cult as far as it did not encourage sedition or weaken public morality? Scholars of Lucan theology have, since the late nineteenth century, theorized on the existence in the Roman legal corpus of the first century the provision of the *Religio licita*, ‘permitted religion’. While it was known that the Romans worshipped all deities they came in contact with in the Empire, the God of the Jews who had no images and no sacrifices except at Jerusalem could not easily be assimilated by the colonialists though a good number accepted the status of *hoi sebemenoi* — the God-fearers. Inspite of Jewish monotheism and their non recognition of any form of religion other than theirs, Judaism was such a *religio licita* in the midst of several eastern mystery religions such as the cult of Isis, Mithras and the cult of Attis and Cybele.

Emperor Caesar Augustus was known to have granted privileges to the Jews. In *The Cambridge Ancient History*, A.D. Nock has instructively addressed himself to the issue of Roman religious policy in the first century. According to Nock, Caesar Augustus left Jewish privileges in matters of religion untouched. Such a privilege appealed to the Christians. Christian missionaries desired to win a similar status in order to avoid being misunderstood in the whole length and
breadth of the Empire. Robert Maddox, in his work, *The Purpose of Luke — Acts*, observes that the simplest way to achieve this objective was to prove to the Romans that Christianity was genuine form of Judaism. But does that mean, strictly speaking, recognition as a *religio licita*? The views of A.D. Nock already briefly referenced and H.J. Cadbury who argues that there is neither historical support for Rome’s licensing of foreign religions nor the existence of a juridical category of the concept must be taken seriously. It appears correct to agree with Esler that what scholars have not understood is “Luke might have desired to present Christianity to an outsider. Roman audience as a form of Judaism and thereby to bring it under the Jewish umbrella.”

III

Roman Palestine

By 63 BC Palestine had become part of the Roman Empire when Pompey had captured Jerusalem. He appointed Hyrcanus II as the High Priest. But the colonialist policy in Palestine contributed immensely to the instability of government in that region. In a trenchant analysis of the socio — political factors in Roman Palestine, Gerd Theissen has shown that the Romans fluctuated between centralized and decentralized; direct and indirect rule. Information available from Josephus’ *Antiquities* indicates that Pompey separated Palestine from the Hellenistic city-states and liberated it from Jewish rule. He confined the Jewish high priests and local leaders to Jewish territory. Gabinius further sub-divided Palestine into five local administrative regions. This, in fact, weakened the hold of the local ethnarchs. During the Roman Civil war, when Julius Caesar defeated Pompey in 48 BC, Herod, the Jewish chieftaincamped with the pro-Caesar faction. As a reward, Julius Caesar confirmed his appointment as ethnarch over Judea and later the Roman Senatus appointed him king in 40 BC. He succeeded in driving out the Parthians who helped Antigonus, son of Aristobulus II to seize power in Palestine. This brought peace for quite some time; and for this Herod was rewarded with further extensions of his territory. This indicates that decentralization became the administrative policy of the Romans up to the end of the republic. Augustus Caesar however returned to centralization which was however, short lived. The divide — and — rule policy of the Romans did not fare any better for Palestine. When Herod the Great died in April 4 BC his province was divided up among his three
sons: Archelaus administered Judea and Samaria; Herod Antipas governed as tetrarch of Galilee and Perea from 4 BC to 39 A.D and Philip ruled as tetrarch of Ituraea and Trachonitis in the North East from 4 BC to 34 A.D. Ten years later, the Herodian chief heirs were deposed by Augustus. In both Judea and Samaria, there was introduced a change from indirect to direct rule. Herodian princes who continued their administration in the peripheral regions nursed the feeling towards the restoration of the dynasty. One of them, Agrippa I (A.D 41-44) made some serious efforts in this direction but as soon as he passed away, the Romans, once more, assumed direct responsibility for government in Judea.

This state of affairs undoubtedly caused instability. Each administration was shortlived. No good tradition could be laid. No institution was given a chance of becoming stable and powerful enough to control the politically unsettled region. Consequently, it can be concluded that Roman Palestine lived in a state of frequent constitutional crisis. Since the Romans, like most colonialists did not allow the growth of strong indigenous aristocracy, why could they not have maintained an authoritative presence in Palestine? But instead they employed the services of sub-ordinate procurators whose political, power was quite limited. The procurators, such as was Felix and Festus of Acts, were subject to three forms of control: i) by the Herodian princes who did not hesitate to portray in bad light the weakness of alien rulers; ii) the prefect of Judea was directly under the control of the Roman Legate of Syria, on whose troops he had to depend in times of crisis: iii) and by the local population who had a right to petition the Legate. When the people exercised this right against Pilate who clamped down on an armed prophetic movement among the Samaritans, the Legate deposed him immediately. The final authority was the Emperor. He allowed himself to entertain petitions from the Jews and on the basis of the reports, over-ruled the procurators whose orders could even at will be rescinded. In John 19:12, the statement ascribed to the Jews: “If you set him free you are no friend of Caesar’s; anyone who makes himself king is defying Caesar” supports the view that Pilate, the Governor could be blackmailed by the threat of popular complaint to Caesar in Rome.

The Romans maintained a small army in Palestine. It was not until the Bar-Kochba (Simon ben Koseba) uprising (133-135 A.D) against Hadrian’s colonialist policies in 132 A.D. that a legion (3000 — 6000 men) was stationed in the plain of Magiddo. Prior to this time, there were only 3000 soldiers in Caesarea Maritima and a cohort (600) in Jerusalem. The soldiers lacked discipline. The men were recruited
from Hellenistic city-states and had a fanatical hatred for the Jews. Luke preserves a tradition which gives insight into the level of indiscipline and the anti—people attitudes of the troops—terrorization, extortion and discontentment with their salaries. These unsoldiery acts led to serious tensions and made it impossible for the army to keep the province under effective control. Nevertheless, it was only the senior officers who were better disposed towards the Jews.26 Josephus informs us that while the other ranks took sides with Gentiles in a clash between Gentiles and Jews in Caesarea, the officers mediated between the two groups, in fact showing greater leniency towards the Jews.27 Cornelius, the centurion at Caesarea, and the one at Capernaum were understandably quite sympathetic with the Jews.28 The anti-Judaic attitude of the ordinary soldiers is quite prominently portrayed in the Passion Narrative. It is probably they who as Herod’s strateuma rough-handle, mock and hail Jesus as the Rex Iudaorum29 whereas it is a centurion who confesses that Jesus is the ‘Son of God’30.

Inspite of this bleak political climate in Palestine, the ethos of the Jesus movement was clearly different from other radical theocratic movements of his time. Aggressive attitudes toward the Romans typical of first century Palestinian resistance fighters such as the Qumranites was totally absent in the politics of Jesus. While many of the prophetic movements drew their inspiration for liberation from the Exodus experience, Jesus’ futurist vision was connected with the temple and its erection, in other words an interiorization of the renewal of the person. In a not—too—recent work which appeared in Britain, A.E. Harvey has correctly noted that Marxists even recognize that the thrust of Jesus’ teaching was not towards social reform but towards a future in which man becomes more fully himself and more authentically human.31 If this remark is true as it seems, it can be argued that Jesus did not unleash an insurrection against the Romans inspite of their brutal suppression of the people. Rather Jesus recognized the chastisement of the people as penalty for their hardness of heart and refusal to Change. According to the Gospel of Mark and as I tried to show in the last section on Luke, the controversial tax decree (Mk 12:13-17) is not disallowed by Jesus; and the Jews who collaborated with the colonialists are not rejected (Mk 2:15-17). According to H. Chadwick, the Cambridge Professor of history of Christian thought, Jesus did not discourage the possibility of rendering “loyal service to Caesar while still being loyal to God”32. The Q — community knows a tradition received by both Matthew and Luke where a tax collector and a zealot (a resistant fighter) Matt.
10:3/Lk. 6:15 enlisted into the Jesus — movement as his intimate disciple. Officers and men of foreign troops are received with friendliness and approval (Matt. 8:5-13; Acts 10:1-33). This attitude can be seen in the fact that Jesus propounded a reconciliation which transcends frontiers and culminates in the demand to show love towards the enemy.

Without doubt, the Jesus — movement was not unconcerned with the socio-political tensions in Palestine of his day. Pertinent to this position is a view already expressed by the Latin American Liberation theologian, Juan Luis Segundo who says:

"... Jesus’ stance vis a vis the Roman Empire or the zealots, as a political stance, is also relatively beside the point. The fact is that the concrete systematic oppression that Jesus confronted in his day did not appear to him as ‘political’ in our sense of the term; it showed up to him as ‘religious’ oppression. More than officials of the Roman Empire, it was the religious authority of the Scribes and Saducees and the Pharisees that determined the socio-political structure of Israel. In real life the authority was political, and Jesus really did tear it apart."

Jesus’ proclamation of the imminence of the reign of God could only reflect the unsatisfactory political arrangement existent in Palestine of his day. Gerd Theissen correctly observes that beyond Palestine, in the earliest Hellenistic Christianity, the kingdom of God was not a central issue in missionary propaganda. The great apostle, Paul rarely used the concept except in two places where the notion is not unconnected with Pauline pneumatology. The Grecian society in which Paul spent his later life had no such deep-rooted political tensions as was known in the country in which he was raised up. The Palestinian problem was one rooted in the relationship between local and colonial structures of government. Traditionally, Israel has founded its government on theocracy and monarchy where the king is looked upon as the vice-regent of Yahweh. This style of administration and governance was quite strange to the Roman authorities and the Greek city-states’ politarchs. King Herod the Great attempted to introduce a rapprochment through the institution of a Hellenistic — type monarchy. But his effort was doomed to failure. There emerged radical forms of theocracy which appeared disappointed with Herod’s structures of government. Here was partly the ground that fertilized the motives of the Jesus-movement; a theme I will explore in the next section. In fact, the social and political tensions got out of hand and later led to the Jewish War of 66 — 73 A.D during which period Titus, Emperor Vespasian’s son destroyed the Jewish Temple and razed down the city of Jerusalem.
IV

Some Sociological Models: Their insights on the Jesus — Movement

In the light of data uncovered from the Roman presence in Palestine and my discussion on the politics of Jesus; this section presents a brief sociological information on the Jesus — movement. My approach will draw from Gerd Theissen’s method. This prominent German sociologist of the New Testament has forcefully argued in favour of the Roelenanalyse (Role — analysis) model which seeks to examine the description or self-understanding of who plays what role in a given society. And with regard to the ‘movement — model’, Theissen admits it helps uncover the social impact of the “wandering charismatics” (Jesus not excluded) who had become itinerant apostles in order to advance the tenets of their movements far and wide. Since the sociology of the Jesus — movement is tout court to describe typical social attitudes and behaviour patterns and to analyse their interactions with Jewish society in Palestine, I feel obliged to ask: what were the effects of the Jesus — movement upon the Palestinian society of that time? Culturally speaking, the Jewish community, as I have previously stated, had conducted its affairs from time immemorial as a theocracy. This “rule of God” was, in fact, the rule of the priestly aristocracy who claimed to represent God’s kingdom on earth. Oftentimes, the idea of the nominal theocracy came into conflict with the de facto aristocracy made up of the priestly group. As Theissen confidently opines the tension provided the breeding ground for radical “theocratic movements in which the theocracy of Yahweh was played off against its theocratic mediators and their confederates, the priests and the Romans”. And quite recently, B.J. Malina using another socio — scientific method (the social-anthroplogical) recognizes that in “old — fashioned non — western societies” religion is embedded in both politics and kinship and so economics. With special reference to religion in the first century Judaism, Malina argues that Religion in the first century Mediterranean world was connected with politics and kinship system. This insight is useful for my present purposes and theorization. Where there is this nexus between kinship and religion as in most African traditional societies, and in the case of the Second Temple period in Palestine, the tension which often generates between the party that claim custody of the cult and those who share liberal and “this — worldly” views can become really disruptive. It is
in the context of this sort of tension that one can understand the emergence of the Jesus — movement as a fundamental manifestation of a radical theocracy that aimed at directing attention to the Kingdom of Heaven. After all, Jesus energetically proclaimed the imminence of the reign of God. In Mark, the hearers are warned in a programmatic ultimatum that “the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mk 1:15) while in the Third Gospel under the garb of Lucan realized eschatological proviso, Jesus declares to his audience: “... hoti semeron peplerotai he graphe aute en tois osin hymon” — “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Lk 4:21). Both evangelists recognize the immediacy of the Change whose realization is no longer far fetched through the Jesus — movement. Apparently for Jesus and his followers, this imminent rule of God presupposed the demise of all other rule; even that of the Romans and their acolytes, the local priests.41

As I have indicated earlier, the Acts of the Apostles apparently mirroring a later stage in the development of Christianity appears to have softened the relation between the Romans and Christianity. To support this, Josephus the Jewish historian informs us that James, the leader of he ekklesia he en Hierosolymois and the brother of the Lord was executed on the demand of the High Priest during a period when the office of the Roman Procurator was vacant. Recognized as an abuse of the ius gladii, the Roman Senatus disapproved of his action and deprived him of his office.42 Both secular sources and the New Testament therefore support the view that the Romans protected the Christians. In unruly Palestine, the Jesus — movement, in spite of its demand for metanoia, was recognized, though as late as after his death, as one of the conciliatory and moderate groups. There was no need to persecute it. Luke, the Hellenistic historian compares the Jesus — movement with the political insurrections of other movements like Judas of Gamala, the Galilean who in A.D 6 incited crowds of followers to mount an uprising against Roman taxation-census drive and Theudas who led a revolt with some 400 followers43. While there flourished radical theocratic movements as these, there also prevailed some messainic movements led by self-proclaimed “messiahs” and “prophets” whose faces allusion is made to in the Gospel of Matthew44. Viewed from a sociological lense, I tend to agree with Theissen on the existence in the first century Palestine, of two types of radical theocratic movements: the one prophetic; the other programmatic45. The prophet previews the future and announces what will be, a programmatic agitator envisages what should be the case. Prophetic movements are tied to
the person of the prophet while the programmatic, though resistant in its ideology, is quite independent of persons. The Jesus — movement was decidedly a prophetic movement which promised a miraculous divine intervention on Israel’s behalf. This is signified in the promise of a new temple. The notion of the “sole rule of God” was quite popular in Palestine in the first Christian century though the city aristocracy did not quite approve of such an ideology. God, after all, they argued, was not to rule quite alone. This ideology was imposed through the influence of new messiahs and some of its traits are not however unnoticeable in the Jesus — movement. Besides, his notion of the kingly rule of God was juxtaposed with the expectation of a rule of the ‘Son of man’. Historically, ideas of the ‘sole rule of God’ and the ‘kingly rule of God’ arose in Galilee, the home province of Jesus and the other freedom — fighters. Galilee therefore produced the men who saw ahead their Judean counterparts the need to destroy alien governance in Palestine of their days.

I may infer from the foregoing that these radical ideologies provided the climate of opinion which fuelled opposition to the existing political structure; namely opposition to foreign rule. From the intentions of the leaders all the movements had been inspired with the desire to realize the rule of God oftentimes thought to have been ushered in miraculous fashions. All the leaders put forward a manifesto discernible in an explicitly imminent eschatology. In such expectations as the reversal of fortunes and the end of the old world order, the Roman rule and the traditional theocracy would be done with. The new theocracy would be inaugurated by charismatic leaders and even by mythical figures. Expectations of the people were fixed on the dawn of the new world. In Jesus’ perspective, this new world order over-stretched into the old world. According to Mark, the date of its inauguration would come during the life-time of the first Christians: I tell you solemnly, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power (Mk. 9:1).

The evangelist Matthew places the expected happenings in a particular locale; namely Palestine. All nationalities would gather from all points of the earth to join in the banquet with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In fact, it was generally conceived as a tangible reality. People would go into it with their two eyes; they would eat in it; drink in it and sit on thrones in it. This new world would not arrive, of course, without the intervention of human activity and a miracle. Its
realization became manifest in the miracles and exorcisms (semeia kai terata) of Jesus and his followers. Luke, the author more faithful to the source, has put it in this primitive form: "If it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you (Lk 11:20). What about the gap between the poor and the rich, indeed a thorny socio-political issue in the time of Jesus? The parable of the Rich Ruler (Lk. 18:18-30) is illustrative enough. Jesus' injunction to the rich man in v.22

\[
panta hosa echeis poleson kai diados ptochois, \\
kai exeis thesauron en tois ouranois \\
kai deuro akolouthei moi \\
\]

sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, 
and you will have treasure in heaven, 
and come, follow me

is an all-time relevant socio — economic theme. Certainly, this is a logion that goes back to the Sitz in Leben Jesu and in the context of his proclamation of the Kingdom of Heaven. In the light of the limited goods and embedded economy typical of the Mediterranean society as Bruce Malina would have us believe, this directive to donate to the poor is by no means to be understood as an injunction to cultivate self-renunciation. Jesus was addressing himself to the political issue of the redistribution of wealth and restitution on the part of the wealthy. Such calls for redistribution and restitution belonged intrinsically to the political economy willed by God for his people; that is, the divinely — ordained, socially required restitution. In other words, the mashal (parable) is against the wickedness of the rich who as in our contemporary times have looted the nation's wealth to become rich. It continues to speak against the socio-economic destitution of the poor in society and force us to make a preferential option for the poor.

Matthew tells us that the performance of miracles were expected from itinerant wandering charismatics as authenticating signs of the theios aner figure typical of Hellenistic religious propagandists. Miraculous healings, as Theissen observes, fulfilled the same authenticating sign "in the Jesus — movement". The proclamation of the kingdom of God was not merely a theological programme, it included the dream for a fundamental political change in Palestine. My discussion so far uncovers what amounted to as popular politics in the first Christian century. If, to a contemporary political scientist, this does not reflect 'real' politics; I advise a re-reading of the sources and the history of antiquity. After all, the change introduced by the
Jesus — movement was heralded by miraculous acts and not by force. Matthew reveals that in the new kingdom, the meek would possess the earth and the peace-makers would gain access to it. Although no alien was mentioned, one thing clear, admits Theissen, is that this would imply the end of Roman hegemony and of all earthly governments.

Concluding section

This enquiry points up to a number of conclusions. The conclusions can however be multifarious and variegated. This is precisely because of the eclectic approach reflected in the study. I have espoused indeed the wits of the historical — critical method to identify specific New Testament paradigms interpretable in the context of contemporary Nigerian political situation. I have used the findings and conclusions of the Redaktionsgeschichte on the Synoptic gospels to lay bare the theological perspectives of the evangelists and how they have interpreted, shaped and framed the traditions of Jesus concerning Palestinian traditional theocracy. The sociological method has been used to render help where necessary. The impressions of the Jesus — movement model (Theissen) intrude into the essay but rather positively for our recourse to this social scientific method has been deservedly illuminating. But do all these methods give the last answers to questions raised in the study; especially when seen through the spectacles of the Nigerian socio — political context? Hardly, for the approaches do not constitute the crown or the focus of the interpretation on the data raised in the discussion. Given the involuted nature of the situation I am asked to address myself to in this paper, I prefer to wrap up the proceeds with the string of the ‘holistic exegesis’. According to J.P. Martin, the search for the ‘holistic paradigm’ is a modern perception of reality. With this approach the text/s is/are treated as a living part of an interactive process of interpretation and not as an archaeological specimen as does J. Murphy O’Connor in his study, St. Paul’s Corinth: Texts and Archaeology. With this approach the dynamics of the social — political world of the text in its past context (the 1st c Graeco-Roman world) is not only discerned but also the similar and parallel dynamics operative in the contemporary context of myself, the interpreter and the Nigerian is called for scrutiny. It is here I can zero in on the wider implications for ourselves and for our Christian men and women the relevance of the issues raised in the texts. Among other things, the approach calls for an eidetic vision; a vision through which I perceive
the total pattern of issues which the text raises and myself as a participant in that pattern. In other words, all true exegesis is contextual exegesis; that is to say, and as I have always insisted in previous works, the context of the interpreter as myself is no less important than the context of the passage. If as an interpreter I merely reflect my own Nigerian context, my interpretation will simply reflect my own hidden curriculum; namely whether I am an upholder of the status quo or apologist for power-groups; a social activist or an advocate of revolution or a combination of these. If I merely reflect an interest in the ancient context I will be limiting my vision and role; in fact, I will be less than an exegete of the New Testament. But if I adopt the hermeneutics of participation, such as contextualisation or inculturation, I will ostensibly relate well to the demands of the ‘holistic exegesis’ made to respond to the foibles of flesh and blood individuals in my own context.

Given that these methodological reflections can be amenable to the Nigerian political situation, what conclusions and consequences may I draw the attention of the Nigerian Christians to as paradigms that can guide them as they prepare their minds towards the dawn of the political transition programmes and the eventual resumption of active civilian politics in Nigeria? Whatever the arrangement, the political transition period generates considerable anxiety. The public will look forward to a change which will not only legitimate the will to return to a civil rule but also its guiding manifesto — call it ideology — which will inspire the populace to go along with the incoming administration. But who can provide this ethos? Previous experiments have shown those given our mandate quite incapable. The First Republic suffered from the stigmata of ethnic politics. Greediness of the politicians and their desire to remain in power at all costs, nepotism, corruption, squandermania and abuse of power, rigging and stealing led to the overthrow of that Government in 1966. The nine — year military rule under General Gowon did not fare any better inspite of the huge wealth which accrued from the booming oil industry. The devastating experiences of the bitter thirty — month Civil War that rocked the nation’s foundation was nothing but a scourge for our political ineptitude. Corruption, graft and ethnicity prevailed even the more and precipitated the ousting of the regime in 1975. The Murtala — Obasanjo regime which sent Gowon packing from Dodan Barracks inaugurated the Jaji Declaration aimed at returning the political climate of the country to sanity but to no avail. The Second Republic (1979-83), presumably recognized as a democratically elected government with its fastidious and pro-
hibitively expensive presidential system under Alhaji Shehu Shagari was ruined by selfish and immoral acts of the Nigerian politicians. Shehu Shagari and his lieutenants unpardonably messed up the socio-economic and political situation in Nigeria. To have launched a policy asking simple folks to keep on “tightening their belts” was tantamount to the wickedness associated with conditions of first century Palestine where the rich bluntly refused to redistribute and restitute their ill-gotten wealth. The Buhari — Idiagbon (31 December 1983 — August 1985) inter-regnum was the fifth attempt by the military to save Nigerians from the throes of hunger and want consequent upon the depredations of the past regimes. Even though the history of the Babangida regime has not so much been documented, it has not got much ahead with meaningful programmes on the well-being of the Nigerian citizens and the workers. If the present Presidential Military System means well politically, the planned transition programme calls for a new vision, a new socio-political order in which the Nigerian Christians should actively be involved. And in the current Zeitgeist, the MAMSER (Mass Mobilization for Social and Economic Recovery) Nigerian Christians are invited to take the challenge. But shall the incoming civilian administration (The Third Republic) be any different from the past regimes? Yes, it can, bearing in mind that the political responsibility of Christians in post — 1992 Nigeria must be praxis oriented.

Christians must witness to God’s demands for justice and peace; for a meaningful life for Nigerians of every tribe and religion. The spirit of the Jesus — movement and its agenda exhort Nigerian Christians stepping into politics now to reject any economic system that permits the existence of abject, and unmitigated poverty side by side with extremes of affluence; that which allows one man and his family to feed continuously everyday on sub-standard and insufficient diet while another family consumes overspiced and extra-nourished food, half of which is thrown into the dust bin as waste; that condition which allows one man to wear rags, while another man wears a Fifteen thousand Naira outfit for only one occasion, that which permits the children of one man to die of a minor disease such as measles or yellow fever while another man has the possibility to send his child to London and California for the treatment of conjunctivitis (Apollo), that condition which allows a total of more than a hundred passengers to ride in a bus, sweating, choking and suffering for several hours in the traffic jam while another man sits in royal comfort at the back of a chauffeur driven hundred thousand Naira Mercedes Benz car fully air-conditioned. This provides us a pro-
foundly political manifesto. For Christians in a post 1992 era, politics shall not only be a reflection of what is but a continuous struggle for the realization of what ought to be (the oughtness). In all its ramifications, politics in the Third Republic must reflect the expression of Christian belief that Nigerian Christians expect the advent of the Lord every day. In carrying out their political responsibility, Christians must allow themselves to be guided by the Word of God. When politicians become insensitive to godly injunctions the temporal order becomes inhuman and oppressive. This Word of God is the Word that gives life. It is the Word that calls upon all Christians to become ‘salt of the earth’ and ‘light of the world’ in order to valorize in the spirit of Christ the total human condition. When listened to, this Word offers spiritual salvation, physical wholeness and economic well-being. Although the New Testament is not a textbook for contemporary economics and politics, it nonetheless reveals all the norms Christians need to recognize God’s will for the people in post-1992 Nigeria as regards their spiritual, material, political and socio-economic well-being.

The New Testament texts studied reveal that our predicament is not much too different from that lived by Jesus and his contemporaries. Christians aspiring for political nominations, elective posts and representative seats, ministerial as well as gubernatorial offices on state and national levels are called upon to heed the ‘gospel message’ and never any more to allow our Fatherland be misgoverned. As the transition programmes are being unfolded one after the other (local government elections, and 562 persons already inducted into the Constituent Assembly) and the D-Day (1992) just round the corner, the questions that keep agitating the minds of many a patriotic Nigerian are: who will, among the aspirants, transform the political decadence of Nigeria? Can our third attempt let democracy survive in Nigeria? Or will this be the last attempt? From which Party can a true leader emerge? Is Nigeria not in an awful dearth of good leadership? Questions as these and a host of others deserve urgent attention and responses from the theological stand-point. Indeed Nigeria needs direction; and her political candidates need a metanoia in order to solve the backlog of our political problems, the paradigms which are discernible from the reality of the Jesus — movement. As part of its agenda, the Jesus — movement tended towards fundamental changes in the political, economic and social conditions of the time. In that spirit, Nigerian Christians should by now be able to sift the grain from the chaff, the bad leaders from the good ones; and should be able to drop behind those persons who cannot hasten the
realization of the needed fundamental political change in Nigeria come 1992. Jesus achieved this change, inspite of the presence of zealotic and resistant pressure — groups in his camp, through no use of force but by his proclamation of the kingdom of God and the miraculous acts which attended his ministry during which all forces that hold man dominated were terrorized and tamed for good. Christians should desist from callous and smear campaigns typical of Nigerians' old ways of politiking and electioneering. Today Christians in Nigeria owe God a duty to vote into power Christ-like citizens from whom Nigerians irrespective of faith and tribe expect the dawn of a new social order and a new political era with its own set of newbreed who by their godly actions will help in reshaping the nation's destiny. Indeed, the pages of the New Testament indicate normatively that the greatest disservice Christians would render to their Fatherland is to refrain from partisan politics. Certainly, it is lamentable that Nigeria is still drifting politically and economically due to lack of responsible and purposeful leadership after twenty-seven years of independence. If Christian politicians can recognize that the Roman colonial chastisement of Palestine in the time of Jesus was a penalty for their obduracy and refusal to submit to change; they can also see our woeful attempts in a similar way and thereby recognize the need to vote in persons who can deliver the goods according the spirit of the 'New Era'. The change must include our wisdom to elect those who can, without ulterior motives, defend issues which are aimed at promoting healthy rivalry, peace, unity and prosperity of the country. All that Jesus did in Palestine did not neglect the material and spiritual well-being of his people. He did not allow himself to the swallowed by the influence of the hypocritical aristocracy of his day represented by hoi archiereis kai grammateis (chief-priests and the Scribes). His example behests Christian politicians to destroy our depraved nature as the peccati and emerge as the iusti, the righteous in order to sink selfish interests and inordinate pursuit and acquisition of material wealth. Jesus ministered to the people as servant. No where did he boss anyone. When addressed as the "good Teacher" (Lk 18:18) he rejected the title. In imitation, Christian politicians should see politics, this time, as a special vocation to serve and not to boss the masses. In this light, the preference of Igbo anthropological model of Onye ndu (the leader) against Onye Ochichi (the Ruler) which is close to the Christian sense of diakonos can further be developed to provide guiding ideals upon which we can build a new and qualitative leadership and civil authority needed for the survival of democracy in Nigeria.
Notes and References

1. Mk. 13:14-23
7. The concept has been a cause of much speculation by scholars of ancient history and the New Testament. Floods of studies have been produced in defense of the existence or non-existence of the provision in the Roman Statutes and Ordinances (tagmata). For one such and a recent study, see J.M.O’Connor, St. Paul’s Corinth: Texts and Archaeology, Good News Series Vol. 6, Michael Glazier, Wilmington, 1983, pp. 130-152.
9. There stands in contemporary Synoptic Studies serious discussion on the affinity between John and the Synoptics, especially Luke. The summary of the opinion is that both Luke and John have drawn from earliest primitive traditional material at the level of John, the redactor. Among several erudite works on the issue one such is, F. Neirynck,”Jean et les Synoptiques: Examen critique de l’exegese de M. -E Boismard, BETH XLIX, Leuven University Press, 1979
22. Antiquities, 14.4.3.; 74ff
23. See Antiquities, 14.5.4; 91.
24. See Antiquities, 18.4.2; 88.
25. Antiquities, 20.1.1; 6f
26. The social nature of the commands given by Luke suggests their Hellenistic provenance which is far removed from John the Baptist’s typical eschatology. Cf. C.M. Laymon et al. (eds.), *The Interpreter’s One-Volume Bible Commentary*, Nashville, Abingdon, 1971, p. 678
27. *De Bello Judaica*, 2. 13. 7; 266f.
38. See 1 Sam 8:7; Ps 47; Isa 33:22; Zeph 3:15.
39. Theissen, *The Sociology*
41. Could this posture not explain why the two groups co-operated towards the execution of Jesus on the gibbet.
42. Antiquities, 20.9.1; 197ff.
45. Theissen, *The Sociology*, p. 60
46. Mk. 14:58.
47. *De Bello Judaica* 7. 10. 1; 410; Antiquities 18. 1. 6;23.
48. See Matt. 8:10-12.
49. Mk. 9:42-50.
50. Matt 8:10-II/Lk 14:15; 22:29f.
51. Ek. 14:25.
52. Matt 19:18
57. Matt 5:5, 9.
CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS IN THE EARLY CHURCH AND THE CRISIS FACING THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN NIGERIA

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Preamble: *The Impact of Jesus on Social Relations in the Early Church.*

Opinions are divided on how to assess the political inclinations of Jesus of Nazareth. Despite the fact that Pilate’s verdict was politically motivated and that he was executed between two criminals (possibly political agitators), the New Testament tradition does not present him as a Zealot. The image presented of him in the New Testament is of one preoccupied with the Kingdom of God, present and taking effect in unbinding suffering men and women from evil (demons, sin, and oppression from the legal casuistry of the Scribes).

The increasing concern about the ‘just middle’ of religion and politics in Nigerian society has led theological associations to commission studies on “Church and Politics in Nigeria”. Studies on New Testament data by Nigerian theologians either deny or confirm Jesus’s involvement in politics.¹ When one however considers the Jewish milieu in which Jesus was living — a milieu which had borne traces of the Maccabean revolt (as from 167 B.C), the unpopular regime of the house of Herod (then limited to Galilee), the Roman direct rule of Judea as from the 6th century A.D with its exacting taxation, the dominance of the daily life of the Jewish man or woman by Scribes and Pharisees with their legalistic interpretation and observance of the law, the rise of Zealotism (as from the 6th c. A.D) and the generalized mood of Messianic expectation (a Messianism which is necessarily linked to liberation from Roman rule)² — one is compelled to admit that no religious statement would be politically neutral. P. Johnson is thus not exaggerating when he asserts:

Palestine was thus soaked in politico-religious apocalypticism. Irreverent politics and religious extremism were inextricably mixed. All Palestinian Jews to some extent believed in a Messianic solution. There were, it is true, many different doctrines of the Messiah but the variations were matters of detail and all rested on the unitary belief that foreign oppressors will be driven out and God alone would rule Israel. Thus a man who criticised the Romans was making a religious state-
Thus one can safely say that when Jesus or his followers attacked the ideological use of religion by the Scribes and Pharisees to hold the Jewish man or woman under bondage (legalism), it would be difficult for their audience not to read politics into his words. But more important still, despite the desire to be at peace with the state, as the New Testament tradition testifies, the Christian community saw its faith in Jesus the Christ as imposing a new social alternative:

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28).

Many exegetes would consider the above text a baptismal hymn — a new type of social relations flowing from being plunged into death with the Christ to rise to a new kind of life (Rom. 6:3-4). This new type of behaviour is not neutral to existing practices in the wider Roman society. All sorts of discriminations are abolished in principle; and people whose upward social mobility is halted because of societal circumstances (e.g. wealthy slaves, aliens not eligible for Roman citizenship, women) found the Christian alternative attractive.

Thus Jesus' deep feeling of solidarity with suffering and marginalized people is projected as an ideal and generalized in the Christian community as testified by Gal. 3:28. It is a new social mobilization in which the humanum is prioritized as manifestation of the divinum; and thus one should not be surprised that Jesus (and the Christian community) would prescribe religious solution to problems which are not simply religious.

My aim in this paper is to explore how far this Christian alternative operated in the first five hundred years of Christianity, and whether Christians can present a saving alternative to the present political debacle in Nigeria.

Christians as the Soul of the World:

In his correspondence with Emperor Trajan (112-113 A.D.), Pliny the Younger indicated how Christianity has spread all over the province of Bithynia.

For there are many of all ages, all classes, and even of both sexes who are or will be summoned to justice. The infection of this superstition has penetrated not only cities, but villages and the country-side, as well.
The *Institutum Neronianum* (Nero’s Decree), according to Tertulian, out-lawed being christian (*non licet esse christianos*). Thus to become a christian was *laesa maiestas* (an attack on the State). Christians were regarded as the scum of the earth, haters of the human race (says Tacitus who disliked them intensely).[9] Despite the bitter persecution that raged, christians could assign to themselves a universalist and eschatological role. The author of the letter to *Diognetus*, rejecting Judaism and Paganism, follows a philosophic thinking originating from Plato to declare christians as the *Soul of the World*. This Hellenistic christian[10] gives a classic definition of the role of the christian in the world:

Their existence is on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven. They obey the established laws, and they surpass the laws in their own lives... In a word, what the soul is in a body, this the christians are in the world. The soul is spread through all the members of the body, and christians through the diverse cities of the world... The soul is enclosed in the body, and yet itself holdeth the body together; so christians are kept in the world as in prison-house, and yet they themselves hold the world together.[11]

Thus even though christians are inoffensive, their presence in the world is not neutral. They have a universalist mission to hold the world together and transform the society. Indeed there appears to be an identity of purpose in the universalist interests of the christian movement and those of the Roman Empire. Thus Tertulian could assert that christians pray for the Emperor and for the postponement of the day of wrath, thereby assisting in the “countinuance of Rome”. His *Apology* is not merely a plea for the survival of christianity but “an argument which projects christianity as the ultimate hope of the survival of society itself”[12]. This identity of interest not withstanding, Tertulian would reject the Graeco-Roman world.

What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the church? Between heretics and christians? (On the Prescription of Heretics, 7)

Again he says:

There is no agreement between the divine and the human oath, the standard of Christ and the standard of the devil, the camp of light and the camp of darkness. One soul cannot be due to two masters — God and Caesar. (On Idolatry, 19)[13]

Diognetus and Tertulian are examples of a christian dogged belief in its mission as an alternative to existing social relations. The Graeco-Roman world needs the christian to continue in existence as the body needs the soul; but the christian must not compromise with
the wicked spirit of this world. The emergence of Constantine will modify this eschatological bent of the christian understanding of church-state relations a great deal.

**The Constantinian Revolution: Christianity as State Religion**

The Edict of Toleration decreed by the dying Galerius in 311 A.D. signalled religious freedom in the empire. The christians “who had abandoned the religions of their ancestors” and had not been persuaded to come back “to their senses” could “once again live as christians and reconstruct their meeting places”. Finally, “in accord with the indulgence which we show them, the christians must intercede to their god for our health and safety, for the empire and for themselves…”

For christianity this was momentous as it was revolutionary. As W.H.C. Frend says;

> For the first time a power other than the immortal gods was accepted as an influence on the destiny of the empire.

More momentous was the Edict of Milan of Constantine and Licinius for it projected first and foremost the christian religion: “We believed it necessary to decide never to refuse anyone the possibility of belonging to the christian religion or to another which seemed better for that one”. And all christian places of worship whether in the hands of the state or private individuals are to be returned without any delay and at no cost to the christians.

The conversion of Constantine, his emergence as sole master of the empire and the triumph of christianity as state religion to the detriment of Graeco-Roman religion led to a new understanding of church-state relations. In the East a political theology of integration predominated while in the West the inclination was towards separation of Church and State.

**Unity of Church and Empire under God’s Providence: The Eastern Political Theology**

The most influential exponent of this theory of Church-State relations is the historian Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea. As one who imbibed fully the christian world optimism of Origen and is also influenced by the writings of Philo; he saw the advance of christianity as based more in its “positive advantages for humanity in terms of politics and religion, rather than in terms of the 'seed of martyrs' or
fear of judgement".  

The emergence of the Roman empire (Augustus) and the emergence of "the first and the true religion" (Christianity) happened at the same period. The two are ordained to work in harmony. The persecutions are the work of "the demon who hates everything that is good, and is always hostile to the truth, and most bitterly opposed to the salvation of man", who thus "turned all his arts against the church".  

In the Oration of Eusebius on the celebration of Constantine's thirtieth year as emperor (335 A.D) he extolled the government of Constantine as an imitation of the heavenly powers. A government which has been victorious "not only over impious and savage foes, but over equally barbarous adversaries, the evil spirits themselves". The way Eusebius pictures the rule of the emperor and the divine origin of this rule leaves no one in doubt about who is the superior partner (or simply master) in the integrated State-Church:

This only begotten Word of God reigns, from ages which had no beginning, to infinite and endless ages, the partner of his Father's Kingdom. And (our emperor) ever beloved by him, who derives the source of imperial authority from above, and is strong in the power of this sacred title, has controlled the empire of the world for a long period of years.

And still in stronger terms:

...he (the emperor) directs his gaze above, and frames his earthly government according to the pattern of that Divine original, feeling strength in its conformity to the monarchy of God. And this conformity is granted by the Universal Sovereign to man alone of the creatures of this earth: for he only is the author of sovereign power, who decrees that all should be subject to the rule of one.

The emperors from Constantine to Justinian were conscious of their powers in matters of State and Church. Eastern Bishops deferred to this power. From theological to disciplinary matters, whether they understood the abtuse speculations or not, they were invited or undertook to arbitrate over ecclesiastical matters. Constantine not only convoked the council of Nicea but was said to have introduced the term homoousios. The two bishops who refused to sign the Nicene document were banished. The model for the church corresponds to his model of the empire: harmony, serenity, multiplicity in unity — a universalist and inclusive church. Constantine could thus threaten Bishop Athanasius who would not tolerate Arius:

As you know my wishes, pray admit freely any who wish to enter the church. If I
hear you have stopped anyone claiming membership I will immediately send an official to depose you and send you into exile. 22

Athanasius was subsequently banished. His restoration by Constantius II was again by imperial grace and not an ecclesiastical decision. He might complain about the justice of the emperor’s action but he never questioned the right of the emperor to pronounce on church matters.

The above pattern characterised church-state relations in the East. A State-Church was established. The peace in empire and church was assured by the emperor. This state-church is brought home to worshipers by decorations of the dome of Hagia Sophia Cathedral in Constantinople (completed and dedicated 537 A.D.). As Frend says,

... the representations of Justinian and of Theodora and their court made the worshipper aware how the monarchy was an extension of the hierarchy of heaven, which included their earthly rulers, their friends, and their military, civil, and ecclesiastical advisers. The spiritual was never entirely divorced from the material. Holiness was not, as it tended to be in the West, confined to the world beyond. 23

The Political Ideology of the Western Church: Separation

Tertulilans rejection of the Graeco-Roman society fairly represents the North African uncompromising church attitude to the State. The Donatist poser was the first test to the Universalist view of Constantine. The question was more complicated because local Punic and Berber resistance to Roman rule found expression in the Carthaginian Church and was entrenched in Donatism. 24 The Donatists who rejected ministry by members of the clergy who were traditores during the persecution requested a meeting in Arles to decide the fate of Caecilian whom they repudiated as Bishop of Carthage. When their view did not carry in Arles, they rejected the verdict of the council. Constantine imposed imperial will by force, sending Donatist bishops into exile and seizing their churches. This strengthened the Donatist resolve to suffer martyrdom and oppose the State satan.

In the Donatist controversy the Roman Church supported Constantine. There was a convergence of interests. However, when State interest and ecclesiastical interest diverged, there appeared to emerge a specific Western view of church and politics. For example, Constantius II was inclined to favour Arianism. Western bishops were insistent that this should not be the case — for the royal fiat was not canon law even if the East identified both.

Hosius of Cordoba in his letter to Constantius rejected the emperor’s habit of banishing bishops and outlined the limits of
Church-State relations:

Cease these proceedings, I beseech you, and remember that you are a mortal man... Intrude not yourself into ecclesiastical matters, neither give commands unto us concerning them; but learn from us, God has put into your hands the kingdom; to us he entrusted the affairs of His church... Neither therefore is it permitted unto us to exercise an earthly rule, nor have you, Sire, any authority to burn incense.

The Western doctrine of the Two Swords was emerging. Ambrose of Milan used similar arguments in his controversy with Valentinan II in 386. Through Ambrose we get an insight into the mind of the Western ecclesiastics. Bishops then were generally of the Roman nobility, and were of some standing in the empire. On this Ambrose had this to say: “we priests have our own way of rising to empire. Our infirmity is our own way to the throne. For when I am weak, then am I powerful.”

The decline in the fortunes of the Roman empire generated pessimism among the upper class Romans. Fleeing the world (fuga mundi) to follow the christian way and flee the wrath to come was seen to be a better alternative. The christian alternative created another city (Augustine’s City of God). Leaders in this city paralleled those of the doomed world. (Ambrose dressed always as a senator—alb and chasuble). And they had final say in matters affecting their interest before a christian emperor even when such were matters of peace in the empire. For example when Theodosius ordered christians of Callinicum to rebuild, at their own expense, a synagogue which they had burned down, Ambrose intervened to stop such an action. His antisemitism was clear. Theodosius tamely bowed before Ambrose’s discriminatory stance. Again the Bishop of Milan was also up in arms against Theodosius when the latter ordered the massacre of 6000 persons at Thessalonica. He called on the emperor as the Prophet Nathan called on David to repent; and he would not preside at the eucharist before the emperor until he repented.

Over the issue of Arianism, Ambrose was uncompromising with the State. Even besieged in his church by soldiers of Empress Justina, he did not flinch: “The presence of soldiers and the noise of arms surrounding the church do not shake my faith”. For Ambrose the christian leader is in the church and not above it. In this way imperial authority became aligned completely behind orthodox Catholic church and the church behind imperial authority when it was stamping our paganism and heresy.

Augustine’s view of the matter is not different. The ideal christian
emperor governs with justice, is not puffed up by flatterers, thinks of sovereignty as a ministry of God and uses it to spread the true religion. In the spread of the "true religion" Augustine's church-state marriage was clear. Heresy must not only be allowed to exist but error must be nipped in the bud. He employed Luke 14:23 to justify using force to bring heretics back: "Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in". He thus supervised the demise of Donatists and encouraged the persecution of Pelagians.

The West lacked the optimistic vision of the world which facilitated integration of church and state in the East. Rather this world is considered evil and asceticism is the only way to individual purification. Thus the general Western Christian attitude is to flee the world. In Donatist North Africa the state remained a persecutor and Christians (Donatists) were ready to oppose it as well as to suffer martyrdom. However the orthodox (Roman) church supported such Christian leaders who were relentlessly preoccupied with fighting errors in the world — especially paganism and heresy. Thus a powerful church denied the same religious liberty to others which it pleaded for in its time of weakness.

The Christian Church in Nigeria and its Relation to the State.

Most Nigerians have 1992 in view. The Federal Military Government's transition programme is devised to keep the rest of us geared towards 1992. If one could go by the last local government elections and the polarization of Muslims and Christians in the Constituent Assembly, it would appear that religious affiliation would be a determining factor for the Nigerian electorate.

The issue is thus grave. One could consider what the ideal Christian leader would be; or what Christians could do to capture power. But when one reflects on the spectre of religious intolerance which is a fact of Nigerian life, one should rather concentrate on what alternatives would generate a more healthy socio-political life in Nigeria.

The brief history of church-state relations outlined above shows that there was discordance in the Christian response when the Roman empire became Christian. The East preferred a close link between Church and State; however, the emperor was obviously the superior partner in the union. The church's eschatological witness lost much of its vigour. In the West a pessimistic view of the world predominated. Orthodox Christianity's interest was other worldly — souls must be saved through stamping our error, and the church aligned itself behind the emperor when he was doing just this no mat-
ter what means he employed.

In Nigeria the situation is different. Muslims are already known to want a close relationship between religious practice and the state; and christians show that they are very much part and parcel of this nation even though a definite christian approach to life must be adopted. For example, early last year (February 23-26, 1988) the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria declared “Political Involvement” to be “a sacred mission of service”. So it is not only a right but a duty to offer one’s services through political leadership in order to establish “a just and moral social order in our nation”. This is a departure from the inherited western christian view of ‘fleeing the world’. Rather the mission of ‘tending the earth’ (cf. Gen. 2:15) is optimistically embraced as in the Eastern church.

But how do christians work for a just and moral social order when religion in Nigeria has become a factor for social disintegration? It is my view that we may have a key to chart a new course in the lived experience of Jesus and the early christians. If we plunge back into the christian roots and reflect on Jesus’ critique of his society (especially the ideological exploitation of religion to oppress the weak), the egalitarianism offered by the christian community (liberation of the oppressed), and awareness of an eschatological and universalist mission by a persecuted church, we may realize that in Nigeria today christians could lead the fight to get beyond religion (its ideological use) in order to save the life of the Nigerian man or woman. Nigerian christian churches should thus be in the forefront in fighting for Religious Freedom.

Religious Freedom as Fundamental Key to Church-State Relations in Nigeria.

The legal aspect of Religious Freedom is already entrenched in the Nigerian constitution:

Every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom (either alone or in community with others, and in public or in private) to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance.

Religious language is self-involving, because the codes employed are symbolic codes. Whether it is invocation (‘My Lord and my God’) or ritual (e.g. breaking of the cola-nut), religious action relates men and women (the human community) personally to a being or beings which give consistency to Human Life in the World (God/Allah).
When the 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides freedom to manifest and propagate one's religion, we must realise that we are not dealing with a neutral code. It is not simply a question of giving information about creeds and rituals rather it is a situation where knowledge is imparted and acquired by doing, by involving oneself, by commitment. The commitment links the confessing community and individuals to the guarantors of certitude, the foundation. The community inhabits a kind of an environment in its symbols — breathing spaces that help it discover the possibilities that Life offers. The religious ground of any confessing community is its familiar ground which it rightly confesses as unique.

When the 1979 Constitution declares freedom to propagate one's religion etc, it is a freedom to communicate one's way of experiencing Life's Foundation to others. One seeks for converts by proposing one's way as having power to sustain Life in the World over other existing ways. Conversion thus implies subversion — persuading one to abandon one way in order to embrace another way. In an ideal situation, this persuasion takes the form of dialogue: between the enquirer/audience and a confessing community in which the enquirer encounters the community's Life-Foundation. Conversion becomes for the enquirer/audience a discovery of a more satisfying Life-Foundation opening up Life to its possibilities.

However, the Nigerian situation shows that the ideal is hard to attain, especially with regard to the two aggressively missionary religions (Islam and Christianity). With a zeal comparable to that of emperors Constantine and Charlemagne, the cause of Islam was embraced by Uthman dan Fodio to the point that the medieval cuius regio eius religio was replicated in the Sokoto caliphate. The will of the Northern ruling class and that of Allah were indistinguishable. Similarly in the christianisation of Southern Nigeria, as from the mid-19th Century, the colonial will and the desires of the propagators of christ'unity often tallied. In each case little place was given to dialogue. These missionary religions subdued the existing traditional religion in their areas of dominance.

In recent times the wave of intolerance has gone beyond oppressing practitioners of traditional religion to attacking non-purist sects within the one religion, and unhappily to confrontation between muslims and christians. Yola, Kaduna, Kafanchan, Kano bear witness to how different ways of approaching Life-Foundation have led to the destruction of human life and property. An end to the intolerance appears to be far away. Christians are smarting under Nigeria’s membership of the Organisation of Islamic Conference
(OIC) — there is no clear indication from Government that Nigeria has pulled out; the majority of christians, like the Catholic hierarchy, look on the presence of Sharia' in "the nation's official system of laws until now" as "a regrettable anomaly which our nation can no longer allow to continue"; christians accuse Government of allowing Abuja (Federal Capital) to take the shape of an Islamic Capital. Muslims reply that to expunge the Sharia' from the Constitution is to deny them their fundamental rights; that Government has continued the colonial (and they insist christian) system to the disadvantage of Muslims. Religion has become the political issue; religious leaders are turning out to be political power brokers. Each religion, each way, is gradually being declared the only way Human Life can be thought and lived in Nigeria. Politicians (military and civilian) and extremists exploit the emotive issue of religion to plant fear in the minds of the unsuspecting, diminishing the possibilities for human life in Nigeria. The nation sits on a keg of gun-powder. For christians, church-state relations could not be more delicate: Islam and Christianity as practised in Nigeria have become overtly political, just as the political leadership is overtly religious. The christian alternative, in my view, should grapple with the eschatological intent (being in the world but not of the world) while insisting on the necessity of Nigerians grasping the value religions seek — Life in its fullness. The christian view of religious freedom, I suggest, should get beyond religion, that is, its ideological exploitation.

Christian Churches in Nigeria to move Beyond Religion

The task facing the Christian Church in Nigeria is not only combating extremism in its ranks and containing Muslim extremists but also facing up to the incoherent stand of Government on religious matters. It appears that Government, military or civilian, is swayed either by religious or political motives. In other words, a christian or muslim head of State could believe that his religious affiliation obliges him to grant privileges to his own religion, or, alternatively, the Head of State could see granting privileges to one or the other religion or playing one religion against the other, as a way of making political gains. In either way, seeds of religious intolerance are being sown.

I think that the Christian Church can play an invaluable role which may project it (in the vision of Tertullian) as "the ultimate hope of the survival of society itself". The church must perform a function of clarification of the end of Religion in order to debunk the exploers of Religion. This task of clarification, in its ranks and for the general
public, is the effective way of propagating religious freedom — i.e. the liberation of the Nigerian man and woman from exploitation in order to embrace fully the aim or end of religion. And I see the aim or end of religion as Human Life embraced fully thereby keeping it in living contact with what is confessed as its source and thus moving towards future realisation of all Life’s possibilities.

For the Christian Church in Nigeria, this option is a courageous one. It declares that all religions, including the Christian religion, are to be considered a means to an end; for to consider religion as an end in itself will only create a momentary and illusory happiness in Nigerians paving the way to fanaticism and war. With a boldness similar to that of John Paul II, the Nigerian Church nurtures in the life of Nigerians the fundamental value religions seek. John Paul II, on October 27, 1986 invited Christians, Muslims, Shintoists, Confucianists, Buddhists, African Traditional Religionists (all in all about 130 religious leaders), and had a place set for each one of them to pray for PEACE in the world. This reinforces the idea that Peace is greater than any religion, and that the religions (whatever be their diverging points of doctrine and ritual) may agree to serve the human value of Peace.

The pursuit of the human value of life, which the religious environment helps Nigerians to live in its possibilities, would commit Christian Churches in Nigeria to emphasise those positive aspects of our religions which are easily forgotten because of controversy. Religious freedom thus liberates the church to move into dialogue or to prepare its members to dialogue with practitioners of other Nigerian religions. For if one is prompted to react in anger to a Quaddafi or to Muslim fundamentalists in Nigeria who see Christians as infidels, atheists, and agents of imperialism, and who would want nothing less than an Islamic State, one should never forget that these are extremists. The church should reflect on and refer its members to such passages of the Qur’an which insist on justice without frontiers and inter-religious dialogue. For example:

O you who believe, be upright for Allah, bearer of witness with justice, and let not hatred of a people incite you not to act equitably. Be just, that is nearer to God-fearing duty. And fear God; surely God knows the thoughts in your breasts (Qur’an 5, v.7).

And about Christians:

And argue not with the People of the Book except by what is best, save such of them as act unjustly. But say: we believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you, and our God and your God is one and to Him we submit (Qur’an 29, v.46).
When one relates such passages to Christian principles of interpersonal relationship as contained in stories like that of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:30-37) one sees how Nigerian religious persons are called upon to move beyond religion to live the values proclaimed by the Scriptures of their religions.

The Christian church living out the freedom by which Christ liberated us becomes free to blaze this trail and liberate Nigerians from military and civilian politicians and other opportunists who divert religion from its end using it to serve their ideological interests. It is true that religion as an important dimension of human life (man is a religious animal) may never be relegated to the domain of private life - religious ritual is corporate, public action. But since religion is concerned with the deepest aspect of human life - its beginning and its end - it must not be allowed to be manipulated by politicians who are ever tempted by its force and who could seduce the unsuspecting into believing that they are working for the common good.

The State manipulation of religion for political purposes may be effectively resisted by a courageous Christian church. The church enlightens its followers and the general public on the end of religion which lies beyond religion. It entrenches conviction in the real basis of religion which is human life lived in full; and it outlaws, in practice, the blasphemous assertion that one can kill in the name of God.

In this way Christians may become in Tertullian’s words “the ultimate hope of the survival of (Nigerian) society itself” not in the negative Western sense of fleeing the world but in the Eastern sense of accepting political leadership and creating through their competence “a just and moral social order” (Nigerian Bishops). They do this through embracing the cause of humanity (human life as it advances and tends towards full realisation — the very end of religion) which cannot be realised apart from political involvement in the concrete situation. Since Christians may not naively think that anybody who assumes power (especially Christian leaders) would be the envoy of God (the danger of Eastern Christian political optimism), they must then lend their support to leaders who bear credible and verifiable testimony to their passion for the advance of humanity. Thus the Nigerian Christian endeavours to stand on an inclusive platform — projecting the total human progress of Nigerians and supporting those who embrace and give concrete account of working for such progress.

On the whole the church’s role in Nigeria today is two-fold: to lead Nigerian religious persons (beginning with Christians) into living and developing those values of human life (as the Eastern Church em-
phases) which the religions seek thereby making Nigerians more conscious of their role as architects of their common history; and then acting as a watch-dog (like the Western church) to prevent Government, politicians and others, who would wish to do so, from exploiting religion for their own ideological interests.
NOTES

1. See the paper of Rev. P.D. Akpunonu presented at the Conference of the Catholic Theological Association of Nigeria (Jos, April 5-8, 1988) and Dr. Chris-manus Ukachukwu at the meeting of EANT (Ekpoma, May 7, 1988).


5. See for example Rom. 13:1-7


7. See J.L. Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1976, Ch.3.


9. Tacitus, Annales, 15.44.


13. A. Cunningham, The Early Church and the State, p.11

14. A. Cunningham, The Early Church and the State, p.40


16. A. Cunningham, The Early Church and the State, pp.41-42

17. Frend. op. cit., 78


20. Ibid, II.1

21. Ibid, III.5


23. Frend, op. cit., 836

24. Johnson, Ibid, p.82

25. Cited by Frend, p.536


27. Ambrose of Milan, Letter 51

28. Ambrose of Milan, Sermon Against Auxentius, no. 4.

29. St. Augustine, City of God, Ch. 24


34. See La Documentation Catholique LXXXIII, December, 1986.
ETHICS OF POLITICS IN NIGERIA:
THE CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Chris. I. Ejizu

1. Defining The Focus

The widespread impression among Nigerians that politics is a dirty game does not set aside the crucial significance of politics in human life in general, or in the continued fortunes of this country in particular. The genesis of that prevailing negative view is of course fairly well known. Nigerians had committed themselves at the attainment of national independence in 1960 to the building of a just, peaceful and prosperous society where no one shall be oppressed. The expectations and dreams of many nationalists and patriots vaulted very high as the Nigerian flag replaced the Union Jack. This marked the termination of colonial subjugation and the assumption by Nigerians of the political power and mandate to lead the young independent nation to a successful realisation of the set goals.

But sadly, the history of Nigeria since then has virtually been one unremitting monotony of political blundering, unbridled corruption, turmoil and decadence. In the midst of the dis-illusionment, numerous Nigerians have developed deep-seated apathy for politics and everything political. It is commonly assumed that only people of little or no moral worth practise it. Some people, most of them Christians, have even tried to justify their sworn indifference on certain religio-ethical grounds. Neither Jesus nor any of his close associates took part in politics. They were simply interested in a religion that preached love and forgiveness. Some others contend that since it would be impossible to live out the high ethical demands of Jesus in the context of corrupt and crises-ridden Nigerian political life, one had better keep off.

There is yet another dimension to the matter. Certain developments in the history of Christianity, and particularly in the missionary history of various Nigerian groups, have also contributed to ill-dispose people towards politics. By the time Christianity arrived Nigerian shores in the mid-nineteenth century, the wedge which rationalism and its allied developments in Europe introduced between religion and the sacred realm on the one hand, and the civil and secular sphere on the other, had become well entrenched. And there
was the increasing trend to limit religion, at least theoretically, to the domain of individual/personal faith and piety. Those events have far-reaching implications for the kind of government Nigeria inherited from her colonial master, as well as the pattern of relationship that continues to exist between civil government authorities and religious leaders.

Scholars have also tried to show some link between the ill-disposition of many Nigerian Christians towards politics and the long-standing Irish anti-pathy for British oppression and domination back home. (Ireland being Nigeria’s number one supplier of expatriate missionaries, while Britain as Nigeria’s imperial master, controlled the political realm). This Irish anti-pathy was unobtrusively foisted on Nigerian disciples and wards and has subconsciously been influencing their political behaviour.\(^3\) Finally, attention has also been called to the “strongly eschatological frame of reference” of the Christianity which both protestant evangelicals and post-Tridentine catholics spread in Nigeria with its fundamental negative view of the world and its affairs.\(^4\) Since their main interest in life was expected to be other-worldly, many converts were brought up to dismiss politics as dirty, devilish and only fit for crooks, cheats and liars.

Admittedly, most of the developments have since ceased. But their lingering effect on the attitudinal tendencies of numerous converts to Christianity should not be under-estimated. In any event, this paper assumes that the full explanation of the dominant impression of politics among many contemporary Nigerians can best be appreciated against that important historical background. In another light, that background throws up a number of basic issues that are of immediate concern to us in this essay. These include the relationship of politics and ethics, the correct teaching of the New Testament and Christian religion on politics, and the real challenges confronting Nigerian Christians in nation-building.

2.1 The Ethical Basis of Politics

Politics, like its twin power, is an integral feature of man’s social existence and interaction. From its original Greek root (\textit{Polis} — city — state), politics simply refers to the art of governance, a dynamic process that entails the mobilisation of human and other resources, managing, directing and enforcing the affairs of public policy and decisions towards the regulation of social order. In an extended sense, politics applies to different forms of organisation and direction of human interests at various levels of society, including the family,
village, national, international and church with some purpose in view. And within that broad frame, history has known a wide variety of political forms and types of government.

Because politics is essentially about governance, it primarily involves the structuring of power for achieving some articulated goals. And experts distinguish two levels of operation; the external and the internal. The external level concerns the structuring or the administrative organisation, while the internal refers to the undergirding ideology which informs policy. At the latter level, the question of the responsibility of power is posed: power is to be used for whom? to achieve what goals? Power itself is of course, neutral and could only be recognised by what it achieves in the dynamic process of politics. As H.N. Nwosu aptly articulates it, in all its modulations power points to some capacity to make things happen.  

Ethics, like politics, is rooted in the nature of man. And human conduct is a common subject to both. But ethics specifically zeros in on human conduct from the perspective of its rightness or wrongness. In spite of divergencies introduced by cultural and historical experiences of different groups, it is widely accepted that ethical values and judgements are objective, and that the nature of man properly understood, is the primary norm of that objectivity. An action could, therefore, be characterised as ‘good’ (right) or ‘bad’ (wrong) to the extent it tallies with or departs from the nature of man. This is clearly the foundation of the inalienable rights of all members of the human family, otherwise known as Universal Human Rights.  

The differing propositions of some contrary theories like those of the subjectivists (which define the rightness of an action in terms of the feelings of approval which a person or a group of people has towards it), or the Marxist school of thought (which maintains that “there are no objective standards of moral or political theory’’ independent of the economic processes), although they do not come directly within the scope of this essay, are unacceptable and untenable. Certain ethical values form the basis on which human society is predicated. And this is as much true of the Communist world as it is of the Western democracies. Such values are in themselves good and objective because they accord with the rational nature of human beings as such. In the view of J.D. Mabbott without such values, “no civilised society could survive and few values could be achieved. The rules against killing and promise-breaking are of this kind.

With this clarification of basic terms, it should not be too difficult to appreciate the fundamental relationship between ethics and
politics. Human conduct, whether in the political or economic realm, usually proceeds from the nature of man as such, that is, from man's intellect and will with some end in view. The human agent is generally presumed to be responsible, answerable and accountable for one's action, in other words, the action is imputable, chargeable and attributable to the agent. And precisely because of the objectivity of ethical values and judgements, such an action is considered as either right or wrong. Ethics, therefore, underlies and forms the basis of politics. This is particularly true of the undergirding ideology which informs policy. At this level, the issues (e.g. equality before the law, human dignity and basic rights of the individual) are predominantly ethical or moral in character. Furthermore, ethics underpins governance in terms of stewardship of resources and regulation of social relationships in such manner that primary values of society such as justice, peace, individual and communal well-being are achieved and maintained. Finally, it relates to the external structuring or the administrative organisation in so far as they constitute the vehicles for achieving articulated goals.

In fact, for Aristotle, the ancient Greek philosopher, politics is social ethic since it deals with people in group activity. Human beings are animals of polis and their natural tendency is to form into and act within groups in order to attain eudemonia (happiness). W.D. Ross further amplifies;

> Aristotle's ethics, no doubt, are social, and his politics are ethical; he does not forget in the Ethics (title of his book) that the individual is essentially a member of a society, nor in the Politics (book title) that the good life of the state exists only in the lives of its citizens.

### 2.2 The Religious Perspective

The three major religions of Nigeria (the Indigenous Religion, Islam and Christianity), are heavily ethical in nature. Each has a definite vision of the universe and reality as a whole as well as the place of man in the scheme of things (cosmology). In common parlance, each of them constitutes a distinct ideology. Not surprisingly, therefore, each posits a clear view on the vital issues of the source and legitimation of power and its dynamic mobilisation in politics. Invariably, such a vision is basically related to the overall deistic and theistic beliefs of the respective religions.

For Christianity specifically, power is rooted in the creative purposes of God. Jesus Christ is the image of
the invisible God, the first-born of all creation, for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominations or principalities or authorities — all things were created through him and for him.

The power which human beings wield derives ultimately from God and is subject to the providential sovereignty of God. It is an essential aspect of the divine design for man’s individual and public good. However, in the contemporary order of things, power is part of the total nature of man that is fallen. Although redeemed by Christ, the tendency for power and other human structures, and even man himself, to claim for themselves absolute values, in other words, to assume the status of material gods, is real. Christianity clearly rejects any such claim as absurd. And it insists on the essential relationship of politics to the overall design of God in creation and salvation history. Human beings hold power in trust. And at all levels of its articulation and structuring, it should aid people to the full realisation of their ultimate mission on earth. Contrary political ideologies and activities are clearly a travesty of the Christian ethical vision of reality.

3.1 Christ, Church And Politics

The clarity which marks the New Testament view of the fundamental link of ethics and politics is not very evident in the personal attitude of Jesus to practical politics. Although Palestine at the time of Jesus, like that of neighbouring Arabia in the time of Mohammed some centuries later, was a hot political region, Jesus, unlike Mohammed, assumed a far less determinate posture. And this has given rise to divergent interpretations of the New Testament accounts relating to Jesus and politics.

The historico-political setting of Palestine at the beginning of the ministry of Jesus is important. With the banishment of Archelaus to Gaul in 6 A.D., Judaea came under the direct rule of Rome, governed by a Legate in Syria and a Procurator in Judaea. As a Roman province, its people were liable to taxation (landed property and personal). As usual, many Judeans resented that domination, particularly the rendering of tribute. Judas of Gamala, commonly known as Judas the Galilean, was quite vocal in his opposition, and he evolved some slogans which Josephus referred to as the Fourth Philosophy. While the Roman official, Sulpicius Quirinius was organising the census for the full implementation the tax laws in Judaea in 6 A.D., Judas openly campaigned against Roman rule and preached that it was a sin to pay tribute to Rome. The revolt which he incited was promptly quelled. But the Fourth Philosophy surviv-
ed in the circle of Jewish patriotic/liberation fighters called the Zealots whose motto was "No King but God". From that group, Jesus recruited one of his twelve disciples, Simon the Zealot.

Strangely enough (as some reason) Jesus did not make much personal commitment as such to the politically hot situation of his time. In fact, a school of thought in biblical scholarship concludes that:

The Kingdom that Jesus came to establish was of such higher nature and more lasting that he could not be expected to busy his time with a transient earthly kingdom.

It contends that Jesus "was not a social revolutionary nor a political activist." Another school of thought however, with S.G.F. Brandon as its chief protagonist, argues that the ministry of Jesus had a strong political colouring. For certain, Jesus had great sympathy for the Zealots and had declared that "I came not to bring peace but the sword". It claims that Jesus was condemned for sedition and was crucified between two freedom fighters. The apparent pacific image of Christ in the New Testament was only a calculated design of the hagiographers who wrote in and for the Roman world.

Whether one endorses either or none of the two positions, it is beyond dispute that most of the pronouncements of Jesus on social justice, love of neighbour and even one's enemy, peace, attitude to the poor and the oppressed, human dignity and equality, have tremendous revolutionary content. More importantly, the fact that he called people to follow him and his new way of life, thereby setting up an alternative to the status quo, is itself a radical move. He charged his followers as salt of the earth and leaven of society, to transform the world with his new ideals and values.

Jesus' approach is a religious response to a situation in which people were looking for a politico-military solution. But in the end, the approach of Jesus proved decisive and its success much more lasting. His religion has since continued to conquer empires and nations and his ethical values and insights to transform cultures and civilisations. Finally, it is pertinent to recall the significant influence of the ethics of Jesus in the constitutions of most Western nations and the United Nations declaration on the Universal Human Rights (including human equality, individual right to freedom, conscience).

3.2 Church And Politics

The New Testament does not leave anyone in doubt about the position of the early Church concerning civil government. The Apostles stuck to their primary assignment of spreading the gospel of Christ from place to place. However, as P.D. Akpuno suggests,
the early establishment of the Church in Rome was a political move.

It was a matter of pride, and of good strategy to establish a foothold in Rome. It served to get good information, to establish influence and to carry out financial transactions. The circumstances of Rome provided the background for a clear statement by Paul on the relation of the early Christians to civil authority. Romans 13 reveals the mind of the early Church on the source of power which politicians wield and the duties of Christians to the State. In First Timothy, 2:1-4 Christians are also urged to offer prayers for civil rules, for by so doing, “we please God, and are able to live religious and reverent lives in peace and quiet”.

Over time, Christianity found its way into the power sanctuaries of Rome, and emerging as a State region, it came into the full blare of the politics of Roman empire. From Rome, it was easily transported to other parts of the world. Today, the 44 countries in which Christianity still enjoys the status of official religion, reminds one of a long period in world history during which Christian religion and ethical principles were the most dominant factors of life for various nations and cultures.

Even with the emergence of secular and democratic politics in many of the erstwhile official Christian States, Christian ethics still greatly informs the civilisation and politics of countries like France, England and West Germany. In some of these nations, political parties are still formed and inspired by Christian ideals (for example, The Christian Democratic Union, C.D.U., in West Germany). Other instances of the rather intricate ways in which Christian religion and ethics play significant roles in the socio-political life of many nations today are readily available in the liberation campaigns of Latin America, the anti-nuclear campaign of Monsignor Bruce Kent in England, the Pro-Life crusade in U.S.A. and Bishop Desmond Tutu’s campaign for a peaceful and democratic South-Africa for black and white people alike. And political theology which handles a wide variety of topical issues like war, refugees, human rights, disarmament, justice and peace, is as much a legitimate branch of Christian studies today as ecclesiology or dogmatic theology.

4.1 Echoes From The Nigerian Scene

The Nigerian political scene is as interesting as it is ambivalent. The multiplicity of distinct ethnic groups federated into one nation, the diversity of religions, value scales and moral norms, are at once a source of strength as well as weakness. And the double standards of
conduct that marked the period of colonial experience are all factors that continue to predispose the course of events in Nigeria. But it appears that the root cause of the disillusionment of many Nigerians with politics is the endemic gap that prevails between articulated goals and actual performance (theory and practice).

In terms of theoretical vision, Nigerian post-independence politics compares favourably in many respects with that of many Western democracies. Both the traditional background of the different groups and the legacies of the colonial administration have tended to favour the formulation of political constitutions that are anchored in the belief in the existence of God, human equality, freedom and sound ethical principles. Nigeria is not only a signatory to the United Nation’s declaration on The Universal Human Rights, the old and new national anthems, the pledge and even the different manifestos of defunct political parties of the past two republics, affirm more or less the general principles (equality, fairness, freedom, etc.) on which humane civilisations are founded and sustained in many other parts of the world. The second stanza of the current national anthem for instance, sums up Nigeria’s prayerful aspiration thus;

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

The evolving Nigerian Constitution enshrined those same ideals and values, as well as spelt out their intricate implications in the key areas of national life. Various national policies and development programmes are supposed to be articulations of the broad principles in specific areas of need. One clear example is in the field of education. The national education policy of 1977 which visualised the 6 3-3-4 system set out to chart a new programme of education that best favours the emergence of a self-reliant nation and a well integrated development. In the vital areas of ideology and policy formulation, therefore, one could safely conclude that the political insights of post-independent Nigeria are based on solid ethical principles — deriving mainly from the nature of man and certain fundamental religious convictions. As such, they compare favourably with those of many other nations.
But sadly enough, the decisive area of practical politics appears to have all along been the bane of Nigerian social engineering. This falls squarely within the specific areas of stewardship of resources, the external structuring of power and regulation of social relationships in such a way that individual and communal well-being are achieved and maintained. Normally, it is expected that the articulated policies and goals should determine the kind of human and other resources that are mobilised to ensure the most efficient realisation at the practical level. But there precisely lies the crux of the Nigerian political situation.

It appears that Nigerian political actors and civil functionaries excel in thwarting the best intentioned programmes by interjecting all kinds of extraneous values and factors, as well as giving free rein to all sorts of primitive urges in practical politics. The issues are pre-eminently ethical. Whichever way one looks at the subject; whether it is the rank indiscipline and corruption that characterise the daily life of citizens or the terrible events that have generally precipitated the toppling of elected governments, the recurrent indictments have always crystallised around one form of gross misconduct or another, in other words, flagrant disregard of acceptable norms and enunciated goals on the part of officials.

A. Dzurgba who catalogued the causes of the fall of the First Nigerian Republic as; “the misuse of economic resources, corruption, nepotism, lawlessness, recklessness, indiscipline, dishonesty, extravagance, misuse of political power, denial of human rights, and mutual jealousies, thuggery, oppression, suppression, rigging of elections, inflating of census figures and bloody riots”, arrives at the following interesting conclusion; “My study claims that all these causes are more ethical than anything else we can think of.” Professor Chinua Achebe who sets his fascinating booklet The Trouble With Nigeria against the background of the Second Republic details the following as part of the causes of Nigeria’s socio-political woes; tribalism, false image of ourselves, social injustice and the cult of mediocrity, indiscipline and corruption. Even the fact that military dictatorship has dominated the greater period of Nigeria’s post-independent history is in itself a clear sign of the irresponsibility of the nation’s political actors, And not even those self-proclaimed corrective military regimes have escaped allegations of gross misconduct and corruption in their attempts at governance. Finally, it is pertinent to recall that the launching by President Shehu Shagari in 1982 of The Ethical Revolution followed later by the War Against Indiscipline (WA!) by the military administration, are all open confes-
sions of Nigeria’s woeful failure to abide by widely accepted basic ethical norms which undergird purposeful political behaviour and ensure the successful achievement of stipulated common goals.

The case of the national census makes a typical illustration of how unethical practices and extraneous values have continued to frustrate fundamental national projects. Three successive attempts that have been made since independence, have all been failures as the figures returned were found to be unreliable. In 1962, Mr. Warran, the Chief Census Officer, announced the results with a total of 56 million. A breakdown of the figures showed that Northern Region increased by 30 per cent over the 1952/53 census, Eastern Region gained a staggering 71 per cent, Western Region 70 per cent and Lagos rose by 152 per cent. At the end, the results were declared null and void. And abortive effort was made the following year, 1963. The figures returned that year became a subject of vigorous debate in the Supreme Court. The military staked its reputation in the 1973 exercise. And to its utter dismay, the outcome proved as unreliable as before. The figure of 80 million meant an incredible 43 per cent growth in population in a period of ten years. The result was found greatly inflated, unacceptable and therefore had to be cancelled. Today, the only census figures which this nation is sure of and still relies on are those of the colonial period, 1952/53.

In spite of the huge losses in resources involved, the shameful census failures are relatively nothing when compared to the shocking revelations of malpractices in the management of economic and financial resources by political actors and public officers as well as horrifying records of electoral performances including brutal killings of opponents, rigging and arson. The level of decadence in Nigeria today is such that many people frankly consider the very continued survival of the nation in the midst of the scourge as a miracle of some sort, others in a state of bewilderment, simply content themselves with echoing the popular tune; “Which Way Nigeria?”

5. **Conclusion: The Christian Challenge**

The sudden upsurge of interest in national political trends among Christians in present-day Nigeria is partly a measure of their dissatisfaction with the *status quo* as well as a response to certain exigencies. Over a considerable period of apathy arising largely from an admixture of historical circumstances and developments, a vast majority of Christians let politics in Nigeria become a cesspool. And the toll of that disquieting condition on people's sensitivity to
sound ethical ideals and values like truth, justice, responsibility and fairplay, is as devastating as its grip on the socio-economic fortunes of the country is stifling. The critical issue now confronting Christians is whether or not to sustain and effectively mobilise the recently aroused interest in political trends towards a positive and lasting transformation of the society.

In the view of this essay, while the summon of late Francis Kwame Nkrumah (ex-president of Ghana), “Seek ye first the political kingdom”, might sound rather far-fetched, Christians in Nigeria should not allow the vital insight and implication of that historic message to be lost on them. Politics, as this paper has tried to show, is a crucial and inescapable fact of social life. Like economics, commercial enterprise, etc., it is not dirty in itself. Rather, as F.A. Arinze clearly points out:

If, however, the politician takes and gives bribes, assassinates other people’s characters ... exploits women and embezzles government and party funds, then it is he (or she), not politics, that is dirty. 31

On another score, the Catholic Bishop’s Conference of Nigeria, had in a recent communiqué re-iterated that participation in politics is a right and duty for Christians. 32

The rest of the challenge appears mainly two-fold; purposeful training and encouragement of Christians for their mission of true witness and leadership in society, and meaningful presence of the Christian religion (Church) in the specific and vital context of politics in Nigeria. The issues entail a sustained process of formation leading to a continuing conversion of the baptised to the ethical ideals and principles of Jesus as well as a de-emphasis on any aspect, including doctrinal interpretation and internal organisational structures of individual Church-groups that might impair the full development of prerequisite attitudes and skills for effective leadership by Christians. They also imply that Christian groups (Churches), as organised bodies of the people of God, must be in politics even though not of politics. 33 On the one hand convinced Christians ought to be encouraged and supported to gain political power at all levels of the nation’s life and use it for the creation of “a nation where peace and justice reign”. Then, on the other, as true witnesses of Jesus in the society, Church-groups in Nigeria owe it a primary duty to make their prophetic voice of dissent heard loud and clear in situations involving fundamental principles of individual and communal well-being, and in which the threat of power to assume the status of an absolute value is real.
Politics in itself is good. Its central importance in nation-building becomes even more focal when viewed against the background of Nigeria as one of the young and developing nations of the world. Perforce, therefore, good and convinced Christians should be mobilised, encouraged and sustained to boldly join politics and aspire to leading positions at all levels of governance in Nigeria, so that from their vantage positions and strong ethical background, they will be able to contribute in establishing the solid foundation and tradition, on which the prospects of the country as a just, free and peaceful society will largely depend.

References

1. Iwe, N.S.S., Christianity, Culture and Colonialism in Africa, (Port Harcourt, R.S.N.C., 1979), p. 163.
2. The Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7 is often cited as a support for this position particularly the teaching of Jesus on forgiveness and non-resistance.
8. On December 10, 1948 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human rights, Some of the rights include the right to life, liberty, security of person, equality before the law, nationality, ownership of property, freedom of thought, conscience, religion, opinion and expression, peaceful assembly and association, and taking part in the government of one’s country.
11. Mabbott, J.D., An Introduction To Ethics, p. 44.
19. Jesus regarded Jewish religious sects as philosophies analogous to Greek Schools of Philosophies. The first three being the Pharisaiic, the Sadducean and the Essene sect.


26. Two most common extraneous factors manipulated by political actors and officials in Nigeria are tribalism and religious bigotry.


30. The most potential exigency is the well-known moves by Muslims to hi-jack Nigeria into the league of Islamic nations of the world.


33. Iwe, N.S.S., Christianity, Culture And Colonialism In Africa ..., p. 163.
In discussing a Christian theology for Nigerian politics, there must be so many clarifications to assure those who have some misgivings about the Church and Politics that there is no intention of bringing theology under political influence or that Christian theology will in the long or short run approve of any or all kinds of political options or analyses. In a theology of Nigerian politics we want to stress how God uses the Christian Church in Nigeria to accomplish His plan for salvation and transformation of individuals, the Church and the nation. Elechi Amadi has an Ikwerre proverb which translated into English means:

The villagers may belong to a god but the god also belongs to the villagers.¹

Although the 1979 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria clearly states in sections 10 and 35 that Nigeria shall not adopt any religion as state religion but grants right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, it also states in the very first sentence that the people firmly and solemnly resolved to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible and undissoluble Sovereign Nation “Under God…” Nigeria belongs to God Almighty and God belongs to us.

Is there any discernible Christian theology or any theology in Nigerian Politics? There has been no political party along religious lines even though some political parties in the past had religious colourings because of the religion of a majority of their leadership. This leads one to ask the suggestive question as to why it is easy for Northern Nigeria to win votes in the south while it is near impossible for southerners, Muslims or Christians, to win votes in the North. Christians must do their best to destroy the myth of the so-called “predominantly Muslim North and the predominantly Christian south”.

¹The villagers may belong to a god but the god also belongs to the villagers.
Even without reliable census figures a few week-ends in both the North and the South of Nigeria will convince any enquirer that there are more christians in Nigeria than Muslims. The Friday outing of muslims going to the mosque and the Sunday outing of Christians going to the Church in both North and South will prove to any doubter that the myth of calling Northern Nigeria a predominantly muslim part of Nigeria is a calculated lie to deceive outsiders. David Barrett’s “World Christian Encyclopedia” however, puts the populations of Christians in Nigeria at 43% and that of muslims at 40%. Admittedly, it has not been easy to ascertain the exact number of adherents of each religion because of the politicisation of census figures but the figures in the above named encyclopedia reflect the numerical superiority of christianity over Islam in Nigeria.

While it must be recognized that politics is not necessarily life according to the Christian Gospel, we must also recognize that the task of the church is not fundamentally a political enterprise. It cannot be denied, however, that the Gospel enters into every aspect of man’s life, even into politics. William Wilberforce of Hull, England who wanted to take Holy Orders was advised by his friend John Newton to use his christian conviction to represent his people in the British Parliament. He did. His christian stance in the political life of Britain earned Britain the honour of being the first country to abolish the dehumanizing slave trade in March of 1807.

From the time of Emperor Constantine of the Roman Empire, Christianity had had its influence in the politics of the Empire until the period of the Reformation in the 17th century. It has a very profound effect upon politics and government in John Calvin’s Geneva. In the New England Colonies of North America, Calvin’s brand of christianity affected both church and state from 1621 up to the middle decades of the nineteenth century. In Max Weber’s thesis, the Protestant Ethic and the spirit of Capitalism, Calvinism was one side of the causal chain in the formation of a capitalist society. Calvin’s doctrine of predestination led his followers to apply themselves fanatically to their daily work and the kind of asceticism which made them plough back their gain into their work. Weber’s hypothesis explored the relationship between religious ideas and economic ideas and behaviour. Admittedly this hypothesis has stimulated much controversy and argument. But it is mentioned here to show that for centuries, the christian faith has influenced political, social and even economic processes.

There is no agreement as to whether religion should continue to in-
fluence political decisions. On one hand those who advocate the
secularity of the state hold that Church and State should be com-
pletely separated while on the other hand those who are anxious to
preserve public morality want the Church to have a strong voice in
the formation of the laws and regulations of the state. Nigeria is
religiously pluralistic and it would be unrealistic to advocate purely
christian principles in a religiously divergent society.

In pre-christian Nigeria kings and rulers in certain parts of the coun-
try were both priests and kings. They built shrines and other places of
worship. They enforced religious laws and the observance of
religious rituals. In the Edo and Yoruba Kingdoms the Oba was the
political head and chief priest on festival occasions. The king
represented God and the ancestors before his subjects. He saw to the
material and spiritual well-being of his people. It was one of the dif-
ficulties of early missionary work in Nigeria that the Church and the
colonial administration did not speak with the same voice because
“Christianity tended to disrupt the existing political and social system
through which the British Colonial Office ruled Nigeria — Viz. In-
direct Rule, the new religion did not usually receive any encour-
gement from the British political administrators in the field” 6 So Chris-
tianity which was seen by the Oba (king) and his people as the
whiteman’s religion and which did not identify or conform to the in-
digenous way of life was also not seen to have had the backing of the
white rulers.

When Colonial rule fully established itself in Nigeria there was no
state religion which everybody in the colony must adhere to. So
Islam, Christianity and the Indigenous Nigerian religion co-existed.
Islam and Christianity which are not indigenous to Nigeria seek con-
verts from the indigenous religion. While Islam has definite policy of
conquering and ruling the people christianity has no such intentions.
In this case the question arises as to what is political theology in the
life of the Nigerian church.

1. WHAT IS POLITICS?

On the positive side ‘politics’ means the art or science of govern-
ment: the management of a political party: political affairs or opinions
but on the negative side ‘politics’ means ‘manoeuvring and intrigu-
ing’. Both sides of this definition of politics are at the root of the
argument as to whether a christian should take part in politics or not.
Politics on the other hand is not what it claims to be because it is full
of twisting facts — manoeuvring and intrigues. Its claims are often
false. In theory politics is universal and rational. In political party formation and in election manifestoes, politics sets out to discover and formulate a worth-while programme to achieve an aim which is not deflected by the whims and caprices of individuals but based on a sure foundation of the actual needs and the goal of the society. Thus politics seeks to involve all society in a rational process of education. The problems with politics though, is that like Plato it is concerned with what the city — ‘the polis’ ought to be, not what it is. It talks of projects to be carried out but does not tell the public what will happen to the contractors who take the money but fail to carry out the terms of contract. A good deal of platonism is always present in contemporary political theory, which is developed in order to give a scientific structure to practical politics.

Politics may set out to be a necessary and rational business but in practice it is marked by a good deal of emotional involvement. As political events develop, one can see politicians having an emotive preference for one value or another. The claim of the rationality of any political approach is undermined by the amount of emotion by which a particular value is affected. In Nigeria in the recent past, the issue of free education at all levels generated a lot of emotions. It still does because the question of ‘quality’ or ‘quantity’ was injected into it. This value judgement makes it controversial and it generates a lot of emotions. Are these emotions generated because each side of the argument has done an objective analysis of the facts? At the end, these emotional preferences affect the execution of the programme which claims to be rational and universal.

Politics seeks to appear as the corporate administration of people and things. It presents itself as the most just and most hopeful way of managing human society. However, this claim to be the best form of administration also conceals a lust for power. Effective government certainly calls for power, but power is also intoxicating and benefits those who exercise it. Andre Dumas declares that

Power is conquest, because politics remain a conflict between different groups. It involves conquest for the sake of gain and conquest to prevent the possibility of manipulation. Politicians fight to remain in power, claim that they are only trying to remain in a position in which they can continue with effective government.\(^\text{7}\)

This easily reminds one of a political party in Nigeria’s Second Republic which gave itself the epithet of ‘super power’ which the other political parties twisted to be ‘soup don sour’. Politics is presented as a rational solution, but in reality, it is a matter of emotional preferences, the struggle for power and the concern to retain
it. Although it claims to have a scientific theory, its hidden face is the struggle to acquire power, sometimes through elections, sometimes through intrigues over succession and coup d’etats in the so-called Third World countries. That is why politics is always waged like a war, although it claims to be concerned with peace. Involvement in politics is not just a matter of making moral or rational statements, it is a matter of adding up the forces at one’s disposal. If you want peace prepare for war.

Politicians always want to practicalise their ideas by embarking on a number of projects. They must be carried out according to the political ideology of the party in a way of establishing a hold on the masses so that they will accept a programme. Underlying this public project is an undisclosed ambition. This ambition provides an indispensable source of vitality but ambition is also prepared to lie in order to survive. This lie gradually destroys the confidence that ambition seeks to build up. Another limiting factor than ambition is economic pressure. A political party may have ideal programmes for the masses but economic pressures may create a wide gap between the splendour of the promise and the limited range of practical possibilities. So politics which has the appearance of personal concern for the progress of the masses or a science of necessary progress, often proves to be a reaction to unforeseen circumstances — a game of chance. Political events then develop through someone or a party seizing opportunities.

2. WHAT IS THEOLOGY?

Theology means rational thought or talk about God. B.L. Hebblethwaite calls it ‘the study of belief in God’. It is the science which treats of God. It also includes in its field of investigation man’s relations to God, because christianity is not a theory or speculation about God. According to E.Y. Mullins religion is man’s relations to the divine being. It involves fellowship and obedience on man’s part, and self revelation on God’s part. The theme of Theology is the Being and Nature of God and His creatures and the whole complex of the Divine dispensation from the Fall of Adam to the Redemption through Christ and its mediation to men by His Church, including the so-called natural truths of God, the soul, the moral law and so on which are accessible to mere reason.

Its purpose is the investigation of the contents of belief by means of reason enlightened by faith (fides quaerens intellectum) and the promotion of its deeper understanding.
For the purpose of this paper, we will exclude all the other definitions of Theology and stress that Theology is concerned with the realities of God, man and the universe in their true nature and interrelation. Theology can only be done properly from the inside by those who actually believe in God. A Political Theology, therefore, must be a subject for serious consideration by Christians who believe in God who made the human being in His own image bearing in mind that the greatest commandment is that we should love God in complete obedience and love our neighbours as ourselves.

In a Political Theology, the Christian must take care to examine the titles of Jesus Christ as they relate to the Christian community and the local people. Each of these titles focuses attention on some aspect(s) of the Person of Jesus. Let us examine three of such titles viz. Messiah, Son of God and Lord. Messiah is an Old Testament title. It means literally 'the anointed one' like the Greek translation of 'Christ'. The title could be used for the king of Israel or for a king whom God has chosen like Cyrus in Isaiah 45. The Messiah was the promised ideal king who would deliver Israel from her oppressors and establish righteousness. The Christian theologian will from this title of Christ see Jesus who overcame sin and death, "a this — worldly interpretation of Christ as the Lord of man's social, moral, and political life." The other title of Jesus Christ which has political importance is 'Son of God' which in the Old Testament was also used for the Kings of Israel or for Israel as a nation. This makes Jesus both God and Man. To avoid being regarded as one of the 'Sons of God' John's Gospel calls Jesus the 'only begotten Son' of God. The title 'Lord' (Kurios) was applied by the New Testament writers to Jesus. This suggests that when used as a religious title for Jesus it is more than a word of respect. It means that Jesus, though a man, is also God and therefore the goal toward which human existence tends.

While the letter to the Hebrews acknowledges the divinity of Christ, it also affirms His humanity:

He (Jesus) reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by His word of power... To qualify this reflector of God's glory to be genuine mediator between God and man, the letter to the Hebrews adds that Jesus

'had to be made like His brethren in every respect so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted."
Political Theology must recognize this two-fold nature of Jesus so that it can be relevant to the life of the church militant here on earth.

3. THE CHURCH AND POLITICS

The Church is the community of God in the world because, "'God is the God of history and as the God who acts in history, he has a purpose in every event of life. It means that His people — the church must take responsibility for history'". 17 Before the Old Testament said anything about God’s choice of Abraham and his descendant’s as a particular people, the first eleven chapters of Genesis reveal God as a universal God — the God of all the earth — the creator and sustainer of the universe, the judge and Redeemer of human kind. The prophets of Israel proclaimed that Yahweh is God of the nations of all the earth. The New Testament teaches that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the Saviour, the Way, the Truth and the Life of the whole world.

The reason why the church cannot avoid politics (the art or science of government) is that christianity (which the Church propagates) is not a particularist religion which is a private possibility for individuals. Theologically speaking it seeks to address the whole world. The Church’s Great Commission from the Lord Jesus is, "'Go therefore and make disciples of All nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit....'" 18

Sociologically, the Early Church was a minority and a deprived group in society. Even then the Church spoke a universal message to the effect that the world was created through Jesus Christ and for Him 19. To the Christian, religion and politics are like the two sides of a coin — to obey God is to co-operate with Him in the historical arena. Faith in Jesus Christ should not be a private religion, tolerated by, or a matter of indifference to, certain citizens and with no real significance for society as a whole. Those who want Nigeria to remain a "secular" State always argue that religion is a private affair. This claim is always made whenever the issue of schools worship is mentioned or some people want the government to withdraw from the Muslim or Christian Pilgrims Welfare Boards. It was also prominent in arguments against the Federal Government of Nigeria joining the Organisation of Islamic Conferences (O.I.C.). Religion may be private in deciding to be for or against a particular religion but christianity is not just a religion; it is a WAY of life. It changes one’s life completely. Thoughts, words and actions are totally re-oriented because the christian is ‘in Christ and has become a new creature’.
It may well be argued that christians in the public life of Nigeria have not demonstrated the claim that christianity is a way of life. It is equally true that the three main religions in Nigeria — Islam, Christianity and African Religion in their millions of adherents have proved woeful failure. These adherents carted away large sums of money entrusted to their care. The social system in which they were brought up and the capitalistic education in the schools make acquisition of illegal wealth a thing to strive at. Nigeria’s political theology can only be a real guide when we evolve a system whereby we can use research results which emphasize the noble ethic in the teachings of Jesus Christ in the Gospels.

Historical Theology reveals that religious thought does lead to action — how a person in a particular period of time considered an aspect (or all aspects) of faith and the practice of that aspect of faith. A careful observation of the christian life reveals that the social and economic circumstances prevailing in a particular place and time affect the practitioner either for or against the true practice of what the church or the Bible teaches.

Christian theology in Nigeria has not done a systematic analysis of the prevailing social and economic realities of the Nigerian church. The Christian Association of Nigeria (C.A.N.), which was born in August 1976 out of circumstances the founding fathers and mothers of the Association did not dream of, should commission a body to carefully analyse the political, social and economic situations in Nigeria which make the Church’s work hang on the periphery when the individual christian enters politics. According to Bishop John Onaiyekan of Ilorin,

The social and political doctrines of the Church need to be applied more directly to our local situation in such a way that christians in power or aspiring to it can have valid and authentic guide-lines in their efforts to be good christian rulers. Here themes like the divine origin of all political power, authority as service, political engagement as apostolate for the Kingdom of heaven, christian participation in public life as a call to witness to the life of Christ and his message, will need further elaboration in a “political theology” for Nigeria.

The church should commission ministries, Panels, committees of experts in different areas of human endeavour. The activities of these ‘ministries’ and committees of experts can be effectively directed to check the fast growing rate of irreligious people. The mass of the uneducated rural people who produce tomorrow’s citizens should be taken to account when the church is planning. The Christian Council of Nigeria’s Institute of Church and Society and the Catholic Social Centres should be used more than before as part of the church’s effort in Mass Mobilization. The common thing one finds in some
southern villages in Nigeria is that backslided christians join the group of those who are disappointed by organized religion of any creed, It is difficult to deal with those who have rejected all religions because the church or her representative failed in one way or the other.

One does not need to stress the fact that christian and muslim politicians in Nigeria have not shown any better behaviour than the adherents of the African Indigenous Religion. They have all displayed a rotten culture of stealing public funds. Our political and social theology should address itself to finding a cure for this evil otherwise the dismal failure of the church in this regard will continue to be a fertile ground from which the so-called Marxists and Socialists (who also grab at any given opportunity) attack religion and call it the only evil in society.

Preaching to maintain the political status quo has been the bane of the Nigerian church. Every subsequent change of government, whether civilian or military, has always received the church’s pledge of loyalty without a definite stand to represent the suffering masses to the new set of rulers. The church in Latin America and in South Africa has a Liberation Theology. The Nigerian Church needs a theology that will speak to the political instability and economic oppression under which the masses practise religion. May be we need a Redemption Theology. The church must not be seen to be maintaining or participating in the system which makes more than ninety percent of the citizenry perpetually “hewers of wood and drawers of water” for those who grow richer at the expense and detriment of their fellow human beings. The doctrine that God is not poor and that His ministers on earth must not be poor must also apply to lay christians who are equally the children of god. This way God’s blessings will go round. The Church through her special ministries to people who live in rural areas can once again as it was in the pre-colonial and colonial periods organise literacy classes so as to teach people to use their brains and resources to fight poverty. Working hard — for a living can cure mass poverty. When government starts a good economic programme like the Directorate of Foods, Roads, and Rural Infrastructure (DIFRRI) and it breaks down for lack of zeal, the church should keep on encouraging both people and government to continue. No one in Nigeria takes government programmes serious because they always fail in the end. Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), the Green Revolution, and the Moral Revolution are just a few examples. Dialogue with the rural populace through the Local Government Councils will always be more effective for the local churches and the so-called “grassroots” with a high birth rate. God has a
long view of history and prepares for the future. He expects His people to be always prepared for His Kingdom, which is always breaking into human affairs. By the sacrament of baptism all christtians are made members of Christ’s Body, the children of God and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.²³

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The ‘kingdom of God’ — basilia tou Theou like its Aramaic equivalent malkuth (malekuth) means strictly the ‘reign’ ‘sovereignty’ or ‘kingship’ of God. It is not so much a geographical area of God’s reign as ‘God’s Kingship’ or reign. God is King de jure and in Christian eschatology God will be de facto King of the world when Jesus comes in the Parousia. Jesus came to set up a community of the reign of God but in this new community royalty is measured in terms of service of God and man-“whoever would be first among you must be slave of all”²⁴. Alan Richardson says that the expression ‘to enter the kingdom of God (eiselthein eis ten basileian tou Theou) means more than to become a subject of God’s Kingdom; it means to receive a share in God’s Kingship, to be one of those appointed to reign.²⁵ Whether or not Jesus Himself thought in terms of a literal earthly reign, he is recorded as having spoken of His fellowship of disciples as the little flock to whom it was the Father’s good pleasure to give the reign.²⁶ An active child of God is acutely aware that to live a full life he lives in two worlds at the same time. Yet they are not two worlds as such but the Christian way of life which according to Alex Vidler, is ‘holy worldiness’.²⁷

Preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ is preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, of the sovereign rule of God over the whole range of human life. In Paul’s letter to the Philippians (in Ch.1:27) he used politeuesthe to mean “manner of life” or simply “conduct yourselves” and (in Ch. 3:20) later he used ‘politeuma’ to mean that the christian’s citizenship is in heaven. If “manner of life” and “citizenship” come from a word we translate ‘politics’ it means the Christian’s call is both to preach the Gospel and be also concerned with matters affecting the citizenry wherever the christian serves the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. St. Paul himself and his colleagues who walked in the way of Jesus Christ are contrasted with christians whose life denied the spirit of sacrifice and God’s judgement upon sin mansifest in the cross; such men are dominated by greed, lust and the things of this world. Christians on the contrary, are citizens
of the kingdom in heaven; set in this world as a colony of that realm, their interests cannot be confined to earth and their life is lived in obedience to the divine sovereignty. The definition of a truly spiritual life must include political engagement participating in the science or art of government in the community in the broadest sense of the word.

Archbishop Cyril Garbett of York wrote in 1955:

The church must also fight the world by bearing against it militant and prophetic witness. For the church must be militant, though its weapons are not those of the world. It is an army on the march in a hostile country, and not a rest camp for the tired. Defence is not sufficient, though often the church has allowed itself to be manoeuvred into the position of a man fighting with his back against the wall. This militancy must be shown in open attacks on the sins of the world, and not only on the sins of individuals. The whole tone and spirit of society can be so evil that it forms an environment in which it becomes very hard for the individual to serve Christ. The Church must therefore condemn the social crimes of avarice, greed and corruption, and expose the falseness of the values accepted by the world... Today the church should condemn the lust for money, the appalling casualties on the roads, the use of indiscriminate destruction in warfare, the toleration of a colour bar, the continued existence of the slums, and the laxity with which societycondonesadulteryandacceptsthebreak-upofmarriages.

Archbishop Garbett demanded of christians not to be aggressive only in condemning sin but also to demand for justice, fight the battle of the poor, the hungry, the refugee and the aged against a world which too often turns a deaf ear to their appeals.

All these lead to the question of how the Church can achieve these lofty goals. How can a church which is a minority bring the kingdom (kingship) of God to bear upon the affairs of this world? Our Lord Jesus Christ used leaven as a metaphor for the Kingship of god acting quietly within the world often unnoticed but the effects are clear. Christians are also the salt of the earth. Salt acts from without, stings on a wound and flavours food. The leaven acts from within, as when a woman hides leaven in three measures of meal and leaves it there until it has leavened the whole lump. As leaven scattered through the meal it is intended to permeate, “so small groups of christians dispersed in the world are to do the work of leaven in the environment in which they find themselves”.

The Church, like Israel, finds herself in a privileged position as God’s chosen people. The God of the Church is the God of the whole earth. Jesus Christ came ‘that the world through Him might be saved.’ As Israel was surrounded by the super-powers of those days so the church is surrounded by those super-powers of modern times who believe they can destroy the world and the church in it in a matter of minutes. The Christian’s God is the God of the Muslims and of
the African indigenous Religion (Godianism). Inspite of this privileg-
ed position of the church God often has better servants outside than
Israel (cf. Isaiah 45.1ff.) God is not bound to work only through the
Church. There are "secular" movements for world peace which God
can use viz. the United Nations Organisation and all its agencies, the
International Red Cross, Amnesty International, movements against
apartheid, the Organisation of African Unity, etc. The Church can
work with these organisations to establish God's kingship on earth.
Jesus has come to redeem the world, it is the duty of the church to
be on duty like a good nurse to bring in the mind, the love and the
power of Jesus Christ to redeem the world which is becoming more
and more evil.

3. WHAT IS POLITICAL THEOLOGY?

Political Theology is relatively new. It is a revival of an apocalyptic
view focussed on what has yet to take place in the history of the
world and concentrating human energy in this direction.31 Political
theologies emphasize the collective dimensions of life rather than be-
ing concerned with personal conversion. Political theologies are
apocalyptic, full of crowds as in the Book of Revelation. The great
gatherings in the Apocalypse recapitulates the twelve tribes of the
Old Testament and the twelve Apostles of the New. It is a book
about collective achievements. All that had been hinted at, announ-
ed, lived out before hand in the lives of individuals is now summed
up and repeated in a final collective re-capitulation. Instead of being
preoccupied with the personal salvation of each individual im-
mediately after his own death, the Aprocalypse speaks of a general
resurrection at the end of history. It describes the collective future
of a humanity in terms of two cities — those who are being saved
belong to Jerusalem and those who are perishing belong to Babylon.

Political theologies use collective categories like those to be found
in appocalyptic, whereas theologies of the Word (hermeneutical
theologies) speak more of the existential and personal decision pro-
voked by eschatology. Political theology comprises not only mes-
sianic expectations for earthly history, but also collective thought
and practice of the church. So far we have restricted ourselves to the
idea of a monolithic church because in the Apocalypse the elect
children of God are a unit — a Church and not churches. Political
theologies affirm the collective and historical dimensions of mes-
sianic perspective which has been revived by the coming of Jesus
Christ. Political theologies are critical of a society which is anxious
for preservation without future expectations, and of a church which provides justification and legitimation without any thought of conversion or transformation. The Church has always had a political horizon, long before political theologies became the present fashion. The church must not be tempted to cast aside her political function because of her minority status.

Andre Dumas says that the great political concern of the New Testament was to warn the church against being tempted by her minority situation or being content with it. He points out that "should that happen, the church would remain a sect, if one understands a sect to be a group which feels society to be corrupt, lost and of no account, and therefore sets out to lead a life of its own. A sect like this has no concern for a political future of the world. It breaks away and goes into retreat. By contrast the Church, even if it is a minority, is involved with all men and puts its challenge to them". Dumas suggests that this seems to be the sense of the famous Romans chapter 13 which appears between other chapters dealing with private and interpersonal relationships. It does more than provide a theological foundation for the state.

There are two great dimensions to life in Christ and one does not rule out the other private life in which we become emotional and close with those nearer to us. Affection, discretion and generosity are important. Personal secrets are kept in the private domain. The second dimension is the area of politics which involves dealings with unknown people with whom we are associated by cold impersonal institutions rather than by warm emotions. Political relationships are by nature anonymous, cold, structured and public. Politics should be carried out in public as far as possible otherwise, it is corrupted by secrecy as private life is corrupted by publicity. The church should be concerned with these two dimensions of life - the private and the political, because if she moves to only one part, especially the private life alone, it has moved to the periphery and becomes an oasis or a ghetto, and ceases to proclaim the God of all the earth. These public and private sectors of life must be preserved. The Church has to concern herself with both dimensions of life and a political theology is required to rescue christianity from all exclusive concentration on private life.

All that has been said so far is too hopeful that the Church can easily play her part in politics. The church is not always competent in the political sphere as if she is the political head of state. In modern times the church can see how many other independent authorities are aware of the complexity of the problems involved and have some
control over the interplay of forces. The other religions, especially Islam, believe and claim that they have the right to rule Nigeria. Of recent, in the October 1987 issue of ‘QUALITY’ Magazine, Sheik Abubakar Gumi claimed that only Muslims have the right to rule Nigeria. The Armed Forces of Nigeria, the different powerful organisations within and outside the country claim that they have the right to rule. The church realizes that these other bodies or groups have equal rights as the Church. The Church must not cower out or feel reduced to making moralistic pronouncements without spiritual content. A spiritual pronouncement has force in a particular context. In the pejorative sense, a moralistic pronouncement only expresses a pious hope. It gives no specific indication of what is to happen as a result, nor does it go into the specific decisions which will have to be taken if anything is to come of it. Andre Dumas reminds us that Jesus did not consider that He was competent in every respect. For example, Jesus refused to give judgement in a dispute over an inheritance. “Man, who made me a judge or divider over you?” (Luke 12:14). The proclamation of the Gospel, salvation and forgiveness are the core of the Church’s competence. On the other hand there are a series of mundane issues about which the church may not feel competent to say anything because it has to leave discussion on such issues to others but not without examining the issues involved to know her stand. However, it should be noted that the passage in Luke 12 just quoted does lead to a discussion of the problem of covetousness and the desire to seek security in possessions. If the church is not competent to make pronouncements on certain issues, she has competence in making pronouncements on the spiritual dimensions of the issues involved.

In conclusion, we have seen the pressing need that the Church which is the new Israel of God — a chosen nation must have a political horizon if she is to serve the God of all the earth. The Christian is to proclaim the Kerygma — the proclamation of God’s Kingship upon earth in all the nations. We have in this last section called attention to the fact that the church faces some dangers when she speaks politically — the danger of making moralistic statements or judgements in areas outside her competence. We have acknowledged the existence of other bodies which have equal rights to speak or even rule in the country. So, for the Church, faith in God makes the involvement of Christians in Politics healthier. Instead of faith in God (religion) becoming the opium of the people it becomes the leaven, hidden and quietly at work in the dough of human history. The example of Jesus in His service to God and to humanity
sets a pattern for the church: greatness is measured by service. He came that we might have life, and have it abundantly. The church has to hold on to the saving mission of her Lord.

NOTES

11. Ibid.
14. Ibid. p. 295
15. Hebrews 1:3 (F.S.V.)
16. Hebrews 2:17f (R.S.V.)
18. Matthew 28:19 (R.S.V)
19. Colossians 1:16; 1 Corin. 8:6; Heb. 1:12 etc.
22. Joshua 9:21, 23 (R.S.V.)
25. Richardson, A. An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament, S.C.M. Press,
28. Beasley — Murray, G.R., Philippians in Peake’s Commentary on the Bible, eds. M. Black

*NB* For inspiration and direction in some parts of this paper, I must acknowledge heavy indebtedness to *Political Theology and the Life of the Church* by Andre Dumas.
STATE SECULARITY AND THE NIGERIAN CHRISTIAN

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INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of this brief paper is to take a close look at the terms and ideas which have featured in the long-standing and on-going debate on the secularity of the Nigerian State. What do people mean when they speak of a “Secular State”? Is there any agreement on the conceptual content of this expression? And if we agree on what we mean, can we agree on what we want? And suppose we cannot agree on what we want, would such a disagreement be compatible with our corporate existence as “one nation”? Or would this be an area where we must agree — or disintegrate? In particular, the line of battle in the debate has been drawn roughly speaking between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. Is the secularism option a position that is per se Christian, or at least ideally so? If not, why do Nigerian Christians by and large keep defending the secular state while the opponents of the secular state are almost always Muslims?

Our primary objective is to clarify these issues in the debate so that Christians can see their way more clearly in the discussion about an issue that may be crucial to the future of the Christian faith in Nigeria. If at the end I do take a position, this would be only a suggestion that does not intend to preclude other options. It may not necessarily be a tragedy if Nigerian Christians do not have a unanimous view on this matter, which on the long run is more political or pragmatic than theological or theoretical.

1. What is a “Secular State”?

Etymologically the word “secular” comes from the Latin word “Saeculum” meaning “age”, period of time, a century. In particular it is used in Latin for the time here on earth as distinct from eternity. Hence, it has come to mean that which pertains to this world in distinction from what concerns the world to come; the temporal and material as different from the eternal and spiritual.
But when the word "secular" is used in describing the state, we need to go beyond mere etymology. By its very nature, the state belongs to the organisation of human relations in this world, and must therefore necessarily be "secular" from the etymological point of view. We must go into history for the origin and meaning of this expression.

I think one can trace the origin of this idea to the great political and social revolutions in the Christian West starting with the Protestant reformation of the 16th century. What started first as a struggle for autonomy vis-a-vis papal influence on State rulers culminated in the French Revolution in the vindication of total autonomy of state authorities vis-a-vis all religious influences.

Until then, it was taken for granted that the state was ruled according to God's will, and that religious authorities were the authentic interpreters of this will; which the temporal ruler had to obey. When the idea of "secular" state emerged, it referred to a state in which the temporal, "secular" ruler enjoyed his full autonomy as ruler with no control from religious or "spiritual" authorities. Per se, it did not mean that the state no longer recognised religion, its rulers and its impact on society. Nor did it necessarily mean that the state ignored, less still went against the will of God. But it could, and did at times, mean these things, especially where temporal rulers had to fight against spiritual powers for effective control of the state. Historically, secular states have taken a wide variety of forms, ranging from benevolent recognition and generous encouragement of religion, to active suppression of all religious influences. Thus, the expression "secular state" has now become a vague and imprecise concept. With such a serious equivocacy, it is impossible to carry on any fruitful discussion.

2. Do we want a secular state?

The "secularity debate" is once again a great controversy. Although much of one's answer depends on how one understands a "secular state", it has become more and more clear of recent that our problem is not only a matter of terminological disagreement. It does seem that even when we agree on what we mean, there are serious disagreements on the substantive issue.

The debate started in earnest during the discussion in preparation for the inauguration of the Second Republic. It began already with the Constitution Drafting Committee, whose sub-committee on National Objectives proposed as an opening to its article one the follow-
Nigeria is one and indivisible sovereign Republic, secular, democratic and social......

In the final draft presented to the constituent assembly, the word "secular" had dropped out, and not merely for editorial convenience. The constituent assembly took up the matter again. Many, especially christians, wanted the word "secular" reinserted to make sure no one would ever think of imposing any official state religion on the country. Others opposed the word. They feared it could render unconstitutional many areas of government direct involvement in religious matters; e.g. the Sharia as state law; Pilgrims' Boards, government religious schools etc. The famous "Sharia Debate", which almost broke up the Constituent Assembly, was therefore only a particular aspect of the "secularity debate". The formulation which we now find in article 10 of the 1979 Constitution was thought to be a good compromise.

The Government of the Federation or of a state shall not adopt any religion as State Religion.

Right up to the present, all official government pronouncements have insisted that government intends to maintain the letter and spirit of that clause.

Unfortunately, we now know that the clause as it stands is too vague to be effective. When does a government "adopt a religion as state religion"? Is it only when it explicitly says so? Or must one resist also making a religion effectively a state religion by giving it preferential treatment and establishment status? Many people insist that Nigerian must be deemed effectively an Islamic State for as long as the Sharia remains a recognised state law, and as long as our country remains in the O.I.C.

In the light of our experience of the recent past, we now need to go beyond what is contained in article 10 of the 1979 Constitution. In the spirit of that clause, we must table for frank discussion and spell out clearly what government may or may not do in the area of religion. Rather than engage in sterile debate on the theoretical concept of "secularity", we should face concrete issues that have so far raised dispute and cast doubt on the secularity of our nation. These include the following: the Sharia as state law, pilgrims' Boards, financing of National Mosque and "Cathedral", Nigeria's membership of the O.I.C. and the establishment of the Advisory Council on Religious Affairs (AORA).
3. **An Open question: a clear answer.**

We see therefore that it is still an open question whether Nigerians want a secular state or not. Some people have in fact rejected any suggestion that Nigeria is a secular state. They point out, and rightly too, that the word "secular" does not exist in our Constitution. It does seem that there is a serious difference of opinion among Nigerians on the basic issue of whether Nigeria is a secular state or not. Furthermore, I am quite convinced that this is an area where we must agree, at least in principle, or disintegrate. A clear and workable answer is needed, and needed quickly.

The way the discussion has gone so far, one may get the impression that it is typically Christian to agitate for a secular state, while it is "Islamic" to insist on a religious state. We need to point out, and insist that there is nothing particularly "Christian" about the secular state option. Nor do I believe that it is basically "unchristian". The Christian can thrive in any state system where justice and freedom are maintained. This can be demonstrated both in practice and in principle.

4. **The Long history of Christian States.**

Both Christians and Muslims in Nigeria need to be reminded that Christianity has a long history of being the official religion of the state. As from 323 AD, when the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great, became a Christian and declared Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire, it became normal for Christians to expect that the state in which they live be Christian.

This is not only a matter of past history, to be associated with medieval centuries. Even today, there are many countries in which Christianity, in one form or the other, is recognized as the official state religion. As late as 1980, Barrett listed 23 countries as being officially Catholic. There are also other states which have adopted other Christian denominations as official state religion. Many of these countries are considered modern and progressive. For example: **Catholic Countries** include the following: Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Haiti, the Holy See, Italy, Luxemburg, Malta, Monaco, Philippines, Portugal, Spain and Venezuela. **Anglican Countries** include Bahamas, Channel Islands, Isle of Man, Great Britain. **Lutheran States**: Denmark, Greenland, Norway, Sweden **Unspecified Christian**: Finland, Liberia, Samoa, and Vanuatu.
From the above examples, it is clear that it is neither unchristian nor strange for Christians to live in a Christian state.

From the same study, we have the following statistics for the whole world:

a) Atheistic States, 30, with 34% world population
b) Secular States 90, with 36% world population
c) Religious States 101, with 30% world population

Among the religious states, 23 are Islamic with 8.6% of the world population. Christian states of all denominations total 44, with 7.4% of the world population, of which Catholic states alone number 25 states with 5.3% of the world population.

The same study shows that while 46% of Christians live in religious states of one form or the other, (including states that have adopted a non-Christian state religion and are often anti-Christian) 36% live in secular states, while about 18% live under atheistic regimes. This shows that Christians can adjust to life under any religious climate.

5. **The Choice is Ours**

Nigerians have the good fortune of being able to discuss the matter of religion and state quite freely. The opportunity must be well used. Many people live under a system inherited from the past or imposed by a dictatorial regime, be it religious, secular or atheistic. From the Christian viewpoint, there are a few factors to keep in mind.

a) Whatever the regime, the Christian must recognise the direct relevance of God and his laws in the running of human affairs. How this will find expression in the concrete arrangements for government and politics is quite another matter. It is often guaranteed by a system of religious state. But it can be guaranteed too under a "Secular state" arrangement, depending on how this is understood.

b) Therefore, the famous quotation "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's" must never be interpreted to mean that God has no say in matters of government. The state too, and all that make it up, including Caesar himself, belong to God. Christians living with Muslims, as we do in Nigeria, should not continue to give the impression that we do not recognise the rights of God in temporal matters. Religion, even for the Christian, is a total way of life, for clergy and laity alike.
c) Even though labels and systems of government are important, what is most important on the long run is the content of good government. This must include justice, fair-play, honesty, due freedom, basic equality, and a general atmosphere of peace understood as tranquility in order. These are ideals that every religion and ideology proclaims; and around which all people of good will can be mustered.

d) In particular, as regards the secularity debate, freedom of religion must be properly understood and adequately protected. Freedom of religion does not mean license, disorder and anarchy. It is freedom to decide on one’s religion and to practice it freely, with due regard for the rights of others. It is also freedom to profess or not to profess religion. Thus, freedom of religion is encroached upon where people are forbidden to believe or not to believe, or where people are forced or unduely pressurised to follow one religion rather than another. We should add too that freedom of religion is not incompatible with holding firmly to one’s religious view-point; as absolute in one’s own regard.

6. The Options before us:

In order to ensure an arrangement that will make for peace, collaboration, and mutually good relations between religious bodies in our nation, we need to take into account our own circumstances. There are many ways in which different states and nations handle religion, each according to its own historical and socio-political realities. What might be working well in some countries may not necessarily work well for us.

The options before us are not simply between being secular and non-secular. In each case there is a fairly wide variety of options within the two broad categories. For the purpose of our discussion, we want to distinguish four different positions,

a) The Mono-religious state
b) The Multi-religious state
c) The Arreligious state
d) The Anti-religious state

Examples exist in the world today of each of these categories, as shown earlier. But how does each fit our own local conditions?
a) The Mono-religious state is one in which there is one official religion. It may or may not allow other religions. But where it does allow non-official religions, they are merely tolerated, without equal rights as the official religion. A few Muslims have asked that Nigeria be declared an Islamic state. But I do not think that such people represent the majority view of Nigerian Muslims, and therefore deserve to be ignored. They should however be restrained from propounding an idea which in our circumstances is clearly a recipe for chaos and subversion. Government should consider them as "security risks" and treat them accordingly. I do not know if any Christians are agitating for a Christian state in Nigeria. If there are, they too should be treated like their Muslim counterparts.

b) The Anti-religious state is one in which government suppresses religion. While there are quite a few vocal critics of religion in Nigeria, there are not many advocating state suppression of religion. Such a state is clearly incompatible with the deeply religious feeling of our people.

c) The Multi-religious state is one in which there are more than one official state religion. Some people say Nigeria is de facto a multi-religious state and should be so declared, since government in fact supports Islam and Christianity. The major lesson of the serious crises of religion that have engulfed our country of recent, in my view, is that we need to reduce, not confirm and increase government involvement in religion. In order that a multi-religious option may work, the state would need to decide what religions shall be recognised as official and by what criteria. Christianity and Islam are only broad categories. Within each group there are differences that are not negligible and can become troublesome to handle if it came to giving each religion an establishment status. For one thing, Catholics would feel the need to be considered as being a distinct group in the country. There is also the problem of deciding what to do for the different official religious groups and of being fair to each, as well as appearing to be fair too. If we wish to reduce areas of religious friction and thus save both government and religious groups the bitter rivalries and wranglings of the past, we should start looking away from the multi-religious scheme.

d) The Arreligious state is one in which government is neutral in religious matters. This is what most Nigerians mean when they speak of a "secular state". It allows government encouragement of religion
but discourages direct government support of religious projects and structures. Above all, it guarantees religious freedom for all, within a general respect for law and order. Many modern states have adopted this approach and it has proved the best for both the state and religious groups.

7. Areas of Necessary Readjustment

In the Nigerian context, it means that we should be ready to take a close look at all areas of government involvement in religious matters and systematically reduce them to the minimum. Here again, we must mention the Sharia as state recognised and state financed legal system, Pilgrims’ Boards, both Muslim and Christian, state funds for erecting places of worship, membership of religious international organisations like O.I.C.

Let us add immediately that it is either ignorance or sheer mischief to equate Nigeria’s membership of the O.I.C. with her diplomatic relations with the Vatican. Nigerian Muslims should be told that countries with embassies to the Holy See include Algeria, Bangladesh, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Morocco, Niger, Pakistan, Syria, Sudan, Tunisia and Turkey; almost all of which are officially Islamic nations. In all these countries, there is a papal representative, as well as in Chad, Libya, and Mauritania. If anyone wishes Nigeria to review its diplomatic relations with the Vatican, they must produce genuine reasons, of a diplomatic nature, and not use religion or the O.I.C. as an excuse.

I appreciate the motives behind the formation of the Advisory Council for Religious Affairs; but I still believe it is a step in the wrong direction. It is not surprising that it is riddled with problems. If religious bodies are not able to meet on their own, government cannot force them to agree. The whole idea goes against the spirit of the arreligious state.

There are other areas of government involvement in religion which we must be ready to look at dispassionately; e.g. Christian and Muslim chaplaincies in Institutions and in the armed forces, religious schools and departments in higher institutions, religious programmes in government owned electronic media, etc. I am not advocating that all these be abolished. Rather, we should justify them on a clearly rational basis so that equity and fair play will be easier to be determined and maintained.
Conclusion

We are in the midst of a "transitional political programme". One important item on this programme is the review of our Constitution. This affords us an opportunity to learn from our past errors and devise ways of avoiding them in future. If there has been a lot of problems with religious issues of recent, it is because the present Constitution left too many points vague and imprecise. We should decide once and for all that Nigeria is a secular state in the positive sense described in this paper as "arreligious" state. Having taken that position, we should set about gradually but surely dismantling the vestiges of a theocratic system that we have long left behind us. The christian continues to be challenged to be a good citizen and faithful disciple of Christ. Both roles are not only compatible with each other. One is fulfilled in the other. It is only by keeping both together that the christian can make a truly valid contribution to government in our multi-religious environment.

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Introduction

The word "politics" in this paper refers to the public welfare or the common good of a nation as opposed to that of the private or individual domain. "Christianity" is taken to indicate all believers in Christ in the different denominations. The aim of this paper is to give a bird’s eye view of the contribution of Christianity to the well-being of Nigeria as a nation. The benefits of the advent of Christianity to Nigeria in the fields of health, education and social developments cannot be exaggerated. These are reasonably obvious. What is not clear are areas for further contribution of Christianity in our present-day changing circumstances. This paper will, inter alia, attempt to throw light on some of those aspects which could help Nigeria, and perhaps, other African nations for ways of grappling with the present problems that plague the nation and continent.

Historical Background

When Christianity first came to Africa, it brought with it some of the divisions it already incurred in Europe. Thus in Uganda, for instance, there was open hostility between Christians converted by French-speaking missionaries and those converted by English-speaking ones. The wars between Protestants and Catholics in Uganda and other less violent confrontations between christians of various denominations in different parts of the continent did not promote the ideal christian love and unity that are the core of the christian message. The facts about the tension between different denominations is well known: not only among Catholics and Protestants but also divisions among Protestants themselves.

The advent of Christianity to Europe much earlier was very different from the African experience. Christianity more than any other factor united European countries individually and collectively. It was
not until the time of the Protestant reformation that divisions ensued — "cuius regio, eius religio". In Europe, Christianity helped to create a homogeneous christian culture. Despite Protestantism, wars and factors that militate against Christianity (such as secularism, atheism), the christian culture has remained in Europe. Despite un-Christian attitudes in various sectors of the social and religious life in different parts of Europe it is true to say that the spirit of dedication to work, truth, honesty, etc. which are an inheritance of monastic ideals, are found among people in Europe who do not uphold the Christian religion, and who are even atheistic. Even in communist Russia where atheism is officially regarded as the way of life for the people, Christian values inherited from the past are sometimes very operative. There is hardly any need to multiply such examples.

Christianity came to Nigeria under the aegis of colonialism. In the Northern part of Nigeria, Christianity met Islam. In return for acceptance of colonial rule, the British were to respect the traditional values upheld in the emirates, and thus minimized interference with already existing conditions. The British helped to keep Christianity away from the North by restricting missionaries and thereby slowed down the process of education through mission schools. The Southern part of Nigeria had a different experience. Missionaries and colonial masters worked hand in hand. Christianity confronted existing traditional conditions and in some cases disrupted African traditional customs, religious beliefs, and culture. The various christian groups also clashed among themselves. More seriously, colonialism already created a tension between the North and the South. Oftentimes, even after the creation of states in Nigeria, North and South are inadvertently referred to as if they are two separate countries.

Consequences of Historical Background

Christianity rejected traditional African culture whole and entire, when it first came to Nigeria. This resulted in a tension between Christian culture and indigenous culture. Since converts were not able to practice their traditional customs (such as second burials and initiation rites), some resorted to double-dealing. In the public, some carried out their christian obligations; in private, however, they returned to practices not allowed by Christianity.

In the South, there arose a lack of common Christian perspective. Different denominations went their different ways and lacked a common christian viewpoint. To a simple or single problem there could
be many answers as there are denominations. Thus a common Christian front is not readily available in the South in the face of national religious crisis. In the North, on the other hand, the resentment of Christianity by Islam has made a common christian perspective possible. From the more recent occurrences in the country, it is clear that there is greater unity among christians in the North than in the South. This is not due principally to the bitter confrontations between adherents of the two world religions. It is enough to presuppose the fact of more Christian awareness in the midst of difficulties: the blood of martyrs is the seed of Christianity. Whatever the reasons, the Christians in the North possess a more Christian perspective than those in the South of Nigeria.

Contributions of Christianity

**Education:** Missionaries opened up the South through gigantic education schemes. The numerous primary schools, secondary schools, colleges, etc. contributed in a great measure to the political life of Nigeria. Missionaries also offered opportunities to study at the post-graduate level in Ireland and other overseas countries. The education of Christians fomented Nationalist movements in the South. This paved the way for independence. In the South, also, women were educated from the beginning. It is not surprising that women enjoyed the right to vote during the 1959 elections.

**Health:** The numerous Christian hospitals in Nigeria have contributed to the well-being of the nation. A healthy citizenry is a strong factor in the development of any country.

**Social Development:** Both during and after the Nigerian civil war, gigantic relief services were carried out by various Church bodies in Nigeria. Perhaps the suffering of many was alleviated by such social services in the areas of food, clothing and other rehabilitation services.

One must ask, if Christianity has not taken roots in Nigeria, could we have pressed for Independence when we did? What would Nigeria have been without the contributions of the Church in the area of education and health? In 1992 Nigeria will return to civilian rule. In the midst of growing evils in the nation (poverty, corruption, violence, etc), what could the Church offer the nation as the most needed help?
The African Crisis: The African crisis is well known. All over Africa, there are military coup d'états, economic depression, violence, unstable governments, corruption, poverty, and a lack of integral independence. It is hard to pinpoint any single cause of such tragedies. Some of the problems can be traced to our colonial past. Professor P.P. Ekeh points out that military rule is natural extension of alien colonial rulership:

.... it is important that we recognize that the fluctuations between military rule and civilian politics have become standard ware in our political history ....

If we examine the nature of colonialism carefully, we would be compelled to admit further that military rule is a natural extension of alien colonial rulership of Nigeria. As the late Professor Billy Dudley so frequently contended, colonial rule was dictatorial and colonial administrators were essentially praetors who combined in their offices military, police, judicial as well as administrative and legislative functions.

Another reason for some of the present evils in Africa is cultural alienation. Thus the African crisis is a cultural crisis, arising partly from the failure of Christianity to provide a cultural basis for our existence. (This point has been discussed extensively by the author elsewhere.) What can Christianity do to correct some of the problems associated with the African crisis? Can the Church offer us the benefits of the Christian message for stablility, peace, justice, and freedom from corruption in the political life of Nigeria? The present condition of the christian churches in Nigeria points to a promising future. Christianity can heal some of the wounds that plague politics in Nigeria.

Solutions: Perhaps the one factor that is very volatile and noticeable in Nigeria is division brought about by tribalism, nepotism, and greed. Unbridled corruption noticed in several sectors of the nation is the result of unpatriotism. Our colonial education and Christianity did not stress the value of patriotism in their educational systems. The time has come for the church to inculcate into her message an unrelenting emphasis on the fact that love of God and love of one’s nation go hand in hand. Europeans fought wars “pro Deo et patria” (“For God and the nation”). The Christian is at the same time a citizen. Therefore, since the nation is no longer under foreign domination and the administration of the Church is largely in the hands of Nigerians, the Church in Nigeria should strain every muscle to see that Christians love their nation. It should also strive to see that Christians in Government posts carry out the ideal of christian love, justice, peace etc. Christians must be involved in politics. Chris-
Christianity is a religion based on love. This aspect of our religion needs stressing today more than ever before. All human beings are equal in the sight of God. Tribalism, division, and hatred are against the spirit of the Church which is a sacrament of God’s union with men and of the unity of men with one another. Where there is love, ethnic differences are transcended, religious intolerance is eschewed and fair-play thrives. Christianity must, like her Master Jesus Christ, incarnate herself into Africa. It must become African as Christ became human. Until the African functions as a true African informed by the benefitting riches of Christianity and other religions, he cannot solve his present problems of instability, corruption, poverty and nepotism. The Church in Africa must be Christian and African at the same time.

NOTES

1. For instance, materialism, homosexuality, abortion, divorce, etc. can hardly be called Christian.

2. In Europe and other parts of Western world, poverty is appreciated; so also is celibacy for non-religious motives. Directly or indirectly, these are offsprings of monastic piety. See Prof. P.P. Ekeh, “Culture and Wealth and Poverty”, 1987.

3. Some of the movies from the West that are pornographic or highly erotic are banned from Russia, e.g. the American block buster, “Saturday Night Fever”.


5. Christian culture here must be distinguished from European or Western culture.

6. For instance burial rites, it is said that in one part of Bendel State, as the priest (Rev. Father) left the scene, traditional rites were performed on corpses.


