Violence and State Security
ISSN 0794-8670

Editor
Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, c.s.sp. - Spiritan International School of Theology
Attakwu, Enugu.

Editorial Board

J.P.C. Nzomiuw - Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.
Chris I. Ejizu - University of PortHarcourt
Chris U. Manus - Obafemi Awolowo University, Ife
Ibrahim Musa Ahmadu - University of Jos.
Obiora Ike - Director, Catholic Institute for Development
Justice and Peace, Enugu.
Nleanya Onwu - University of Nigeria Nsukka.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>N100.00 per issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign</td>
<td>20 U.S. dollars per annum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10 U.S. dollars per issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(air mail postage included)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Payments overseas:%
Congregazione dello Spirito Santo
Casa Generalizia
Clivo di Cinna, 195,
00136, Roma, Italia.

Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology is published by the Ecumenical Association of Nigerian Theologians (EANT) and printed in Nigeria by SNAAP Press Ltd., Enugu.

All Correspondence should be addressed to the Editor, B.E.Th. Spiritan International School of Theology (S.I.S.T.), P.O. Box 9696, Enugu, Nigeria.

Violence and State Security

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Editorial</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis Duniya  The Zangon Kataf Crisis in Respect of Minority Culture in Northern Nigeria</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.W. Orakwe  The Prison and You: A Study in Diminishing Social Responsibility in Nigeria</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Prison Chaplains  Communiqué</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew Hassan Kukah  Political Stability and the Leadership and the Inevitability of Instability</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cecilia Ukamaka Asogwa  Managing Stress Among Rural Poor in a Distressed Economy: DEC’s Experience</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Ehusani  Theology at the Service of the People</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Review</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

1. AFFUL, Ebuley is a Catholic priest who lectures in Sociology at St Paul’s Seminary Sowutuom, Accra, Ghana.

2. ASOGWA, Cecilia Ukamaka, is a Social Worker. She is the Director of the Development Education Centre in Enugu, Nigeria.

3. DUNIYA, Francis, is a Catholic priest who lectures in Scripture at St Augustine’s Seminary Jos, Nigeria.

4. EHUSANI, George, is a Catholic priest. He is the deputy Secretary General at the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Lagos.

5. KUKAH, Matthew Hassan, is a Catholic priest. He is the Secretary General at the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Lagos.

6. ORAKWE, I.W. is a Superintendent of Prisons who works in the Enugu prisons.
Editorial

These are trying times, times of trouble! We live in dismal times, in total absence of consolation. There is danger in the city, danger in the village. There is danger in the street, danger in the home. Violence and bloodshed have become household words. Living becomes precarious and uncertain. Today one is a victim of armed robbery, tomorrow one may become the target of politically or economically motivated assassinations. Bloody clashes between villages, violent clashes at the borders of various states, clashes between ethnic groups! Ethnic pogroms, religious pogroms! This is the type of life we endure in Nigeria.

But the situation is not only a Nigerian phenomenon. We hear similar stories of violence and bloodshed all over Africa, and all over the world. The gory image of ethnic massacres in Rwanda may remain etched in our memory as the limit experience of barbarism at this end of the twentieth century. The killings continue. Sudan lives in a state of war because of religious intolerance. Islamic fundamentalists in Egypt and Algeria wage war with government. "Ethnic cleansing" has become an expression associated with the bloody brutality of the various communities that make up the former Yugoslavia. All these evils may not be found in their totality in Nigeria, but our country has a good share of the violence.

The Nigerian state which arrogates to itself the monopoly of the legitimate use of violent means to impose its authority, like states elsewhere in our world, applies this violent force to curb armed robbery, settle conflicts between villages, and conflicts between ethnic groups which live in the many borders of the 30 states of Nigeria. But today, the behaviour of government and its law enforcement agencies leads many to wonder how far the Nigerian state may legitimately go to apply this use of violence.

Many in Nigeria, and elsewhere in Africa, question the legality of a military non-elected government. Its seizure of power is often violent, and, as is the case with Nigeria, generates a spiral of violence - the endless coups and counter-coups. This has made such countries that live under the torture of military dictatorship regress daily into barbarism. The first instinct of the military dictator is to
secure a monopoly of all powers. Insulated by draconian decrees with ouster clauses - not subject to question by any court in the land - the gun-toting military becomes legislator, judge and executor. Every manner of state violence becomes legitimate in the name of national security. When peaceful means are adopted by civil society to resist the tyrant, the reaction of the state is brutal repression. Under the ideology of national security rights of citizens are infringed upon as a matter of course.

In Nigeria, the repressive regime has practically imprisoned all of its political opponents. Trade union leaders, leaders of civil liberties organisations have either been incarcerated or forced into exile. Unjust detention, trial by secret tribunals, inexplicable murder or assassination of critics of government, have become a regular phenomenon. Constructive criticism by the press is interpreted as opposition. Media houses in Nigeria are closed at the slightest provocation and editors or columnists are detained or imprisoned.

Our situation of un-freedom is compounded by a hypocritical and unfriendly world community, more concerned with what may be carted away from Africa than with the emergence of humane living in the continent. Western governments and their finance houses, especially the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, pay lip-service to human rights. Their interest is in their investment and profit. Meanwhile our Government operates with no constitution. Little thought is given to honouring a social contract. The basic requirements for a humane social life are a luxury in Nigeria. In many rural and urban centres there is neither regular supply of potable water, nor is there electricity; government owned health institutions have moved from consulting clinics to desolate and abandoned empty buildings with no doctors to consult; our children and youths may no longer count on good education because of disruptions caused by teachers/professors strikes and inadequate facilities. Lack of maintenance gnaws at our infra-structures - to ply any of our roads is a whole nightmare. If the life of citizens are so precarious, how may one imagine the condition of detainees, prisoners and those condemned to death. The situation beggars imagination.
This issue of our BULLETIN addresses the question of Violence and State Security. Its aim is to raise awareness, among the men and women of our society, to the many ways we contribute to this spiral of violence. One must say an unqualified no to this kind of evil. Citizens of this country are challenged to create the conditions favourable for humane living in our nation. As christian theologians, we consider it important to emphasise that the social, political and economic principles proposed in this issue are to be controlled by the prophetic life of Jesus and the witness of his church for the emergence of an alternative way of life. This makes the combat against criminal and state violence an evangelical imperative.

The lead article by Ebuley Afful is a sociological overview of the phenomenon of violence in Africa and the world. This is followed by concrete examples of the many ways in which we live this situation in Nigeria. The Zangon-Kataf crisis is a test case of the manipulation of the powers of the state by a majority ethnic group and the use of state violence to persecute a minority ethnic group (Duniya). The state of our prisons and police detention rooms, according to a superintendent of prisons (Orakwe), is an indictment of the type of society we are constructing. We do indeed live in an uncaring society.

The litany of evils and the magnitude of our distress are a challenge to action. Government and governed, civil society and the military, Hausa-Fulani and Zangon-Kataf, rich and poor alike, are all convoked to adopt concrete action programmes in order to arrest the present drift of our society towards self destruction. As the Catholic Prison Chaplains insist in their Communiqué, published in this issue, government and its law enforcement agencies must abide by justice and fair-play. The provisions of the law have to be applied in favour of those unjustly detained or those awaiting trial beyond the duration foreseen by the law. The scandal of our prisons and police cells call for immediate reform of these institutions and of the penal code. Justice in Nigeria should cease to be “a matter of cash and carry” (Kukah). This is why Nigerians are challenged, in this issue, to courageously deal with corruption at all levels and entrench merit and transparency in public life. But to truly realise these
reform programmes, the boundaries of the military in Nigerian politics have to be redefined.

These reforms are nevertheless imperative if we are to set aside the violent circumstances in which we live in order to embrace more humane conditions of life. This implies, for the Church and other caring agencies, a committed social practice sharpened by a liberating social analysis and theology. The rural and urban poor need care; but they also need to be educated to overcome the root causes of their impoverishment. The little achievements of the Enugu-based Development Education Centre (DEC), which undertakes women education and rural development programmes, is narrated by Asogwa in this issue. Its self-help projects have advanced the economic, health, and living conditions of families of rural poor women East of the Niger. Christian churches care for the poor and disadvantaged in our society. But they need to adopt a sharper and more critical approach to their analysis of our social situation. Our Churches must assume a stronger prophetic role in our society (Ehusani). We must dare to live fully for others and risk getting hurt like Christ, the wounded healer. Our commitment to change the degrading conditions of life in our society, especially in favour of the disadvantaged, demonstrates a clear choice of an alternative society. Our witness to the Gospel clearly involves concrete action programmes to redesign the society. This is the way towards integral human development. We believe it is the credible manner of confronting the violent structures of our society and challenging the sons and daughters of our continent to embrace humane conditions of life.

Elochukwu Uzukwu and Obiora Ike
Violence and State Security in Africa: 
A Sociological Analysis.¹

By

Ebuley Afful

1. Introduction

The current African situation, beset by conflicts and violence, is drawing attention all over the world. It is no good news! It is turmoil, communal conflict and violence, hatred and malicious actions towards ethnic groups in the same nation-state. There is institutionalized division, deep-rooted enmity between ethnic groups, religious sects and belief-systems, political groups and institutions of state. These have flared up in conflagration impairing the security of most African nation-states, conflagrations which are wreaking havoc on innocent lives, sowing death and destruction on citizens and bringing economic ruin. Millions of people have fled and continue to flee their homes across national borders. Mass migrations have resulted in overcrowded and cholera-ridden refugee camps where people die pathetically from apocalyptic diseases and plagues. Most of these are fleeing wars and government repression, and a state machinery characterized by corruption, gluttony and indiscipline leading to general institutional breakdown and infrastructural atrophy in most nation-states. Wither is Africa wending?

Wars have degraded Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Chad, Angola and Mozambique. Wars are still devastating Burundi, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Rwanda. There is civil strife in Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and the Sahara Republic, Ghana, Zaire, Cameroon, Nigeria, Gambia, Senegal, Mali, Togo and some others. Repression and corruption have fuelled conflict and instability across Africa. And most of the countries seriously affected by war and violence suffer from famine and disease.
The African continent and its opinion leaders will have to delve into the deep-rooted causes of these wars and conflicts in the various nation-states. What is the nation-state?

1.1. The Nation-State, Power and Violence

The nation-state concept is very important in modern politics and government. The nation-state is described as "a political apparatus, recognized to have sovereign rights within the borders of demarcated territorial area, able to back its claims to sovereignty by control of military power, many of whose citizens have positive feelings of commitment to its national identity". Political and cultural self-determination and economic integration are characteristics of the nation-state. The government lays claim to specific territory, possesses formalized codes of law backed by the control of military force. All nation-states in Africa are sovereign, and the citizens are supposed to have common rights and duties, and should know themselves to be part of the nation, but virtually all African nation-states have been built from societies of diverse backgrounds. As a result social integration has to be worked at in order to bring about unity and peaceful coexistence. The OAU Charter is supposed to have accepted national boundaries as they existed during the colonial times. The Africa of today is made up of "nation-states" with boundaries set to suit the interest of the colonists.

The modern nation-state monopolizes power in order to maintain order and effect control over its citizens. This function rests on the right to apply physical coercion. Thus the nation-state is seen by some as "an organization of violence that serves the interests of elites".

The use or threat of physical power has often been maintained for social control. Violence as a means of settling economic, ethnic, territorial, political and religious disputes has a long and tragic history. It is in vogue in Africa of today. In modern nation-states physical force is sanctioned by elaborate set of conventions, and it is employed by carefully chosen, controlled and psychologically trained personnel. Thus the institutionalized monopoly of power is
almost taken for granted. Much as state power is good, it is
demonized when one arrogates power to her-himself and divorces it
from love, service, justice, peace, equality and development of
human and social resources. If official power serves mainly the self-
interest of the ruling class, it is divorced from service for the
common good. It simply promotes lust for power and self-
glorification through the ruthless use of power. This is what has
engulfed the continent of Africa with violence. Such power
degenerates into tyranny. The tyrants choose violent solutions based
on vindictive justice which is vindictive self-righteousness in
disguise. In this way power and authority exclude the common
citizens; and there is bound to be an eruption as is happening in
most of Africa now.

1.2. Violence as Demonized Power

The nation-state assumes responsibility for the exercise of justice,
taxation, welfare and violence. Religious fanatics, employers,
landlords, policemen, students etc. engage in violence. Violence
here then is "a use of considerable or destroying force against
people or things, a use of force that offends against a norm". In the
use of violence, physical force is applied to inflict injury or damage
on persons or property. Honderich sees political violence as force
prohibited by law and directed to change in society. It includes the
injuring, maiming and killing of citizens, enemies or opponents, and
even the police, to settle scores. This is revolutionary violence or
riots which may lack well-articulated intentions.

Violence is demonized power which breaks rules of practice and
renders systems less secure. People thus live in fear. Society
becomes unstable and insecure. The consequences are that citizens
find themselves brutalized and dehumanized by conditions beyond
their control.

Socio-economic development becomes grounded. Citizens are
denied political rights and security, their civil and social rights are
virtually non-existent, and when these are aggravated by economic
failure and hardship, the possibility of violence erupting and its
being exploited by the power-hungry exists. Could this be the root
of the violent eruption all over Africa? There also exists political opportunists who employ violence to curb arbitrary and irresponsible use of power, and to broaden the area of political and economic liberty for a particular group. Could this be the motive for the various coups in Africa?

The nation-state needs power to diminish the ruthless power of evil, (injustice, inequality, criminal activities, violation of law and order). But it is apparent that in most African nation-states, law enforcement officers find it difficult to distinguish between preservation of peace and preservation of the status quo. From maintaining law and order, they easily move to the defense of the established order. Criticism, agitation or tampering with what is, is construed as an offense to be violently crushed. This could lead on to internal conflict and civil war.

Nevertheless, violence may on occasions be an "appeal to the sense of justice of the majority". In this case, violence is employed to gain some degree of influence greater than is enjoyed by some of the majority of individuals. We can now move on to discuss the African situation.

2. The African Situation of Conflict and Violence

Presently the African continent is going through a number of upheavals. The glaring social inequalities and tragedies on the continent have become the concern of all Africans. Africa is in deep crisis - the consequence of the many conflicts and wars that plague it. Conflict is understandably an endemic element of social life and thus unavoidable. Conflict is, however, not by necessity accompanied by violence. But Africa of today is riddled with armed violent conflicts, damaging to national unity and socio-economic development, political stability and state security.

Media reports have focused largely on Rwanda, ravaged by continued ethnic violence between the Hutu and Tutsi groups, in the course of which bands of marauders roamed the streets armed with guns and machetes searching for victims. It is estimated that over half a million people were massacred on both sides in cold blood. About 250,000 refugees flooded into Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania
and Botswana. Then over a million refugees crossed over into Zaire to be camped in appalling conditions. Even in the refugee camps, the killing continued.

Burundi has had its share of ethnic blood lust and political rivalry, turning the country into an unimaginable hell of killing, looting and anarchy. The estimates range from some few hundreds to 150,000 killed with hordes of them joining refugees from Rwanda. The Rwanda and Burundi killings still go on with pockets of armed people going on intermittent attacks. Egypt also suffers its radical Moslem terrorism, violence and bloodshed perpetrated by Islamic fundamentalists. There has been murders of foreigners and indigenous Egyptians. The count as of last December 1994 was put at about 400.

"To avoid bloody unrest, the democratic process to elect a government in Algeria was forcibly halted when it was realised that the Islamic Salvation Front, a militant Moslem group, would win the elections. This triggers off violence and counter violence." By the end of 1994, there has been 27,600 people murdered by the militants and some 160 by government forces. The killings still continue. It is now estimated, May 1995, that the number killed could be 40,000.

Sudan is faced with racial enmity and forceful conversion to Islam. It has brought in its wake the suppression of culture and the identification of culture with religion, persecution and extermination. This 12-year old conflict has already claimed over 100,000 lives, excluding casualties from drought and famine. The Dinka of Sudan believe God has endowed them with the right to rule. They see the Nuer as simple nomads, and the Nuer see the Dinka as greedy and hedonistic manipulators. The Equatorians argue that their green fertile land is the backbone of the economy. They should, therefore, possess everything.

A market-place argument over a guinea-fowl in Tendi triggered off a bloody ethnic conflict in north eastern Ghana. Some 6,000 lives are lost and over 15,000 persons are displaced with the destruction of several villages. Nigeria yearns for a peaceful return to civilian democratic government. Elections are held and they are supposedly characterized by fraud and dishonesty. The results are annulled.
Agitation, strikes and demonstrations follow in its wake. Some people lose their lives, others are arrested and detained, some still have to seek asylum elsewhere.

Riots erupt in Kano over the beheading of a Christian for "desacralising" the Koran. Kano, we know, is the volatile Moslem centre which was the focus of religious riots in the 1980s in which thousands were killed. As I write, the news is that an argument over a tip for a car parked in a market place erupted into riots between Hausas (Moslem) and Igbos (Christian). Reports say there could be as many as 100 victims but police give 5 as the official number with hundreds of shops destroyed.

The Polisario wants territory, sovereignty and peace in the Western Sahara. King Hassan denies them all these rights. There ensues armed conflict. Peace and stability elude Morocco. Several hundreds die.

Liberians have suffered and continue to suffer untold hardships through the action of Charles Taylor. He was determined to eradicate the injustices, corruption and exploitation of Samuel Doe, and then entertained the ambition to seize power in Liberia by force. Over 25,000 out of a population of about 3 million are reportedly killed and over 200,000 displaced as refugees all over the world. Presently there is a tussle for power. A series of negotiations to bring about peace and end the civil war have not succeeded.

Ethiopia and Somalia have had their share of hostile encounters. Over 300,000 lost their lives. Instead of justice and peace, hunger, thirst, disease and misery have became their bread. The whole world was besieged with pictures of the suffering, pain and dehumanization of the Ethiopians and Somalis.

In Sierra Leone, over the past 36 months, more than 10,000 people have been killed or are reported missing. Over 2 million have lost their homes and villages and nearly 100,000 have had to leave the country. At least 50 people are dying each week in a growing spiral of violence. Citizens find themselves brutalized and dehumanized. Scores have had their heads and hands cut off, and the severed parts dumped in mass graves or displayed at roadblocks. More than 30 villages are depopulated and have ceased to exist in any meaningful sense.
Mozambique is now thriving on a brokered peace. It has been devastated by a 16-year war in which one million died; more than 500,000 children became orphans while 6 million others were displaced or became refugees in neighbouring states. The war caused economic and social damage to the tune of 20 billion US dollars; 3,000 primary schools and about 1,000 health centres were destroyed in the rural areas. The country returned to illiteracy, moral degradation, famine and disease. Angola is on the road to peace after over 20 years of civil war. More than a million have lost their lives and pretty well over two million were refugees in other countries. In 1985 there were 35,000 Angolan refugees in Zaire's Shaba province.

Quite recently the civilian government of the Gambia was toppled by the military in the name of justice and economic mis-management.

In all these violent conflictual situations innocent lives have been and are being lost unnecessarily. There is neither peace nor security. And in Accra, Ghana, workers and citizens embarked on a peaceful better conditions of living in a harsh, 'sapped' economic set up. Violence erupts when they are confronted by ACDRS, a pro-government para-military group. Lives are lost. Security for the civil population is impaired by precisely increasing the "state security" outfit.

This is a panoramic view of the African situation: violent conflicts in Zaire, Kenya, Togo (where mystery killings are reported), Uganda, Mauritania and even in Côte d'Ivoire.

What are the causes of these wars, confrontations, violence and conflicts? The question is, do Africans have innate inclinations towards aggression? Are they inherently aggressive and use these violent conflicts to express their murderous feelings in their nation-states? Why would an ethnic group massacre another in the same nation? I shall like to examine these questions on the religious, political, ethnic and military level.

3. Why Do Wars and Violence Take Place?

May be it would help us to delve into the general causes of war and violence. Conflicts and wars have forged national borders.
Military strength is a major factor influencing the survival of nation-states. The wish for conquest or subjugation of less powerful groups have been enough grounds for war and conflict. Others have been spurred on by the quest for economic interests to promote violence and conflict - from the limited and rational application of force to unrestricted violence.

We also know that war or conflicts come about over disagreements, which cannot be handled successfully through negotiation, treaty or diplomacy. The desire to acquire some or all of the territory of another and the struggle over resources, such as the control of a major oil region or sea-route or whatever could be occasion for war. War becomes the ultimate test of power in the international arena. War is not merely a political act, but also a real political instrument, a continuation of political commerce, a carrying on of the same by other means through the management of violence. In some countries the threat or actual use of violence is employed to blackmail or to intimidate civilian authorities. Violence and conflict could also be the result of ideological or religious clashes.

3.1. **Ethnicity and Violence**

The ethnic factor underlies the armed conflict in northeastern Ghana, Liberia, Somalia, Sudan, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and the highly publicized Rwanda-Burundi massacres. In the Kwazulu Natal area of south Africa Chief Buthelezi is cashing in on ethnic division and loyalty as a legitimate cause for hatred to advance his cause for leadership. This has resulted in the killing of hundreds of people.

The post-colonial era has brought to the surface latent ethnic animosities. Group rivalries are being exploited by power-hungry politicians like Buthelezi, Charles Taylor, Strasser, Mobutu, Savimbi, Rawlings and many more.

In Zaire more than 300 ethnic groups are at each other’s throats tussling for supreme control with serious consequences for the future development of the country. The main ethnic groups have divided their support for Mobutu and the opposition leader, Etienne
Tshisekedi. The Kivus and Baluba who support Tshisekedi have been harassed and forced by government soldiers to seek refuge in Zambia and Angola. The wish to subjugate and control less powerful groups seem to be the motive.

Where ethnic groups believe in a superiority or privilege based on ethnic ancestry and/or historical events, aggression and show of force are often initiated against other groups. Rwanda and Burundi could fit into this model. In some nation-states it is not uncommon to hear of some ethnic groups being labelled the 'slaves' of other ethnic groups. Pejorative and derogatory remarks are made of those 'slave' groups. And it is not uncommon for them to initiate steps to free themselves from their feudal overlords. This is the root cause of the Nanumba-Konkomba war. The Konkomba would not want to see or regard themselves as 'slaves' of any group in Ghana. They fight or go to war to free themselves.

Some other ethnic groups seek ethnic separation. They define nationality in terms of cultural homogeneity and racial distinctiveness. Citizenship is seen as a cultural bond between the individual and the community. Some even define the nation-state through race and biological descent, and would therefore want to maintain a tradition of sexual exclusivity. The ethnic conflict boiling in Algeria between the indigenous Berbers and the Arabs, and also between the moors and blacks in Mauritania are rooted in ethnic superiority and ethnic purity.

Colonial regimes did not encourage the ideals of democratic participation in Africa, and there is little basis for a feeling of national unity. This is evident in Liberia, Nigeria, Zaire, Burundi, Rwanda, Somalia, Ethiopia and many more. The divide and rule tactic adopted by the colonialists kept the groups apart and where multiple ethnic, clannish and regional loyalties existed, they maintained them and even deepened the antagonism through lopsided development. Some of the population therefore came to have little knowledge of or interest in the mechanisms of a central government. The introduction of multi-party government systems led to these being ethnicized and thus becoming unstable. Specific ethnic interests are much more important.
Opinion leaders in the ethnic groups realize it is pretty easy to use the army to advance their cause and to settle their scores. They flood the army and bide their time for an excuse of 'unbridled corruption, political repression and social injustice and uneven development' to seize power. For example, Sierra Leone's Strasser seized power ostensibly to crush rebels, crackdown on corruption, fix the economy and respect human right and democracy. There is the general feeling that 'the widespread revulsion is caused by the officially sanctioned tribal killings organised by a bunch of violent corrupt and undisciplined young soldiers of the Strasser led NPRC.' The undercurrent tribalism of the military takeover is evidenced by 'the tribal massacres [which] were planned in advance and were ordered by government (NPRC) officials'. The civil war in Liberia was originally aimed at toppling Samuel Doe whose Krahn ethnic group held sway and was suppressing other groups including the Americo-Liberians who had enjoyed a privileged position until Doe's coup in 1980. The indigenous groups have always resented rule by the settlers, the Americo-Liberians. But the settler group of repatriated American slaves and their descendants have made themselves the dominant group. So Charles Taylor and other ethnic leaders continue to fight for leadership four years after Doe. This has reinforced ethnic exclusivity and has necessitated repression and decimation of groups. So the Liberian war drags on for ethnic-cultural exclusiveness.

It is also not uncommon to form political parties along ethnic lines in order to gain advantage over other groups. In so doing, power-hungry politicians choose to exploit latent ethnic animosities in order to throw people against one another as has happened in Zaire. This is also the situation in Angola where the 17-year civil war pitted Jonas Savimbi's UNTA, which is Ovimbundu-dominated, against president Eduardo dos Santos' Bakongo-dominated MPLA. Tens of thousands of Angolans have died and hundreds of thousands left as refugees. Rawlings of Ghana is promoting a system of domination by the Ewe group over all others, especially the Akans. And this does not augur well for the future of the country.
To entrench and perpetuate their rule some governments promote communal and ethnic violence in order to exploit it for their own personal security. Since violence has no constitutional sanction (it is irrational as well as immoral), it presents the opportunity to clamp down on opponents in the name of state security.

Ethnic violence could be the result of conflict between the beneficiaries of a regime and those who have been deprived as in Rwanda. The deprived groups rose up against the privileged in Juvenal's regime, and the consequence is the bloody Hutu-Tutsi violence. When ethnicity combines with political ambition and privileged status of an ethnic group, possible fertile grounds are prepared for violent upheavals, especially in a situation of economic chaos and administrative incompetence.

3.2. Religious Factors

Religious and race consciousness could be dangerously pursued to the detriment of national security. And when religion and ethnicity are both intertwined, fortress mentality, which is the result of martyrdom complex, could bring about bloody conflicts and prolonged violence. The Islamic North Africa (the Mahgreb) has serious security problems as a result of religious 'purity'. Several thousands of people have been violently murdered in Algeria, Egypt and Morocco as a result of the religious factor.

Algeria is on fire. Militant Moslems want power and the establishment of an Islamic theocratic state. They want Sharia Law to be the basis for ruling. In the Sudan, the same search for an Islamic theocratic state had led to division between north and south, Arab and African, Moslem and Christian. Here, religious and ethnic homogeneity merge, and thus ethnic and religious intermarriage have become additionally constrained and inhibited. They seek for religious exclusiveness. Religious intolerance is the framework for the struggle of ethnic and racial superiority and supremacy. And religious vengeance breeds counter-vengeance. The riot of Kano and Kaduna in northern Nigeria are also ethnically and politically motivated with religion providing only the inspiration. The cross and crescent become ostensible cover-ups. Thus the racial and ethnic
struggle in Algeria and Mauritania are disguised as religious wars inspired and guided by the Quran and Sharia law.

In like manner, the violence in Egypt is against the backdrop of acute economic and social problems, a growing gap between the rich and the poor, public disenchanted with government corruption and bureaucratic inertia, but is disguised as religious under the aegis of Islamic forceful conversion. It is alleged that Islamic religious conflicts and wars are founded by the Organisations of Islamic Conference (OIC) with petrodollars from the Middle East. A make-belief that one is an ardent 'islamizer' gets one the funding. In most areas where religious violence has erupted, the religious factor only precipitates it; the remote causes or real causes and motives are there. It could be a struggle for supremacy or for political authority by the poor, who make religion the sign of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people.12

3.3. Military Violence

Military service has been considered as service for order and peace. The presence of the military is marked by nonviolence. Modern nation-states involve an apparatus of government laying claims to specific territories, possessing formalized codes of law, and backed by the control of military force. The state is thus a principle of power and authority relying on the military. The military is used to back up juridical decision-making. It therefore steers clear of politics. It therefore lacks the legitimacy to rule. But military governments have become common and normal in most of Africa.

For two decades Africa has experienced an epidemic of military take-overs and the dissolution of democratic rule. Since the overthrow of colonialism, there has been a constant struggle between the military and political elite for supremacy. The military in most cases have won because they are far more tightly organized and have a monopoly over the most powerful weapons. Military opportunism has been exhibited in Ghana, Nigeria, Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso, Uganda, Guinea, Sierra Leone and recently The Gambia. The military has sought to rule only to correct 'graft and
official corruption which has eaten so deeply into... society and the
civilian government's inability and unwillingness to curb this social
canker'.

The military rule, as a corrective regime, is motivated by the
elimination of corruption, animosity and divisiveness. Citizens who
have become disenchanted with a decadent and incompetent
government accept these reasons as plausible. Attempts to use
constitutional and legal means to get a change of government
entrenched in power is forcefully used against the citizens. There is
apparent insecurity and destabilisation. The military thus comes in to
redeem the citizens (National Redemption Council in Ghana) or to
liberate the country from bullish criminals (National Liberation
Council, Ghana). The military also comes in simply the clean the
augean stables and quickly leave the scene. So you have the
Provisional Ruling Council in Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Ghana.
Some military regimes tend to be revolutionary, to change the tide
of affairs and introduce new political climate. So you have the
Revolutionary Council in Sierra Leone, The Gambia, Nigeria and
Burkina Faso. They see themselves as promoting a new ideology.
There are also defence councils which defend the nation from
political marauders who have plunged the nation into a permanent
state of anarchy and instability - Provisional National Defence
Council, Ghana.

The military juntas aim at cleaning the stables, introducing
accountability and transparency, honesty and hardwork along with
patriotism. Then they safely handover to a democratically elected
civilian government and leave the scene.

More often than not these military regimes evolve into
sanguinary despots riddled with corruption. They become insensitive
to the plight of the people they seek to liberate or redeem, defend
and protect. They, in their trail, introduce draconian decrees for the
ruthless oppression of opponents, disguised as discipline. Detention
without trial, torture and executions become their hallmarks. What
often happens is more coups attempts; and when a coup-d'état
succeeds, another regime comes in more brutal than the former.
Should there be a failure, in the attempts, then one has summary
executions and/or rebel factions fighting the regular army as in Sierra Leone and Liberia.

In order to beef up their position, the military leaders become the focus of security and all others are left at the mercy of chance. When tribal factions do form within the military establishment, the security of the state is doubly hampered. They jostle for power, and loyalties are divided. The ground is ripe for civil war as in Angola, Zaire, Somalia, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The military could sound the drums of war as diversionary tactics to heighten the insecurity in the country. Trouble is fomented in neighbouring countries in order to get the sympathy, if not the support, of the populace and to keep their minds off the harsh conditions at home. So Ghana confronts Togo, Nigeria is struggling with Cameroon over the Bakassi Peninsular, and Sudan and Uganda are now slugging it out.

Military violence is perpetrated through the announcement of alleged coup plots. The occasion is used to silence critics, arrest and detain potential opponents and when possible eliminate opinion leaders physically. Rawlings has done that in Ghana; and in Nigeria Sanni Abacha has arrested some personalities in the wake of the second anniversary of June 12 1993 presidential election, all allegedly involved in a coup attempt. Insecurity is heightened by that act. The arrogance and political intolerance of military juntas make them preoccupy themselves with witch-hunting of opponents, intimidating them with torture and bullish tactics.

During the civilian rule, the military could be used to cause havoc, especially when most members of government are retired military officers. The least agitation is an occasion used to declare a state of emergency in order to use the military to brutalise citizens. A recent 'Kumepreko' demonstration in Accra against economic malaise, mass dismissals, conspicuous plunder and use of state funds by government and its functionaries, was nearly exploited by the government to use the military to cause violence. The minister for the interior said, among other things in parliament, that the government 'consider[s] the stability of the nation as of paramount importance and will not shirk our responsibility to protect life and property'.14
Other government functionaries and institutions viewed 'the so-called demonstration as only a ploy for bringing down the government and turning the clock of constitutional progress backwards. There was no doubt that the aftermath of the thwarted and frustrated demonstration was no different from the aftermath of a foiled uprising or a coup d'etat'.

The ground was thus being prepared for a state of emergency in order to exploit it to deal ruthlessly with political opponents who are blamed for destabilisation and insecurity. The army then violates human rights with impunity and human life is not respected. The state's security cannot be guaranteed, as a result of rumblings in the army itself.

3.4. Economic Violence

The civil wars and internal conflicts in most of Africa have their economic dimension. Socio-economic transformations have often been the rationale for a change in government. The majority of the African elite, both civilian and military, over indulged in a get-rich-quick bonanza and become tools of economic paralysis. Rather than contribute meaningfully to the socio-economic development of the nation, they strive to transform themselves overnight into petty bourgeois by massive embezzlement of public funds with impunity in a free-for-all rat race. They (military and civilian elite) perpetuate the economic exploitation of the continent resulting in untold hardships and misery for the masses who continue to bear the brunt of their economic mess.

How do they do it? They become the acolytes of Western economic policies on our continent. Most African countries are now pursuing IMF/World Bank Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). These prescriptions have visited untold hardships on the citizens. Grinding and abject poverty are sweeping across the continent as she wrestles with the results of ERP/SAP. Social service provision by the state is reduced considerably, if not non-existent. Hard gains in health and education have been reversed, living standards have so declined and poverty has so increased that people are refusing to live any more. Since our power-hungry
civilian and military elite want international and western recognition, they kowtow to these inhuman prescriptions at the expense of their poor citizens. They would lick their boots for anything.

As reported in *West Africa*, 'Structural Adjustment Programmes are loans with strings attached. They lead to cuts in spending on health and education, rising unemployment and spiralling prices all of which hit the poorest hard'. By its trade liberalisation arrangements, the IMF/World Bank control the economy of most African states which are thus turned into dumping grounds for all kinds of shoddy goods. The consequence is that Africa has become a continent of buyers, sellers and consumers. African nations have become the pawns of Western economies providing raw materials at prices set by the West and they sell their manufactured goods to us at their own prices.

State enterprises have been privatised, or is it 'foreignized'? This leaves some countries, like Ghana, without national assets. The economy is controlled by foreigners with support by the government. These foreigners maltreat citizens with impunity and threaten them with dismissals when they complain. An illustrative example is this 'inhumane treatment being meted out to workers of VGL by an expatriate without regard to the existing labour laws of the country. The workers are under constant threat of summary dismissal any time they complain and...have been asked to sign a bond to work every Saturday and Sunday without pay.' The ERP/SAP have brought serious human costs and social hardships to many African states - disease, overcrowded hospitals, unemployment, rise in street children, political instability. In short, 'people have become senseless, fruitless, heartless and ruthless'.

The cumulative result is brain drain, and the attendant influx of foreign consultants to 'monitor and evaluate state-owned enterprises who are paid between $10,000 a month and $16,000 a month but their impact have been negligible'. The *Times* continues, '... at a time that workers of corporations had not been paid for over 20 months, should the government continue to pay between C10m, and C16m monthly to individual'. The paper said that 'the salaries of the consultants came from a World Bank Loan'.

On the other hand African experts are labelled "economic refugees" and discriminated against in the Western World. Economic packages for neo-colonisation are forced down the throats of Africans through their puppet government. For a few dollars given to these governments, they are instructed to 'evangelize' their citizens on family planning and population control, and against procreation. Africa is over populated. Multinationals therefore have the licence to flood the streets with sex-materials for the prevention of conception. Some of their adverts are dehumanising.

Deals are clinched with some few dollars to alleviate the economic difficulties and for 'development programmes' if toxic waste and materials would be accepted into Africa. So you wake up one morning and the sea is full of weeds, or what?

On the African market can be found expired manufactured goods, rejected meat and poultry, salmonella-infested eggs, cereals and grains gone bad. All in the name of AID and economic assistance. This is economic violence. Africa is so poor and needy that she has 'sunk so low commercially that people have the effrontery to import used BRASIERES and PANTIES for our women and men folks'.21 For a paltry sum, our women are sexually abused by expatriates all because of lack of financial security. This is real economic violence.

This economic violence is more dangerous than all the other forms of violence. It leads to identity crises, loss of self-security and low self-esteem. It is not surprising that most of the countries (Ghana Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Gambia, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia etc), rocked by civil wars, uprisings against their governments and devastated by famine and drought are all IMF/World Bank controlled economies. The African has lost his/her soul through socio-economic violence.

4. Conclusion

Humans everywhere desire freedom, order and security. They want to curb arbitrary and irresponsible power in order to broaden the scope of political and economic liberty. Therefore, when
governments adopt strategies and tactics for the manipulation and control of the majority by a powerfully and strategically placed minority, peaceful coexistence and cooperation of a multiethnic nation would be disturbed. Violence erupts and security is impaired for the individual and the nation as a whole.

African leaders have used their power to turn their states into one-party states and in the process alienated and excluded the majority. When the ruling party happens to be ethnically based, then this gives room for other ethnic groups to struggle for freedom and economic advancement. There is bound to be ethnic conflicts and wars. And the leaders, in a way, failed to earn the support of the masses and thus lack the basic foundation on which the ability to lead rests.

The belief that one-party rule brings about stability and economic progress while it keeps emergent nations from fragmenting and balkanising themselves along ethnic or regional lines have often been good ground for insurrection leading to communal violence. This is the situation in Zaire, Togo, and is in process in Ghana. Ironically, these leaders pursue policies that per se cause fragmentation and balkanisation. Some create an ethnic-based personal army instead of a national army. Others dominate the army command and with officers from their ethnic groups in what should really be a national military organisation and not a tribal army. And when this 'tribal army' is turned into a tool of oppression and blind devotion to the tribe and president, ethno-cultural violence, like that of Rwanda-Burundi, can easily take place. This explains the Liberian, Somalian, and Sierra Leonean internecine wars. The 'Solidarity of the gang and the tribe' brings in its wake civil strife, destruction of peace and stability.

Africa is not helping itself by perpetuating and perpetrating the ethnic divisions so successfully exploited by the colonialists. It is unwise to rule one's country by pitting one tribe against the other. It breeds hatred and vindictiveness. When religious conversion is combined with ethnic purity, there is bound to be a conflagration. Many new democratic nations (Ghana, Togo, Guinea, Benin, Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, etc) in Africa are so jerry-built that they resemble dictatorships on leave. In many cases the colonial
edifice is still unchanged, or what they revolted against and murdered people for, remains intact. It is merely populated by new faces with some governments practising an internal colonial regime which is authoritarian but not authoritative. The state has become synonymous with the ruler. Zaire - empire of Mobutu; Kenya - fiefdom of Arap Moi; Ghana - vassalage of Rawlings etc: "L'etat c'est moi!"

The West often aids and abets these despots with often misguided development aids to help entrench them in power. These leaders become 'guinea-gips' for the testing of socio-political and economic theories of the West. This results in hardship leading to violent overthrows and internal conflicts.

Some dictatorial governments play on existing communal tensions in order to entrench their own power and advance their own political agenda. For example, the Ewe-Akan tension has been exploited 'successfully' in Rawlings' Ghana. It looks like it is about to explode.

The Americo-Liberian-indigenous groups tension was exploited by Doe in Liberia, and the long term result is the present Liberian crisis. Mobutu's Zaire, Savimbi's Angola and Konan Bedie's Betes are all carved along these lines. Discrimination and violence against target groups, denial of equal political rights may sometimes be traced to official policies. One cannot rule the Nanumba-Konkomba conflict out this. The pronouncements and promises of officialdom have brought about this situation in northeastern Ghana.

On the religious plane, racial, religious and ethnic superiority interplay to bring conflict and violence. The religious wars of the Dark Ages in Europe for religious supremacy are now being fought in Africa with support from both Arabs and Christian Europe. Let's colonize and control Africa through religion. And Africa falls for the bait. Africa is either Christian or Moslem, just as it is Anglophone, Francophone, or Lusophone. This ethno-religious conflict is aggravated when one area is perceived to be very well provided for by way of social amenities and development projects. This easily triggers off violence.

It is also a known fact that some sanguinary despots in Africa train hit squads to brutalize, torture, repress, intimidate and physically
eliminate their opponents. They allow discussion only in line with their views which are deemed rational and tolerable. There is the commando group of Rawlings and his Associations of Committees for the Defence of the Revolution even in this constitutional era. The Red Berets or presidential guards were about to be formed in Nigeria; Eyadema of Togo and Kerekou of Benin had their hit squads etc. They are involved in political spying, intimidation and attacks on individuals and the news media. The armed forces are rendered powerless as they are poorly armed and underpaid. They become easy prey for the power hungry who lure them to cause violence and disturb the security and peace of the nation.

A new political situation is emerging today in Africa. Africa stands a great chance if it would take advantage of the vast possibilities created by the new political situation. The war in Angola may soon be over, and in Mozambique it is all over. South Africa is multi-racial. All Colonial bastions have been pulled down. Africa has to respond creatively to this new situation. Despair should not be our answer. There is need for a new focus. This requires discipline and visionary leaders; an elite which is truly independent in thought and action; an elite which wants to reach the top through excellence and dedication. Then would peaceful, settled and stable societies emerge in Africa - societies organized for sustainable growth and development.

ENDONTES

1. For this analysis I depended mostly on magazines (like West Africa Weekly), News Bulletins and Radio discussions on the BBC World Service and GBC, and Ghanaian Newspapers. I thank Frs Abuah-Quansah and Amakye Mlasey for their critique, and Fr. Wynnard Amewowo who encouraged me to write.


11. *Ibid*.


13. Cf *West Africa* No. 3969.


15. T.N. Ward Brew, Chairman of Bar Association of Ghana, a rival pro-government lawyers' group to the Ghana Bar Association.


20. Ibid.

The Zangon Kataf Crisis in Respect of Minority Culture in Northern Nigeria.

By

Francis Duniya

1. Introduction

Throughout the country, but perhaps more in the former Northern Nigeria, the Guardian Newspaper noted that ethnic minorities are in ferment. They are striving to shake off age long usurpation, to cast off the yoke of distant suzerains, and to take their own destinies in their own hands. This ferment, which this nation can ignore only at its peril, is what has been subsumed under the national question. It is real, and it is urgent. To pretend that it does not exist is to be deluded. The Zangon-Kataf disturbances were a regrettable manifestation of the national question. So were the earlier disturbances in Kafanchan. And so were the Tiv disturbances of the early sixties. As General Olusegun Obasanjo (Rtd) has warned, "the trouble which had its roots in pre-colonial Nigeria, may not be washed away by the shedding of Lekwot's blood. The Kataf [people] of Kaduna State are only one of the scores of ethnic groups in the old Northern Region that have resisted Hausa-Fulani rule for centuries".¹

There is no gainsaying that political power has always been in the hands of Northern Muslims since independence. This power has more often than not been used to expand the boundaries of the map of Islam (and Hausa-Fulani interests).² After many years of groping around in the dark, experience has taught Christian minorities that today, their Hausa-Fulani Muslim neighbours are the best of friends, tomorrow, the worst of enemies. It is therefore in the light of their present position as "The Back-Waters of Northern Politics", that I have undertaken to review the Zangon-Kataf crisis in respect of minority culture in Northern Nigeria. It is my hope that a better
understanding of the situation will help the Katafs and their Hausa-Fulani neighbours to come to terms with each other.

1.1. The Katafs

The Kataf people, called "Atyab" form one of the ethnic groups of the Zangon Kataf Local Government of Kaduna State. They are one of the numerous tribes to be found in Southern Kaduna in Northern Nigeria. The language of communication among the Katafs is "Tyap". The "Atyab" and their neighbours have been adumbrated into a single ethno-linguistic culture area called the Kataf group of languages in the international classification of African languages.3

1.2. The Hausa-Fulani Muslims

Linguists and archaeologists have shown that the Hausa were originally Sahara people, who gradually moved southwards about 3,000 years ago, and reached the present Hausaland comparatively recently. As late as the 12th century AD, the Hausa were still moving around the Sahara, and are still there, being the most numerous tribe in Niger Republic. The Hausa of Zaria inhabit the southern-most tip of Hausaland, and they occupied this area not earlier than 1,000 AD.4

The Fulani, one of the major tribes in Northern Nigeria, migrated into the region from Senegal.5 The Fulani, according to Kalu, came in from the West, but their ultimate origin would appear to have been the Middle East.6 The Fulani were established in Gobir, as in the rest of Hausaland, not only as cattle herders but also as officials in the courts of the Habe King; and many of them occupied high positions. By the turn of the eighteenth century, their increasing political economic influence in the Northern States gave the local rulers considerable cause for disquiet, especially since they formed a class in the vanguard of the movement for religious and intellectual reform. It was in the atmosphere of religious laxity and intellectual
decadence that the architect of the present-day Sokoto caliphate, Usman Dan Fodio, came into being.7

2. The Origins of Zangon-Kataf Town

The town was originally known as "Zangon Kataf (traders)" by the Hausa traders and "Zongon Akpat" by the Atyab, to signify that it was a resting place where long distance traders rested, took supplies of food and local merchandise, before proceeding on their way. It was thus a centre of active commerce amongst the transient settlers and the Atyab, Bajju, Kamanton and Ikulu. Zangon Kataf was not only a market for foodstuffs, livestock, handicrafts, neutron, salt, ornaments and antimony; it was also a slave market.8

The oral traditions have it that the Hausa Community in Zangon Kataf is said to have been established around 1750 AD. by a man called "Mele", a Beriberi and a relation of the Chief of Kauru. Mele first settled near Abuiyab, a village which is two kilometres away from the present site of Zangon Kataf. As a stranger, he was suspected of spying on the traditional practices of the Atyab and so was given an alternative land which is the present Hausa settlement.9

Before colonial rule, relationship between the Kataf owners of the land and the Hausa strangers they accommodated, had been cordial.10 A local history of the Fulani community in Zangon Kataf land, stated that "Zangon Kataf was a mere trading settlement granted to the Hausas by the Atyab". The Hausa settlement in Southern Kaduna area like Kaura, Lere, Zangon Kataf, Jere and Jena'a were established between late 18th century and the middle of the 19th century. Historical evidence from both the host communities and the settler-Hausa, showed that all the settlements were established when the land owners of these host communities gave them (the Hausa) land to settle, which was the same with Zangon Kataf settlement.11

It was towards the end of the 18th century that the Chief of Kauru was said to have appointed a Chief (Magajin Gari) for the Hausa living in the town known as Zangon Fatake. The Magajin Gari maintained order, collected tribute from the Hausa inhabitants of the
town and passed it onto the Sarkin Kauру. This relationship remained essentially the same even after Kauру became subject to the emirate of Zazzau after the 1804 Jihads. The only difference was that the Fulani herdsmen living amongst the Atyab began to pay jangali (poll tax) to the Zaria rulers. The Sa'i of Zaria had a representative in Zangon Kataf, who collected the poll-tax and passed it to the Emir of Zaira. The Hausa-Fulani Muslims who inhabited Zangon Kataf town never considered themselves rulers of the Atyab, but as subjects of the Emir of Zazzau and therefore paid tribute to him. At no time in pre-colonial history of our people did the Hausa-Fulani Muslims attempt to collect tribute from the Atyab, Bajju, Kamaton, Ikulu and Chawai. They only traded with the Kataf people and their neighbours.

The Colonial era in Hausaland was basically marked by Islam's easy and handsome victory over paganism so as to become almost a state religion. Islam seemed to have the approval of the colonial regimes, and thus there was every encouragement officially for one to become a Muslim. They re-instated the Fulani aristocracy in their old positions with the provision that they maintained order. The colonial government was content simply to restrict the most oppressive features of Fulani rule such as slavery and severe punishments and then accepted the Islamic fact for what it was. Generally, the British government was more interested in creating and maintaining conditions favourable for the extracting of reasonable revenues from the relatively rich Hausa farmland than in introducing British ideas as freedom of religion and complete personal liberty.

In 1902, the British imposed Hausa district heads on Zangon Kataf, Kagarko and Lere districts. The Atyab resisted this unfortunate development on the grounds that they had never been under any Hausa ruler. The imposition of Zaria feudalist Muslims on the people of Kataf was rationalised by the British through their wholesale acceptance of the false claims by the Zaria feudalists that they had conquered and ruled the Atyab, Bajju, Ikulu and all their neighbours before the coming of the British colonialists.
Colonial history and fabrications from Zazzau emirate that the Hausa-Fulani conquered and subjugated Atyab people were merely a justification for the oppression meted out to the people. The deliberate distortion of the history of Atyab made the British to believe that Zazzau emirate covered the whole of what is presently referred to as Southern Kaduna. The Hausa enclave or settlement became overnight a district headquarter and the traders and their offspring became rulers. This situation destroyed the mutual respect between the two communities. Today, what we are seeing is a display of arrogance and insensitive maintenance of an oppressive and exploitative system of government, which breeds nothing for the citizenry, but injustice and violence in the area.  

In 1904, there was another revolt against the British insistence, in collaboration with the Zazzau ruling elite, to impose a district head on the Atyab people. By 1905-1907, the revolts solidified and were directed against the oppressive tax system. The building of the settlement of Zangon Kataf town was completed between 1915 and 1920 under the supervision of the British and during the emirship of Aliyu Dan Sidi of Zaria. Both the land on which the town was settled as well as the farmlands given to its residents were forcefully acquired from the Kataf people by the British and given to the Hausa-Fulani community; an act which has been contested by the Katafs till date. In order to protect and please the Zazzau aristocracy at all cost, the British colonialists, stationed military garrisons at Madakiya and Kachia respectively.  

Thus by 1922, the protests against the oppressive politics of the colonial administration and the native Authority officials became more militant. In Zangon Kataf, the leader of the Atyab, Marok Fada was tied to a stake in the open market. Another leader, Gankon Matagama, fled into exile.  

The 1946 revolts assumed unprecedented dimension and even led to closer ties of unity among the Bajju, Atyab, Atsan, Ikulu and Angan. These communities resolved to have a ruler of their own and to dissolve the Zazzau ruling oligarchy represented by the District Head. The British and their collaborators within the "Native Authority" blamed this militant resistance to British and Zazzau rule on the influence of Christianity. In response, the British moved with
speed to quell the revolt, arrested and jailed 26 Kataf men in Zaria prisons where seven of them died of torture.

Between 1953 and 1958, Zangon Kataf Hausa settlement was surrounded on various occasions. In 1953, in particular, the Kataf had had to surround the Hausa colony of Zangon Kataf with a view to capturing the Emir of Zaria who had arrived there to cart away their grain. He narrowly escaped a speeding arrow aimed at him. It was the army unit from Kachia, commanded by British officers as usual, that was rushed to rescue him in Zangon Kataf where he had taken refuge for eight days.22

For a greater appreciation of the more scandalous data, as we already indicate above, it should be remembered that "the British colonised Nigeria in the name of Christ, but found it expedient to leave her in the political care of Allah".23 Christianity, we will like to state here, preached conformity with the status quo. In fact the missionary-trained Atyab actually denounced the leaders of the popular revolts.24 The missionary educational programme was of course designed purely for the purpose of evangelization. They were concerned with bringing up people who could read the Bible, teach and write.25

In short, we would like to conclude this section by saying that the founding of Zangon Kataf, both as a settlement and a seat of Native Authority brought new dimensions to the relationship between the Hausa Community and the Atyab. It also added another dimension to the relationship between the Atyab and an alien ruler, viz., the British.26

3. National Independence and Neo-Colonization

The structures of Hausa-Fulani domination remained intact and were further consolidated during the First Republic (1960-1966) under the Northern Peoples Congress-controlled Regional Government of the late Sardauna of Sokoto. The Native Authority (N.A.) system of government which was the organ of autocratic local control was manned essentially by the Hausa-Fulani settlers in most part of the Middle Belt.27 There were sporadic incidents of popular uprising in many parts of Southern Kaduna State during the
1960s which gave rise to the concession to appoint indigenes as the District Heads in a few places, but under firm control of the Emir of Zaria.

It is only in 1966 after the military take-over that a revolt by the peasants - Bajju, Kataf, Chawai, Ikulu and Kamanton - resulted in the expulsion of the Zaria-imposed District Head and the subsequent appointment of Mallam Bala Dauke Gora, an indigene, to head the Zangon Kataf District in 1967. The appointment therefore was the fruit of years of continuous struggle against the oppressive feudal rule based in Zaria city. This concession angered the then Emir of Zaria, Alhaji Aminu, as indicated by the front page commentary of Gaskiya Taфи Kwabo, of October, 1967. The Emir in a furious reaction to the administrative changes, said that "the appointment of a native as a District Head was tantamount to creating confusion and could lead to demand by the indigenes for their District Officer, independent Province, local Government and eventually a state and a Chief of their on".28 Before Alhaji Aminu, Emir Ja'afaru of Zaria had in the fifties articulated the ideology of the ruling class. He told his people that the non-Muslims were meant to nourish and sustain the desires of the power-hungry ruling class. He likened the relationship to the horse and the grass; and warned that the "grass must never be allowed to eat up the horse."29 This position was confirmed in the reply the present Emir of Zaria, Alhaji Shehu Idris, gave to the Bajju (an ethnic group from Southern Kaduna), when they demanded for a district of their own. He objected and wrote to the Secretary to the Military Government against the creation of a Kaje (Bajju) District, because as he put it, "such a precedent will enable others to demand for their rights, and that government did not have enough money to finance the district".30

The state of emergency created by the civil war temporarily put a seal on such community uprising. They were however to resurface immediately after the war since the underlying causes had not been properly addressed. In other words, it appears that for the good of society, we need to look at upstream solutions that eliminate causes rather than effects.
4. The Zangon Kataf Market Conflicts and Their Eclipse

The Zangon Kataf market became prominent in the 19th century because the Atyab ensured the safety of the market and the traders did nothing to cause the Atyab to withdraw that protection. The market therefore became part of the network of several markets within the region that linked the whole of Northern Nigeria to the Trans-Saharan Trade and the Southern Nigeria Trade in the 19th Century.31

(a) Zangon Kataf Market Conflict, Phase I: On Thursday, 6th February, 1992, there was a massive destruction of lives and property in Zangon Kataf. This was the day set aside for the Zangon Kataf market to be moved across the road leading to Saminaka and Samaru-Kataf, in order to locate it at a better site prepared by the Zangon Kataf Local Government Council. On getting to the new site on the fateful day, unsuspecting early market-goers, largely Christian Kataf natives, were attacked by the largely Muslim Hausa-Fulani settlers. It is the premeditated action of the Muslims using dangerous weapon such as machine guns and daggers, that caused the riot leading to loss of lives and massive destruction of property.32

(b) Zangon Kataf Market Conflicts, Phase II: On the 15th of May 1992, the inflated town of Zangon Kataf experienced yet another devastation of lives and property. Not surprisingly, the immediate cause could be traced to religious undertones. For on the 9th of May, 1992, a letter was written to Sultan Ibrahim Dasuki to formally inform him of plans to start a Jihad (Holy War) at Zangon Kataf by a radical Islamic group. The Muslim group which undertook this task was the "Nigerian Aid Group of Jama'atu Izalatu Bidia - Ikamatu Sunna". The members of this radical Muslim group forwarded a strongly worded letter in Hausa language to the following persons: the Sultan of Sokoto, the Emir of Zaria, the Commissioners of Police and State Security Service, the Chairman of Zangon Kataf Local Government Council, the District Head of Zangon Kataf and some Islamic Groups.33
However, in my own judgement, I wish to state that the immediate cause of the 17th May, 1992 Kaduna riot is not unconnected with the dramatic entry into Kaduna on the afternoon of the above date by Alhaji Saminu Daura, Assistant Inspector General of Police, Zone 6, accompanied by Alhaji Tanko, the Chairman of Kaduna North Local Government, a Hausa-man from Zangon Kataf. The Inspector General of Police and the Chairman of Kaduna North came into Kaduna town, carrying along with them the wounded and corpses of some of the rioters, from the area of conflict, which was 400 km. away. The Executive Governor of Kaduna State Alhaji Mohammed Dabo Lere is said to have provided the transport. Arriving in Kaduna, they stopped over, by design, to openly display the dead and wounded to their Muslim community, definitely to incite and stimulate them into rioting.34

5. Government partisanship in the Midst of Ethnic and Religious in Nigeria

Since the outbreak of hostilities in Zangon Kataf on the 15th of May 1992, and especially with the subsequent spread of violence of revenge to other towns, such as Kaduna, Zaria and Ikara, the government and the mass media focused their attention on three major issues.

First and foremost, the alleged colossal scale of destruction which took place in Zangon Kataf became an issue being handled in such a way as to attract sympathy, emotion and human concern, while wittingly diverting attention from the seriousness of the pogroms which took place at Kaduna, Zaria and Ikara. What occurred at Zangon Kataf is nothing to compare with the massacres which took place in the above three towns.

Secondly, the issue of compensation, rehabilitation and resettlement of those affected by the crisis! These are necessary and humanitarian duties and aids which, if mishandled, could sow further seeds of discord.

Lastly, the insinuation or open campaign to put the blame for what happened at Zangon Kataf on the indigenous Katafs, who it is being
The Zangon Kataf Crisis

claimed attacked and ransacked a peace-loving Hausa-Fulani community whom the Kataf people considered to be "strangers" even though they have lived in the area for about 300 years.\(^3\)

The foregoing analysis of the various religious and ethnic riots in Nigeria reveals one thing, according to Garba Yedimakudon: "when Muslims riot and kill fellow Muslims and Christians in the process, it does not constitute an offence as in the cases of Kano, Yola, Bulumkutu and Katsina riots. But when Christians kill Muslims, the offence is as high as Olympus. Zangon Kataf riot suggests this. Too bad for national unity and community harmony!"\(^3\) It therefore became necessary for the Church to issue a press release in order to correct the malicious and false statements which have been published by the State and Federal Governments. One of the parties to the Zangon Kataf ethnic and religious conflicts had not only access, but full control over these government statements.\(^3\) A situation where some are regarded as sacred cows because of their religion and tribe is most annoying. Such a practice can work against the peace and stability of our country.

The prompt response of the Federal Government to the crisis manifested in the visit to the area by the then Head of State, General Ibrahim Babangida, and the immediate setting up of a Tribunal to investigate and try those involved in the fracas, is said to be at variance with the relatively indifferent reaction to other similar crises in Nigeria. Some thought that this quick response was motivated by the fact that those at the receiving end of the communal clash were the Hausa-Fulani Muslims. Further evidence of this partisanship is said to be evident first in the fact that only the Katafs were arrested and arraigned before the Tribunal, despite the fact that the conflict was between two communities: the Katafs and the Hausa-Fulani Muslims. Secondly, the promulgation of Decree 55 of 1992, which rendered null and void appeals against the ruling of the Tribunal was seen as aimed at convicting the suspects at all cost.\(^3\) In a situation like this, the government cannot avoid being accused of connivance in respect of what happened in Zangon Kataf.

As we cringe at the sight of the horror and violence associated with intermittent communal mayhem, we must all the same wake up to the reality that emotional outbursts, strongly worded condemnations,
and panic measures do not of themselves remove the conditions that create violence or its re-occurrence. It is in this respect that we must reassess the issue of Zangon Kataf, not on the basis of emotions but on the basis of historical and contemporary facts. In order words, we must look beyond Zangon Kataf. In her efforts to work out a permanent solution to the ethnic conflict between the Katafs and the Hausa-Fulani Muslims of Zangon Kataf, the government depended on the recommendations of traditional rulers and the judiciary.

(a) The Traditional Chiefs and Emirs: From the colonial days to the present, the army or the traditional rulers have always ruled the masses of this nation with an iron hand, arresting and sentencing thousands of suspects on political charges. The survival of both present and past military and civilian governments in Nigeria has always been determined by their alignments with the institution of traditional leadership in the country. Their role in the success of any government is indispensable.

Immediately after the Zangon Kataf conflict, the traditional rulers assembled in the government house at Kaduna to work out a solution for a harmonious coexistence between the Katafs and the Hausa-Fulani Muslims of Zangon Kataf town. The "Tor Tiv", Alfred Torkula, explained that the meeting called by the traditional rulers to discuss the 1992 Zangon Kataf crisis and to work out how the conflict could be resolved, failed because the Katafs were not invited to the meeting. The Tor Tiv who made the revelation in the current edition of *Northern Nigeria in Perspective*, Vol.I, No.2, said: "It was difficult for them to take any decision because there was no single Kataf person among us there at least to tell the story as the Kataf people understand it." According to the Tor Tiv, "it was only the Emir of Zaria giving his own version of the story". He maintained that "the version of the Kataf people was necessary because if you would get a balanced news of anything, it is better to hear all sides".

(b) The Tribunal of Benedict Okadigbo and Emmanuel Adegbite: Following the Zangon Kataf communal clashes of 6th February and 15th-16th May, 1992, two separate Tribunals were set up to try the suspects. One was headed by Justice Benedict Okadigbo and the
other by Justice Emmanuel Adegbite. Even before the Tribunals disposed all cases before them, the public received with shock, the news that both Tribunals have handed down, to some Katafs, death sentences by hanging and various jail terms.41

Past Committees of Inquiry: The Kangaroo panels that have been commissioned by the Federal and State Governments in the country to settle an ethnic or a religious crisis, have failed woefully to tackle this problem. The panels are only important if they are free from manipulation or vindictiveness. Many of these steps were futile because they failed to go into the root of our national malaise. They attacked the symptoms without touching the causes.42 On several occasions, government has set up administrative judicial and special military tribunals to victimise and witch-hunt selected persons instead of finding lasting solutions.43

Some of these inquiries, like the one on Kasuwa Magani, turned into interrogation sessions, where members concentrated on finding guilty people and apportioning blame. They invariably failed to look into the historical and social causes of these crises. For example, in 1987, the government of Kaduna State avoided addressing the causes of the crisis, and spent all its energies in trying to refute the evidence presented before the Donli Committee of Enquiry. The government hurried to prosecute those caught on the scenes of violence. The legalistic approach actually ends in victory for those who can afford to pay for legal services, but those suffering social injustice usually end up being the losers. The victims are blamed for the violence visited upon them. The problem is thus swept under the carpet, only to erupt in more violent upheavals later.44

The Government and the Judiciary: In the case of the Zangon Kataf crisis, the problem started with the composition of the Tribunal. The trial, it must be remembered, emanated from a bloody clash between native Kataf Christians and settler Hausa-Fulani Muslims. One set of problems stems from the fact that the Hausa-Fulani Muslim is the prosecutor, the judge and the jury. Leonardo Boff calls this "a Kafkaesque process wherein the accuser, the defender, the lawyer, and the judge are one and the same".45 Peter Jatau, the Catholic Archbishop of Kaduna Archdiocese and
Chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in the Northern States, lamented that "The Okadigbo Tribunal, as it were, is now made up of he, Okadigbo, and five others, four of whom are Hausa Muslims. This, according to the Archbishop, clearly runs contrary to the spirit of section 33(1) of the 1979 Constitution, which makes provision to the effect that a tribunal set up must be constituted in such a way as to avoid being partial. The Archbishop further noted that "For the Okadigbo Tribunal to consist of four Hausas to try the Katafs amounts to their (Hausa-Muslims) being judges in their own cause which is a violation of basic principles of natural justice, that one ought not to be a judge in one's own case."

The proceedings before Justice Benedict Okadigbo cannot pass the test of fairness and impartiality. Since the constitution of the tribunal favoured a certain interest group, the imbalance in the composition of the seven members of the Tribunal led to the resignation of Mr. Graham Douglas, shortly after the inauguration of the Tribunal. One understands the action of Douglas; for "when the enemy chooses the leader, why do you bother to fight"? At every turn in the Zangon Kataf crisis, the government is calling the tune and paying the piper. The Babangida's military junta, went forth to arrest and detain all Kataf leaders under the notorious Decree 2, which empowers the vice-president to order the detention of any citizen at his pleasure.

Many sections of Nigeria saw the conviction of the Kataf leaders as a direct attack on the minority ethnic groups in the North in their age-long fight against Hausa-Fulani hegemony. Right from the word go, the composition of the panel was especially objectionable. The Lagos based lawyer, Gani Fawehinmi, said, "The judgement was not based on the due process of law, justice and common sense". It is what he called "a product of illegality". On the trial of the Kataf leaders, the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria in their Communiqué did say:

We have followed with keen interest the proceeding of the Okadigbo Tribunal. It is an axiom of good human relations that justice must not only be done, but also be clearly seen to be done. This is particularly important when human life
is at stake. In this particular case, we regret to say that in our view, justice has not been clearly seen to been done".50

Under the Nigerian law, a Tribunal is inferior to a State High Court. The case had reached the Appeal Court when the Federal Government published Decree 55 of 1992, giving the Tribunal a blank cheque and forbidding any court in the land from questioning its powers. Chief Godwin Ajayi, too, read motives into the sudden promulgation of Decree 55. In other words, Okadigbo's Tribunal was made to be more powerful than the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court. "Why", the chief defence counsel, Ajayi, asked, "is it necessary to make any group of persons more powerful than the Supreme Court, the highest court of the land? What is it they want to do? What is it they want to achieve? For what purpose do you have the rules of the game being changed in the midst of the game?" In frustration, the defence counsel withdrew from the Tribunal, saying they could not freely defend their clients in such an atmosphere of hostility and omnipotence.51

General Olusegun Obasanjo (Rtd), Nigeria's former Head of State, said in a letter to General Ibrahim Babangida, that the issue should be handled with tact and confidence. Obasanjo said:

While appreciating the need to bring sanity and humanity into our communal and inter-communal relationship, nothing should be done to fan the embers of hatred and to exacerbate our already difficult and, in some cases, precarious inter-communal relationship.

He added,

But killings and counter-killings are not the solutions to ethnic and religious disputes, strifes and conflicts in our country. Let us cultivate a new culture of understanding, tolerance, forbearance, forgiveness, and accommodation."52
6. Towards a Solution to the Zangon Kataf Crisis:

An identification of the remote causes of religious and communal clashes especially in Kaduna State is of paramount importance for a lasting solution. Considerable efforts must therefore be made to arrive at an objective and balanced version of both remote and immediate causes of the riots. This should include a knowledge of both the pre-colonial history of that geographical area. A sound knowledge of the history of Southern Kaduna covering these three periods may help to tell us whether the present crisis is as a result of a conflict of two interest groups; one trying to maintain an old but unjust system brought about the British colonial system of indirect rule, while the other, because of its present state of enlightenment, is trying to liberate itself from the clutches of entrenched injustice.53 Reasons for the Religio-Ethnic conflicts in the middle Belt, with Zangon Kataf inclusive are:

In 1902, 1904, 1905 and 1907, there were violent conflicts in Zangon Kataf town when the British colonialists made Zangon Kataf a District Headquarter and imposed Hausa-Fulani Muslim feudalists from Zaria to rule the Kataf people in their land.54 One of the first and the most important policy of the British was taxation. The rates were in conformity with the Emirate system of taxation. This was one of the most exploitative weapons of the Zaria aristocracy. In a situation where one could not pay his tax, usually, his harvest and livestock would be auctioned. It was the tax collectors and Chiefs who organised the auction, fixed the prices and paid for the items. The prices of the items were mostly highly below their values. Human beings were taxed simply because they were surviving, since tax payers included the aged and under-age youths.55

There was also forced labour which was an additional factor that helped to sour the relationship between Atyab and the Hausa-Fulani of Zangon Kataf. Forced labour was used to construct roads, build colonial structures and cultivate the farm lands of District Heads. Able-bodied adults were also used to carry heavy loads to Kaduna, Zaria and Native Authority Headquarters. The Atyab were reduced to a labour-reserved people by the Zaria ruling aristocrats.56
It is not true that the Atyab were conquered by the Hausa-Fulani Muslims. The conquest, however, was carried out by the British colonialists, who removed the freedom enjoyed by the Atyab and replaced it with a servitude to the Hausa-Fulani. As a result of this unfortunate development, the Hausa-Fulani Muslims, in the far North, have erroneously conceived the indigenous people of Southern Kaduna as being primitive and incapable of ruling themselves. They, thereby, conferred on themselves the moral right to continue to rule the Atyab in perpetuity. The Hausa-Fulani Muslims have continued to dominate all aspects of life of the entire Southern Kaduna people up to independence with the active support of the colonial government.\(^{57}\)

The Willink's Commission of Inquiry into minority grievances called for a separatist political. This would lead to the creation of the Middle Belt States, a motion of which had indeed been tabled in the Northern House of Assembly in March 1957. In their testimonies to the Commission, as regards the plight of the Middle Belt Minorities, the various people who testified drew attention to differences in social and cultural habits between people of the Middle Belt and the far North. There were evidences of religious intolerance manifested in the refusal of some Native Authorities (N.A.) to grant permits for the building of Churches; acts of deliberate Islamization such as the imposition of Alkali courts and also of Hausa-Islamic rulers; the promotion of linguistic imperialism through the deliberate encouragement of Hausa as a Lingua Franca; and the neglect of and discrimination against the minorities in political representation and in the provision of social and economic infrastructure and services by the regional government.\(^{58}\)

In 1958, the Minority's Commission was set up ostensibly to collect and collate the grievances of the minorities in the wake of independence. In the North, despite the well argued cases of the non-Muslims against all sorts of discrimination, ranging from various restrictions imposed on Christians, such as denial of land to build Churches, restrictions in the circulation of Christian literature, freedom of worship, and association, degrading treatment of traditional rulers who were not Muslims and other forms of cultural domination, the Commission argued that it was convinced that the
grievances of non-Muslims would be dealt with only within a united North. The Commission's findings were unrealistic mainly because it failed to face up to the challenge that the Minorities and Southern politicians articulated. The solution of the Commission was no doubt a political eye-opener for the Minorities. By refusing to deal with the problems that had been raised, it not only bottled up the collective frustration of the Minorities, it indeed institutionalised the perceived superiority of the ruling class in the region and thus postponed the day of reckoning for the regions.59

The New Nigerian Newspapers have consistently refused to side with those who ascribe the disturbances solely to religious differences. Indeed, most of the clashes, if not all, are caused by economic deprivation, ignorance, rabble rousing and armed banditry.60 "In fact, the underlying reason for the quick spread of communal and religious riots (if not the original spark) had been economic."61 The ignorance and economic misery of the masses and the increasing power of the feudalist regime, backed up by the military commanders, have not been helpful either.

In Zangon Kataf town, one of the major problems that has not helped matters in the relationship between the Atyab and the Hausa is the pattern of settlement. It has never bothered the Hausa to integrate with the indigenous Atyab community by learning to expand and settle so as to mix up with them. The nature of settlement has made an important market place of Zangon Kataf to become two small. The stalls in the market are entirely owned by the Hausa. This is why they will not want a new market site which may lead to stall redistribution.62

Even more important is the fact that worsening condition of drought, desertification, and environmental degradation in the far north of Nigeria, has sent, and is continuing to send massive wave of Hausa-Fulani migrants into several parts of the Middle Belt and beyond. These major demographic and population movements are fundamental realities which we must live with in Nigeria and which we must develop the political courage and skill to handle. They must be handled with caution and tact and not with emotion and sensation.63
7. Conclusion

The struggle of the Middle Belt indigenes has kept Nigeria united since Independence. We truly love Nigeria our beloved country and all it stands for. The people in the Middle Belt, have to struggle to resist the enslavement and marginalization of their people at all cost. Alhaji Jalingo regretted that today, the Hausa-Fulani Muslims are using people from the Middle Belt to obtain what they want at the expense of Middle Belt indigenes with the collaboration of their leaders. To overcome any form of oppression, Alhaji Jalingo said, "there must be proper orientation so that a new generation, preferably, youths, take over the struggle". He maintained that the only way of realising the objectives of the Middle Belt is to incorporate the youths so as to make them feel that they are part of the forum thereby promoting peace and unity in the process.64

Beyond that, the conflicts are calling attention to a serious problem that is capable of tearing the country apart, if not addressed urgently. Nigeria should restate her resolve as a truly secular state where government has its hands off religious affairs, and where no ethnic group is dominated to the point of being crushed to death. In fact, we must look beyond Zangon Kataf. For the Zangon Kataf crisis was another dark chapter in the strained relationships between two communities which could have been clearly avoided if necessary steps were taken on time by the government.65

Finally, if the Government and the Emirate leadership in the North want peace, they must learn to respect Minorities. And government in particular should be schooled in understanding its proper mission and duty as an impartial arbitrator who is supposed to "maintain public order and protect the common good of the society". It should, therefore, adhere to the recommendations of the Committee for Reconciliation as a way towards lasting peace for the Zangon Kataf community in Kaduna State. The Panel which had former Kaduna State Military Governor, Air Vice-Marshal Usman Muazu (Rtd) as arbitrator and Chairman, turned in its report to the present Military Governor of Kaduna State, Col. Lawal Ja'afaru Isa with the following recommendations:
(i) The Committee members called for the immediate release of all persons imprisoned as a result of the Zangon Kataf crisis.


(iii) A quick resolution of the ownership of the various farmlands around Zangon Kataf town together with effective completion of the housing projects will facilitate the early resettlement of the refugees.

(iv) Similarly, the Committee spoke on the need to urgently compensate victims of the Zangon Kataf crisis as well as victims of Kaduna, Zaria and Ikara.

(v) And, lastly, the members of the Panel stressed the need to resolve the issue of self-determination which the Chairman said was enshrined in the full report.66

ENDNOTES


2. Philip Gaiya (Editor), "The Zangon Kataf Crisis in Perspective, No Date, Introduction, pp. 6-7.


4. The Historical causes of the Zangon Kataf Market Riots of Thursday the 6th of February 1992: Being a Memorandum submitted to the Judicial Commission of Inquiry by Katab Youth Development Association (KYDA), Zaria Branch,


9. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14. The Oral traditions from Hausa elders of Zangon Kataf town states that Zangon Kataf was established around the Middle of the 18th century by itinerant "Beriberi" or "Hausa" traders. These transient traders (Fatake) were given land to settle by the Atyab at Abuiyab, about two kilometres away from the stream running to the South of the present town.


22. *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22; See also Mak-Zar Prot.cf71953/ Vol.I.


24. KYDA, p. 20.


26. KYDA, p. 20.


28. Cf. Bajju Development Association: "Creation of Additional Districts in Kaduna State, the Case of the Bajju Community" (An address to His Excellency, Col. Abdullahi S. Mukhtar, Military Governor of Kaduna State), 23rd February, 1990, p.7; see also KYDA, p. 23. *Gaskiya Tafti Kwabo*, a Newspaper based at Zaria serves as the mouthpiece of the Northern oligarchy.


31. Cf. National Archives, Kaduna, ZAR; Prof. No. 14; "On the Social and Economic Organization of the Tribes of Southern Zaria".


33. Ibid.

34. Ibid., pp. 23-24.

35. Philip Gaiya, Editor, "Going Beyond the Surface", op.cit., p.10.


43. Philip Gaiya, op.cit., p. 2.

44. KYDA, pp. 28-29.


52. *Ibid.*, "It is a Kangaroo Affair", p.11.


54. KYDA, p. 29.

55. *Ibid.*


62. KYDA, p.40.


The Prison and You: A Study in Diminishing Social Responsibility in Nigeria

By

I. W. Orakwe.

All too often the word prison evokes very powerful emotions in the average Nigerian. Such emotions range from fright to incredulity and then to disdain depending on how the subject comes up. I know this for a fact because as many a time as I have had cause to be in both privileged and under-privileged social circles the reactions have been the same each time I introduce myself as a prison officer. Is it because the average Nigerian has a disdain for crime and criminals which the prison evokes and which turns her/him sick? Or is it because the prison is seen as the house of the dogs - a golgotha where "they" rather than "we" should be? I shall say "no!" to the first question because Nigerians are anything but law abiding: for if every Nigerian that has committed any crime was put in prison, we shall surely need more prisons than residential houses today. I shall subscribe in the positive to the second question for the simple reason that ours has become a society steeped in hypocrisy - a society that proclaims the virtues of honesty and uprightness at every turn but perpetuates evil at every opportunity.

1. The Prison in its primitive origin

What, you may ask, is the prison? What function does the prison perform in society? To answer these questions let us start by going on a brief historical excursion into the genesis of the prison. Prison is as old as organised society. No one to date has been able to pin point exactly in what society and at what time in the development of society, the prison emerged. All records of ancient European and American societies (at whatever stage of their development) make mention of the prison. In the ancient societies of Africa evidence abound of prison or prison-like structures. What this translates to is
that there was a general awareness of the social need for the prison in every society. The prison therefore served and still serves the purpose of isolating those persons whose conduct is perceived as violating the collective norms and values of their societies. The essence of isolating these "norms-infractors" varied from society to society according to the stage of social development of the society in question.

In ancient times the penal orientation had depended on the maxim "an eye for an eye" ostensibly because the social contract was such that a criminal needed to be punished "be it so severely" so that he/she will not only pay for his/her deeds but also experience what will serve as a deterrent for other would-be offenders. Such punishment varied from one place to the other. In some areas felons were either killed, ostracised, had their limbs severed or were sold into slavery. In others, restitution was the vogue after which the gods of the land will be appeased. In other areas, especially in the ancient kingdoms of the Middle East, wives of offenders were confiscated as penalty. All these go to underlie the view that not only did ancient societies need prisons, they also had an idea of what useful roles the prisons were to play in the protection of lives and property. By so doing these societies "set the boundaries of acceptable expected behaviour for all other members".

As a result, the penal regimes of prisons world wide up to late 19th century were essentially brutal and primitive. Most countries of the world at this time did not really consider spending money to keep prisoners. In the Russia of this period as in the states of the Middle East and Saharan Africa, prisoners were slaves that farmed the lands of the rulers or did other jobs to earn their keep. In Britain of this period, when people could be sent to jail for as much as speaking their minds, jails were either places where prisoners were kept to work for their keep or preparatory to transportation. By transportation we mean a process whereby prisoners were taken to other lands to work and settle. The same practice was also popular in France of the 16th Century. Thus, the whites in Australia were descendants of prisoners sent on transportation after conviction. The same is also true of the French and Dutch settlers in the 16th, 17th and 18th century South Africa. Other draconian penal practices
included the black hole of Calcutta, India, the Russian Gulags etc. All these, in sum, represented the worst in penal bestiality. But they suited the primitive mental construct of these bygone days.

2. The Reform of the Enlightenment

However, following from the age of Enlightenment and the transformations in the lives of people occasioned by the rise of mercantilism, the industrial revolution and other revolutions, public opinion in Europe began to change in favour of less brutal treatment of prisoners. This shift came partly as a result of the enlightenment and progress of the period but also as a result of the realisation that punitive penal regimes produced very hardened and irreparably damaged personalities. I do not want to bore you by delving into the history of penal Reform in the 19th and 20th century Europe and America. Suffice it to say, however, that by mid-19th century, several movements had sprung up to fight for a more benevolent treatment of prisoners. The Howard League in England readily comes to mind. The fight of these groups were given added impetus by studies on crime causation which showed that though the industrial transformations in Europe and the Americas may not be responsible for crime per se, yet they certainly intensified criminal activities. To assuage the prisoners who were in the main products of the social relations of the time, a package of reform and rehabilitation programmes were put together which tended to emphasise education in its widest sense, skills acquisition, rehabilitation and resettlement of discharging prisoners. The view was that no matter what may be said by the arm-chair theorists and political propagandists prisoners were essentially products of their social day and that it was the responsibility of the society to retrieve those fellows from their chosen path of destruction. The need to reform and retrain them especially in self-sustaining skills represented a collective admission on the part of the entire society that the so-called criminals were the way they were because the society failed them. What has happened since then amounted to a
progressive review and a modification of this thrust in penal policy in these societies.

3. The Colonial Prisons in Nigeria

At the time the colonialists came calling in Nigeria, the view of penal administration had already shifted from punitive to reform regimes. Yet, understandably, the colonial prisons which started with the establishment of Broad Street prison in 1872 did not reflect this reform thrust. The advent of colonial rule was not peaceful but was intent on subjugation and exploitation matched, equally, by forceful opposition. It will therefore be suicidal to embark on reform-oriented prison services. Furthermore, those native prisons which the colonialists met in Nigeria, especially the Native Authority Prisons in the North and the West, were ideally suited to colonial needs as they were brutal and inhuman. Indirect rule, therefore, provided the British an opportunity to use native prisons to compel obedience from Nigerians through the native rulers.

It was only natural that colonial prisons should emphasise punishment. Consequently, the staff of the colonial prisons were mainly ex-service and police men whose training was not geared towards penal management but the brute force necessary to put the restive segment of the population in check.

However, by the 1940s when colonial rule had settled down and some benevolence had begun to be tinkered with, it became fashionable to think in terms of reform and rehabilitation. Thus, programmes of skills acquisition, adult and vocational education as well as psycho-therapy became introduced into the prison lexicon. Even the colonial prison administrators began to train prison officers as opposed to soldiers of fortune who had run the prison previously. Emphasis began to be laid on correctional management. If you ask anyone closely associated with the prison up to the time of independence in 1960, you will be told that not only were prison industries producing articles that compared favourably with their kind elsewhere, but also prisoners were discharged with skills which they put to good use at home. At that time too, individuals, voluntary organisations, Church societies and other non-
governmental organisations rallied round the government to see to the successful reform and rehabilitation of prisoners. They did very well, given the circumstances. But it was essentially colonial rule and we can only expect so much from a colonial state.

4. The Prison After Independence

But what, you may ask, has been the fate of the prison in independent Nigeria? The story I am afraid is not the best. Those who have over the years told us that the colonialists were and still are responsible for much of our problems today should at this point explain to us why after more than 30 years, the structures put in place by the colonialists to take care of fewer than 10,000 prisoners, bed and all, today accommodate up to 75,000 inmates, all the wear and tear notwithstanding.

Expectations were that, given the progress made by the colonial prison administrators to reform inmates in our prisons, the coming of independence would certainly mark more progress in penal administration in Nigeria. But today what we find is a progressive decay not only in prisons but also in the mental construct of the average Nigerian accompanied by an equally progressive and total degeneration of the entire Nigerian social structure. We cannot expect a better prison in the circumstance since a prison is by and large a microcosm of the society. The more brutal the society the more brutal the prison. Today our prisons produce in place of reformed persons, unrepentant recidivists. And whether we like it or not the responsibility for this state of affairs is ours.

5. Prison Congestion and a Warped Criminal Justice System

Many people get confused about the role of the prison in contemporary Nigeria. This confusion is understandable in the light of the fact that signals from the Criminal Justice System (CJS) are a bit confused about the role in the prevention and control of crime in Nigeria. By Criminal Justice System we mean the total group of institutions designed to arrest, prosecute, adjudicate and put away.
By this we mean the police and other prosecuting agencies, the judiciary and Ministries of Justice and the prisons in that order. The prison is the last stop in the CJS where those who have been prosecuted by the two earlier segments end up to serve the terms of imprisonment imposed on them for their offenses. The prison is supposed to take over at this level to see to fruition the key element of modern penal method namely, that the reform of the offender not his punishment is, in the final analysis, the aim of imprisonment. This view is informed by studies which showed that punitive confinement often destroyed the convicts and transformed them into even more sadistic delinquents. To reverse this trend, upon conviction, the prison authorities are expected to among others: (1) identify the causes of the anti-social behaviour of the convicts; (2) to draw up a programme of treatment necessary to engender turn-around in the convicts. This programme includes guidance and counselling, the provision of opportunities for skills acquisition, the provision of education in its widest sense and a host of other reform-related and therapeutic programmes. All these are aimed at releasing convicts at the end of their terms as persons who are law-abiding and self-respecting.

It is an open-ended question if the prison in Nigeria performs this role or not. But it must be noted that for these programmes to commence, the target inmate population must be convicted by our law courts. This is because any person awaiting trial is technically adjudged innocent until convicted in the courts. To that extent all those awaiting trial are therefore not qualified to either be deployed to prison workshops, prison education classes or work gangs. That is why the new trend in prison congestion should be a source of very serious worry to all those who have, even a passing, interest in the affairs of the prisons. The congestion in the prison has over the years tilted in favour of those awaiting trial (ATPS). Take the following population samples for a start:
Table 1: Total Population and Atypical Population inSelected Prisons in Nigeria (1995)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/No</th>
<th>Prison</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>ATPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Onitsha</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Enugu</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>999</td>
<td>555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Kaduna</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1,283</td>
<td>819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Kano</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>1,229</td>
<td>630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Ibadan</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>388</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the figures are not static and are restricted to few strategic prisons, the trend is worrisome for there is a preponderance of ATPS over convicted inmates. The figures are even so misleading if one recalls that in some prisons the condemned convicts are grouped under convicts. Furthermore, if it is realised that those ATPS have among them so many who have been detained awaiting trial for up to thirteen years, then the worry translates into panic.

Within the prison, those who are awaiting trial are severely restricted by law in their movements. They are housed in special cells since being of indeterminate legal status their escape from custody generates uproar in the courts and this is a condition no prison officer cherishes. As a result, these persons, though technically innocent, are reimprisoned inside the prison. Not exposed to the reformatory programmes in prison, confined to their cells all day long and staying for so long awaiting justice that crawls, one needs to imagine the trauma these ATPS are subjected to.

As a matter of fact, if the prison in Nigeria were properly classified that we have specialised prison institutions like, the Remand Centres for ATPS, Psychiatric Prisons for the mentally unsound, Borstal Institutions for the under-aged convicts, Open prisons for malleable first offenders, Convict prisons for the recidivists and hard offenders, Prison Farm Centres for the teaching of agricultural skills and production of food etc., then the figures above would have
meant that only the Remand Centres would be over congested. As it now stands, not only are the rated capacities of our prisons overshot by as much as 200 percent in some cases, the congestion rates among the ATPS speaks volumes of the Criminal Justice Administration in Nigeria today. If, for instance, a person stays ten years in prison as ATP and at the end of the day, s/he is told to go as s/he is not guilty, what is the measure of the damage s/he has suffered all these years? Our experience is that most of these people are terribly damaged and they react to the society by rationalizing thus, "If I can suffer this much for doing nothing, why not go the whole hog and do it?" Others are simply so damaged by the experience that they never get to settle down to anything if they are ever discharged. Even more die in prison waiting for justice, that never come.

Ideally, the Chief Judge of the state goes on gaol delivery periodically to check such excesses as highlighted above. But this exercise has been of little help in decongesting ATP cells because most of those ATPS are usually charged with armed robbery and this is a 'no-go-area'. Our experience also shows that many of these people are armed robbers but many more are only charged for such offenses through allegations made by powerful interest groups or persons in society who want them put away. And when this happens, the cases go neither forward nor backward year after year. So at once, our society is also responsible for this state of affairs since powerful people often manipulate the CJS to put away for good, people they are at odds with. And all that not only go to fuel congestion in the prison but also create the condition that makes being at ATP the practice of hell.

6. An Ill-Functioning Judicial System

As a rule the ATP population in any prison should not be above 10% of the total prison population. This indicates a vibrant and functioning judiciary. Where, however, the ATP population range from 30% to 60% of the prison population over the years we now turn to the Judiciary for explanations. I do not intend to hold brief for the judiciary and the ministry of justice. I can for now say that
the work before the judiciary is enormous given the fact that there are very few judges and magistrates to carry the load: the trial of cases is so cumbersome, with everything from files to law books either in very short supply or totally lacking. Generally, facilities in our courts are not such that make for proper dispensation of justice. Do not forget the Nigeria factor which impedes progress in every facet of life but which we choose not to refer to lest the focus be on us. Lawyers do not help matters also. Judges and Magistrates may not readily admit it publicly but they are often exasperated by the rate at which lawyers ask for adjournments.

For now, I wish to suggest that to reduce the congestion among the ATPS in our prison, the concept of plea-bargaining should be radically employed to deal with long delayed cases. To this end, a task force should be set up to allow those held for armed robbery for 4 years or more to plead guilty to less offenses like burglary and stealing so that they can be sentenced to prison for between seven and ten years. If on discharge they commit crimes again, they should be tried a shade more quickly. In the interim, the shortcoming of the Judiciary and the Ministry of Justice as shown above should be ameliorated. Finally, we must change the values of our society for pervasive crime is but one symptom of deep-seated disquiet in our social structure. Unparalleled corruption is one of the non-values we must drop.

7. Unparalleled Corruption and Crime in Nigeria
   - the poor go to gaol.

Recent studies have shown that more than 90% of our prisoners are the marginalised, the wretched, the social drifters, in short the *hoi polloi*. These are people in society without education, without jobs, without social status and without hope. But are they truly representative of the group that commits the most crimes? Certainly No! Rather they are the group produced in the main by the crimes of the other more powerful group of thieves - the industrial and bureaucratic classes. The crimes of this group produced the anaemic
economy of Nigeria today. Yet not one of these people is in prison. The reason is that they have the cash and the connection to play the litigation game our own way and get away scot free with their loot. On the other hand, the group in prison has to stay there because they have neither the cash nor the connections to get away. So they remain our prisoners - the "they"; and we the "upright" sit pretty and turn our noses up on the prisoners.

But do we really believe that "they" are the "bad guys"? Or, are we being plain sanctimonious? The truth of the matter is that we are being hypocritical each time we look at our prisons and our prisoners with contempt. And this is for two reasons. Firstly, we have watched over the years as one group of political bandits after another come up to the political scene to organize one systematic looting and plunder of state resources after another. At the end of the day we have not only applauded such brigandage by inundating the actors with many titles and honours, but we have also tended to encourage others to make it the same way. By so doing we succeed in enthroning a culture of thievery which has turned governance of the Nigerian society into an exercise in crime and corruption. While we applaud the successful thieves, we look down with contempt on the poor thieves, forgetting that stealing is stealing no matter by which academic nomenclature we choose to label it. Secondly, we have by our actions produced these poor thieves we look down upon. We must realise that for every million naira stolen from the public funds, at least a hundred thousand people are denied education, good jobs, health care, shelter etc. And the rate at which the public treasury has been attacked and looted in this country makes the crimes of this poor group pale into insignificance. Yet we turn our noses at prisoners.

Even our criminal justice administration is as objectionable as the political economy that operates it. How many of our big thieves and their sponsors are at liberty? Stories assault our intelligence of judicial putrefaction that pervades the entire landscape of Nigeria. I have not said anything new for we all know that our criminal justice administration is anything but sound. How, therefore, do we guarantee the type of judicial impartiality that assures us that those we send to the prisons are indeed those who deserve to be there?
How about the sponsors of the small thieves the "fenges" who purchase stolen goods but who are often found consorting with our secular and ecclesiastical leaders? Who therefore in this country can say in all honesty that the prisoners deserve what they get?

The point is that the only common denominator that binds our prisoners together in this dispensation is lack of cash and connections. The element of crime is pervasive as much among the rich as among the poor. Yet more of the poor go to jail. It follows therefore that the contempt we hold for the prisoners arises more from their being poor than from their being prisoners. Ours has become a country that has nothing but contempt for its poor - a poor produced in the main by years of prodigious looting and plunder of the public treasury. Today a section of the poor which by its actions question the status quo are dumped into jail to rot and die while we the innocent live our very short lives satisfied that we have done our best. It will therefore amount to hypocrisy for us to turn around and care for the same poor. Rather we move on and pretend the problem of the prison does not exist. When next you see a prisoner, do turn your face away so that the nightmare can vanish! After all they are a specie who are not like us. No, we can never be they! Never!

8. Reflection - Nigerian Prisoners Challenge us

Yet pause and think. Ask yourself whether you have never done anything to warrant your being in jail. Ask your soul if without luck, class and connection, you will be better than those folks. Ask also if you have not by one action or the other contributed in one way or another to those people being, either in prison or out of it, poor. Do not think that the analysis I have made above grew on trees. It arose from the opinions of those we call prisoners. The challenge of living in Nigeria today is what our prisoners have accepted. They have risen to the occasion. When next you face the open-ended barrel of a robber's pistol or you are duped by a trickster or a burglar breaks into your house just remember they are playing the game by the rules we have set. Do not talk of reforms in a predatory economy; the possibility does not exist.
However, all hope is not lost. We can start a process of reconstructing our society by placing our values correctly. We may need to begin to reassess our attitudes to the poor, from then on all programmes designed to better their lot will be pursued with the singleness of mind they require. We may begin to think of our social responsibilities to include concrete programmes of caring for the under-privileged as opposed to the epileptic and hypocritical fashion we do it during major events. Rather we may map out long term programmes of action designed to give the under-privileged the opportunity of living fulfilled lives. Show your care and concern for the under-privileged in a sustained and permanent fashion - in your work place, in your homes, in places of worship, etc. If we are to let go of corruption, looting and plunder, if we are to do our jobs properly, fairly and honestly, if we are to shun ill-gotten wealth in whatever form, if we put a stop to the unbridled adulation of wealth and begin to appreciate humans for what we are and not what we have, the social surplus will go round and the poor will have a breather. Then we contribute to the restoration of human dignity. We need to raise the value of being human and down-play the value of wealth. When we do that, the poor will have a sense of belonging and the opportunities open to them for self fulfilment hitherto closed by our actions shall be opened again. When we do all these and more we shall be sufficiently mentally liberated to begin to care for the poor rather than hold them in permanent contempt.

The points I have raised here show that our society is sick. And we are held hostage by this very pathological condition we find ourselves in. Rather than face the fact that by being contemptuous of our prisoners and other socially marginalised groups we are actually trying to run away from our consciences, we create a wall that makes the socially deprived appear leprous before us. By so doing we hope to conjure away our social responsibility. But it can never go away. For a person without conscience is dead. So long as we live, the socially marginalised group gnaws at our collective conscience. As Uthman Dan Fodio once said, "conscience is an open wound only truth can heal it". Or, as a postcard on the office door of the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Police Headquarters Enugu, reads, "the truth which makes people free is the most part of
the truth they prefer not to hear". Only when we face the truth of our social situation can we really stop and care for those we have put behind bars.
First All Nigerian Congress of Catholic Prison Chaplains
Held in DRACC Emene, Enugu

Communiqué

From 27th to 30th November 1994, several interested and public spirited individuals - priests, sisters, social workers, lawyers, judicial officers, university dons, officers and government officials - gathered at the Divine Love Retreat and Conference Centre (DRACC) Emene Enugu from various dioceses in Nigeria (Ibadan, Oyo, Enugu, Jos, Abuja, Ondo, Issele-Uku, Awka, Owerri, Lagos, Port Harcourt and Nsukka) to discuss, within the context of an all Nigerian Congress of Catholic Prison Chaplains, the very urgent and rapidly deteriorating situation in Nigerian prisons and its bearing upon the prisoners' rights and dignity as human persons.

After much prayer and reflection with six brain-storming sessions of lectures and three workshop sessions, the following communiqué was issued:

1. We thank the Almighty God whose providence continues to fecundate the Church with the gifts of the Holy Spirit for stirring up in our conscience an awareness of our responsibility in the Prisons Apostolate and for making it possible for us to hold this first all Nigerian Congress of Catholic Prisons Chaplains.

2. We call on all Catholics, and indeed all men and women of goodwill, to embrace the prison apostolate as an integral part of the gospel. The words of Jesus in Mt. 25:37 "I was in prison and you visited me" does not leave us with any alternative in the matter.

3. We therefore welcome every support and sign of solidarity given to prisoners and their families by christian communities and public
spirited individuals and Non-Governmental Organisations. Such efforts should be intensified.

4. The Prison Chaplaincy services as they now exist in Nigeria fail to address adequately the needs of the prisoners who, by reason of their incarceration and deplorable living conditions, are in need of special pastoral care. We therefore call on the Bishops to appoint chaplains to the various prisons in their respective dioceses. In the short term, emphasis should be on appointing people who are mature and have an aptitude for the work. In the long term, professional training and competence should be a prerequisite for such appointments.

5. The Prison is a world of its own with its unique language and culture, its problems and prospects which will not be readily obvious to an outsider. We therefore call on Government to promulgate necessary laws integrating chaplaincy work into the Prisons Services. The Army Chaplaincy service is a model for an integrated Prisons chaplaincy services.

6. We deplore the barbarically inhuman and criminally unhealthy sanitary conditions in Nigerian Prisons and call for urgent remedy.

7. It is blatantly unjust and a gross violation of the United Nations Human Rights Charter and the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights to detain people for long periods of time without charge or trial and under unhealthy and debilitating sanitary conditions. We therefore call on government and law enforcement agents to discharge without delay all persons who have been detained, without charge or trial, for up to four weeks.

8. The over-crowded nature of Nigerian Prisons and the lumping together of First Time Offenders and mere suspects with Hardened Criminals all living under conditions of horrid squalor occasioned by intractable delays in the dispensation of justice not only violates human sensitivity and honour but contradicts the entire correctional purpose of the Penal Code. We therefore call for the release of all
minor offenders whose trial cannot commence within one week of their arrest and detention.

9. We condemn in the strongest terms the attitude of some Prisons officials who either divert foods and various supplies meant for prisoners to their own use or exploit the prisoners and their families by asking for financial inducements to perform towards the prisoners even the most routine of their duties. We call for adequate remuneration of Prisons staff to reduce the temptation of pilfering of various gifts items meant for prisoners.

10. We note with shock and alarm that over 60 percent of Nigerian Prisoners are suspects awaiting trial, which makes the over-crowding of the Prisons quite an artificial creation. Such suspects must be presumed innocent until proven guilty. That is the law. If they cannot be tried they must be released without further delay. Their continued detention is neither justifiable in law nor to common sense.

11. There is a causal linkage between the socio-economic situation of the people and the crime rate in society. For instance, offences against property for which most people are sent to prison increases proportionately with increase in inflation and corresponding decrease in per capita real incomes. We therefore call on government to address urgently through social welfare schemes and adequate provision of public utilities the rapidly deteriorating living standards of Nigerians if the country will not slide into anarchy and complete lawlessness.

12. The Congress is extremely worried by the continued proscription of some media houses by the present military government in Nigeria. Besides denying hundreds of Nigerians of their legitimate means of livelihood, therefore exposing them to crimes and delinquency, such closure violates the rights of Nigerians to freedom of expression and free access of information. We therefore call for the immediate de-proscription of the affected media houses and advice government to adopt the due process of
law in dealing with its perceived enemies if it wants to be obeyed as legitimate authority.

13. The near collapse of formal education occasioned by incessant strikes, and the high rate of youth unemployment provide great impetus for the involvement of youths in serious crimes. We call on government to take urgent steps to address the issue of dysfunctional formal education and its attendant youth unemployment.

14. The Nigerian Prisons as they now exist seem incapable of fulfilling any correctional roles. We therefore call for a complete overhauling of the Prisons Service with adequate provisions for separate treatment of various categories of offenders: juveniles and adults; males and females; First Offenders and Habitual Criminals. The Penal Reform System must also consider alternative more efficient and effective ways of correcting delinquents. For example: caution and discharge, fines, suspended sentences, compulsory community service schemes, paroles and sending offenders back to their local council areas for some period of time.

15. The Government as well as all agents of the law (judges, the police and prison staff) must see to the responsible and efficient fulfilment of the law they make for the common good. It is plainly irresponsible to overcrowd prisons with offenders without caring for their dignity, correction and livelihood.

16. The Prisons as they now exist and function constitute a devastating drain on the nation's dwindling resources. We therefore call for a reformed prison service in which the prisoners would be gainfully employed and capable not only of providing for their own sustenance but also of contributing to the growth of the wider society.

17. We declare our compassion with all who are detained without charge or trial and especially those whose detention is for oppressive or political or ethnic reasons.
18. We are greatly concerned about the continued detention of Chief M.K.O. Abiola, the undeclared winner of the 1995 presidential elections and some pro-democracy activists like Chief Anthony Enahoro and Chief Frank Kokori, the Secretary General of NUPENG. Their continued incarceration, despite reports of their failing health, constitutes a regrettable regress into crude barbarism, an outrageous act of moral cynicism and a visceral affront on the political rights of the Nigerian People. We therefore call for their immediate release from detention and the stoppage of their trial which has made Nigeria the laughing stock of the world. Such also is the case with Mr. Ken Saro-Wiwa of MOSOP - a detained Minority Rights activist.

19. We announce the birth of the Nigerian Association of Catholic Prison Chaplaincies with its protom Secretariat at the Catholic Institute for Development, Justice and Peace Enugu to co-ordinate the activities of Catholic prison chaplancies across the nation.

20. Finally, this Congress hereby calls and recommends for the Nigerian Church a Sunday in the year to be known as Prisoners Sunday with special church collections focusing attention on the situation in the Prisons and the challenges of Prisons Apostolate.

[Communiqué signed by: Revd. Fr. Prof. Obiora Ike (Director, CIDJAP, Enugu - Congress Convenor); Revd. Fr. Emeka Ngwoke (Secretary to Congress - Nsukka Diocese); Revd. Fr. Livinus Uka (Sec. Justice and Peace, Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Lagos); Revd. Sr. Carmel-Mary Fagbemi SSL (Ondo Diocese); Revd. Fr. Anthony 'Detutu K. Adediran (Archdiocese of Ibadan); Revd. Sr. Tina Betiku SSL (Jos Diocese); Revd. Fr. Simon Bako (Archdiocese of Abuja); Revd. Sr. Bernadette Onwuzurigbo (Co-ordinator for Justice and Peace, Diocese of Port Harcourt).]
Political Stability and the Leadership and the Inevitability of Instability.

By

Matthew Hassan Kukah

1. Introduction

A society must from time to time conduct a critical self appraisal, put itself on a moral scale and find out the extent to which it is, in aggregate terms, favoured by the balance of socially acceptable conduct.... (Col J. Isa).

The pungency of these words contained in a copy of the letter of invitation which I received from His Excellency, Colonel Ja'afaru Isa, the Military Administrator of Kaduna State, made me feel that if the host has the courage to extend this invitation under this theme, then I do not think we shall be doing ourselves any good if we end up here merely extending the social frontiers of bonhomie and backslapping. I therefore caution that if you are allergic to mirrors, then do not read this paper any further.

Political stability has always been presented as an ideal around which good governance can and should be built. In fact, it is always being argued that political stability is a precondition for national development, cohesion and integration. It is, therefore a desirable component of life. The opposite, political instability, has a corrosive effect on national development, stunts integration, frightens investors and disrupts the national equilibrium. If nations must move forward (to use the worn out parlance), attain national cohesion and consolidate their human, material and mineral resources, gain international recognition and credibility, then they must find ways of achieving domestic political stability. Perhaps it is in pursuit of this that this conference has saddled me with the topic on Political Stability and the Leadership question. My intention in the paper is to
provoke more serious discussions beyond some of the superficial areas that have dominated our discourse on politics and the problems of nationhood.

2. Political Stability and the Leadership Question

  I, however, hold a slightly modified view in regards to the above presumptions and assumptions and could therefore alter the direction and scope of the paper to go beyond some of the rather popular views that have been prominent in the discourse on political stability in the states in Africa in particular and the so called third world in general. There has been, to my mind, unnecessary and sometimes highly exaggerated views about our lack of progress in all directions of our national life. The processes of identifying the areas of our failure have dwelt much on the superficial questions of the crisis posed by flashes of conflict around such areas of our lives as ethnicity, religion and poor political performance. This paper will attempt to focus on these conflicts, argue that rather than being seen as stunting our national growth, they have served and should serve a cathartic effect in our national life. We should see them as an inevitable part and parcel of our lives, overcome them and move on. More importantly, it is my belief that rather than see them as a weakness, we should see them as the result of our abundant human resources and the human talent in this country. I also wish to argue that at this level of our national life, our political stability in a narrow sense is neither attainable nor desirable and the search for more qualitative input in our daily lives will be impossible if we as Nigerians settle for less.

  This paper has been divided into three broad parts. In part one, I will argue that political stability as an ideal can be an ideological fraud. I will show that contrary to popular belief, political stability is a mythological contraption and that in reality, political instability is in fact an inevitable component in the quest and attainment of nationhood. History and common sense will be my guide. The second part of the paper will address the nature of the historical obstacles that lie in the path of even attaining the so called political stability. Part three will look closely at the ingredients for managing
and resolving these conflicts, arguing that this indeed is the most desirable option, and by way of conclusion, show that overcoming them is a vital part for laying the foundation for a firm, just and democratic future. I am not implying that as a concept, political stability is not desirable, but I wish to show that it cannot serve as an end in itself; many national sins can be easily committed in its name, if taken literally.

3. Inevitability of Instability: Myth or Reality?

Perhaps we need to ask a preliminary question: what is political stability? In fact, what does a politically stable state really look like? Do we have any to point at today? If the answer is yes, do we want all of it or just part of it? In seeking answers to these questions, we can keep slipping into the pits of philosophy and sophistry. What is most obvious is that in real life a politically stable state is inconceivable. A state may be stable economically, but may not be so socially or morally. Our minds may go back to the Swedish models, the British and American experiences and so on, which have been tried and tested over time. Events of the past years have shown us that time and trials do not necessarily lead to the attainment of political stability. For example, why has seeming instability become the bench mark of Italian democracy? The attainment of political stability does not necessarily occur because we have civilian rule, nor does the presence of democracy lead to it automatically. This has been the experience of many post colonial states all over the world. How come that nations which seemed to have attained what was deemed political stability suddenly come tumbling down? For example, the Shah's Iran, Kamuzu Banda's Malawi, Mobutu's Zaire or Mungabe's Zimbabwe, Kim Sung or Kim II Jong's North Korea, Pinochet's Chile, Somoza's or Ortega's Nicaragua, etc.

When we argue that instability is inevitable, we must place our discussion in proper context and perspective. Stability is not to be taken to mean an atmosphere of solemnity and serenity, absence of any form of opposition and political protests. Is this state of affairs conceivable or even desirable anywhere in the world? It will be
thoroughly insincere for any government to think that it does not have enemies or opponents. There will always be opponents even for those with the best of intentions. Even God in heaven was not spared the opposition led by Satan hitherto an angel whom He in His goodness had created. The real questions we have to ask are: how do we manage conflict or opposition? How does government handle those it perceives are opposed to its policies? Are there seats available for the opposition in African democracy? Someone has argued that in reality, the African mind cannot handle the opposition as a part of democracy because the same word is used for opposition and enemy in African languages. In Mozambique, one hears that the opposition sits nearest to the back door in Parliament!

When a government is full of sycophants, praise singers and courtiers, it fails to hear the voices of reason and can be deafened by the voices that massage its ego. A government can achieve what looks like political stability by such means as physical elimination of the opposition, infliction of terror, victimization and many illegalities. In this case, state security becomes a carte blanche for all forms of atrocities. A frightened society can then be mistaken for a peaceful, stable society. Two options are available in these circumstances: the opposition goes underground or abroad and bides its time, or government resorts to co-opting its opponents by offering a slightly bigger carrot and a smaller stick.

When a government does not listen, then, instability can deteriorate to chaos and this is its worse form. This can be avoided when government learns to listen even to opinions that are seemingly not politically expedient. To do this, it needs to set up mechanisms for identifying and managing conflict, accepting the dynamics of conflict as part of statecraft. Overcoming or containing conflict becomes an aspect of national growth. Let us now identify why instability may have been part and parcel of our national life.

3.1. Colonial Roots of Political Instability

Colonialism may not necessarily be responsible for all our political sins, but there is no doubt that like the sin of Adam in Christian theology, most of the roots of our present day political sins can be
traced to the loss of innocence after colonialism. I use the word *innocence* not in terms of sinlessness, but in the sense that the new cosmology which would later dominate our lives after independence as Nigerians had hitherto been unknown to us. The new paraphernalia of governance as seen in the introduction of Parliaments, all the talk about Democracy, Constitutionalism etc, the new economic language of Capitalism and western education, all these came with their new demands on our fragile polity. They threw our communities into a world that they were neither prepared for intellectually, psychologically nor spiritually. Their traditional cosmos was destroyed and they were offered new value systems that they had never known.

Colonialism may not have invented ethnicity, but its new definition of political space injected new interpretations and conceptions of Ethnicity and Religion into our people. If they made ethnicity, religion and region a basis for access to the spoils of state, there was no doubt that these hitherto innocent identities would gradually become miniature Frankensteins in the process of political competition among communities that had lived peacefully on many fronts. Many communities had lived with their neighbours on the basis of some form of independent international relations, but they were now forced to live under new tutelage that they did not know. They were now to worship *gods* that they had never heard of or known in the new ways being proposed by the conquering powers. The colonialists established their governance by force. It was natural that despite so many years of innocuous legislation and dubious claims of *indirect rule*, it imposed a certain dominant ideological world view on the populace. By coercion, the law enforcement agencies they left behind - the army, the police, the immigration and all the other arms of security - would later become tools of terror in the hands of the successor elite. Security would later become a veritable fig leaf to cover up all forms of injustice and atrocities by various arms of the state. Although the colonial government pretentiously behaved as if it was a referee, in reality, it had its own interests which it sought to defend during and after its stay. This became the main reason for the exaggeration of Region (division of
the country into three regions), Tribe (making the boundaries coterminal with the boundaries of the three main ethnic blocs) and Religion sheltering Muslims from non-Muslim influence). It was never clear to anyone that the regions would never be merged together and one country formed from them. But today, here we are. This is what accounts for the endless attempts to redefine our various interpretations of nationhood today.

3.2. The Leadership Question

Post-colonial leadership was largely illegitimate. From the time the British made their incursions and finally established themselves, the whole landscape called Nigeria was littered with illegality. There were dubious legal documents ceding territories to the British, but whose contents were unknown to the signatories. It simply armed them with the instruments of coercion as a means of legitimacy. It is little wonder that the first batch of political activists to emerge from the colonial period became known as agitational politicians. Part of their psychology was that they saw the British as usurpers whose presence was aimed at undermining the integrity of Nigerian peoples. Their politics were dominated by the quest for privilege, taking over the batons of power because the land was occupied by those they saw as foreign enemies. There are those who argue with hindsight that this kind of agitational activism was not capable of laying a solid foundation for an enduring legacy of political stability. Thus, this line of reasoning argues that the agitational politicians of the independence days suffered from lack of a competent back up of politically efficient successors. Leadership could not be established where there was no tradition of discipleship. The need to fill in the vacant places that loomed with the departure of the British meant that the few educated men and women that were available soon went over to take up positions in government. This generation of politicians with no experience in the game of politics could not automatically learn tolerance and statesmanship so easily. Perhaps because of their experiences with the colonialists, they soon invented their own rules and it did not take long for confusion to set in, thus
leading inexorably to the collapse of the first republic. Since then, the quest for the establishment of a stable polity has been largely a case of the pursuance of the proverbial will-o-the-wisp.

3.3. Politics of Tradition and Modernity

The clash between the new traditions of the west and those of our people have been the subject of debate as we struggle to explain our failures with various experiments. It has always been argued that part of our problem lies with the fact that we have been experimenting with foreign systems of governance that are sometimes alien to our traditions and cultures.

Today, it is evident that democracy seems to be on a collusion course with the politics of tradition as it is evident from the issues surrounding the role and place of traditional rulers. There is obviously an absence of clarity on lines of authority, and the pressures of military rule have made the roles of traditional rulers more and more complicated. Our very poor experimentation and abysmal results with such systems as the Westminster Parliamentary system and the American Presidential system have led our thinkers to conclude that nothing is wrong with these systems and that the fault is with us ourselves. The military system, the third option with the longest running time, which has come in to redeem us has consistently offered us a cure that is by and large worse than the disease. The real questions are about greed and unrestrained selfishness. Or else, how come Nigerians in government do not have problems with those alien structures that facilitate their looting the treasuries? The fact is that there has been a total absence of political will and commitment.

3.4. Education, Opportunity and the Theory of Relative Deprivation

In his famous essay titled, *The Inevitability of Instability*, published in 1967, the political scientist, Professor James O'Connel
argued among other things that:

Educational development tends to overreach itself and to fall short. It sends too many young persons with irrelevant skills on to the labour market and yet leaves the market short of well trained intermediate technicians and administrators. Education is the largest industry in many African countries, and it is also the single biggest cause of rural depopulation and urban unemployment.

When we add this to the fact that this is the age in which the communications revolution is by far the most aggressive, then we can appreciate the impatience of our young men and women. Today, we have the media revolution as shown in the Cable News Network (CNN), INTERNET and CYBERSPACE. All these have become vital components in the fulfilment of the prophesy of the revolution of rising expectations. This revolution argues that expectations will continue to rise as new visions become possible, and men and women will remain insatiable in their quest for a better life. This means that we shall become increasingly impatient with the quality of our politics, governance, economy and so on. When we add to this the fact that this nation continues to churn our thousands of many young and competent men and women from our Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education, then we can appreciate the reality of the inevitability of instability as defined in the context of this paper.

In his book, *Why Men Rebel*, Ted Gurr propounded the theory of relative deprivation to explain why people rebel. He argues that relative deprivation progresses from the belief that men and women compare their fortunes with those of their immediate environment and then use these as a means of defining their condition and position. Sometimes they come to the conclusion that their conditions are not as good as those of their neighbours and then they seek means of redressing the imbalance. At other times, they trace their predicament to other sources: we are deprived of political power because of the Hausa-Fulani, we are deprived of economic power because of the Yoruba, we are denied access to
the bureaucracy because of the Igbo, etc. This self criticism and self definition continues as a vicious circle, and it only depends on how states deal with these endless agitations.

3.5. Corruption and the Bureaucracy

The net result of the politics of a post-colonial state is that politics tends to become, by and large, what has glibly been often referred to as a competition for scarce resources. But why are the resources scarce and who determines the scarcity? Is scarcity real or imagined? It is the greedy urgency of the competitors that leads to the misplacement of the priorities and identification of what constitutes resources. In post-colonial states, the temptation is to work within the limits of the aphorism: first come first served. This introduces an urgency in the competition which leads the politicians to narrow down the definition of resources within the context of money and privileges (land, houses, cars and other perquisites within the bureaucracy). The real resources are the men and women who make up the nation, not the mineral or material resources which are by and large the creation of international industrial needs. Tragically, these same men and women of our society are the victims who get sacrificed. The process of coping with the demands by the elites occasionally leads to the false belief that an expansion of the bureaucracy is a necessary precondition for job creation, but the job placements continue to expand in inverse proportion to the job seekers. Gradually, the competition becomes decisive when losers substitute their personal incompetence or weakness with their ethnic origin, thus raising the stakes by the introduction of ethnic politics within the system.

4. Options for Political Stability

In this section, I shall try to proffer suggestions as to what areas we need to address to achieve national cohesion/stability. The list is not meant to be exhaustive in any sense. It only seeks to open new horizons and addresses government as well as governed.
4.1. Learn to run an open Government

This is not meant to put the State Security organs out of job. It is obvious that although the Babangida administration somehow sabotaged some of its good policies, there is no doubt that the IMF debate, the political debates leading to the transition programme, the MAMSER outfits, all had great potentials as means of gauging the thoughts of citizens on issues that concerned them. Those in government are not always the best in their fields nor are they always the most brilliant minds. Government must learn to use expert and professional advice even from its opponents. Again, the Babangida administration destroyed the political left by giving them a long rope; but their self immolation was an inevitability any way. Yet his integration of some of the finest minds in this country into the various areas of public discourse offered new opportunities for resolving some of our complex national problems. The tragedy is when these intellectuals end up lowering their intellectual quotient to fit the ideology of those in power for the sake of improving their personal economic and political ambitions.

4.2. Invest in human resources

Contrary to popular thinking, the greatest resource of Nigeria is not oil. It is, rather, the citizens of Nigeria - from the Anangs, Ogonis, the Katafs, the Hausas, to the Ikulus, Ebiras, Ogoris, Mumuyes and so on. The minerals will all go, but the citizens of this country will remain. The government must become more conscious of how Nigerians live and what being a Nigerian means to its citizens. We have placed such a low premium on human life in this country that life has become so cheap. In fact, my conviction is that AIDS is not the deadliest disease in Africa; hunger holds the trophy as the undisputed champion. One of the greatest threats to political stability is not foreign interests as our leaders are wont to argue. These so called foreign conspiracies would come to naught with a citizenry that can see a reason to identify with the aspirations of its
nation. Citizens will reciprocate when government shows enough concern for their welfare and well-being. So far, most of this is lacking in the policy formulation of this nation, and no amount of ‘sloganeering’ can alter this feeling of alienation. It is a tragedy that this nation has not shown sufficient appreciation for the performance of some of its best brains who have been compelled to market their brains to various research institutions outside this country.

4.3. Seek to Understand the real issues of Conflict

The Babangida years saw the most unprecedented upsurge in religious and communal riots in the history of this nation. These points of conflict need to be understood. Part of the explanation is that the Babangida policies, populist as they looked, prepared a ground for the emergency of Ted Gurr’s relative deprivation theory. There were so many possibilities as the endless donations showed; and government tended to stone every problem with more and more bundles of naira. Violence inadvertently seemed an attractive investment for deprived communities. The absence of avenues for interaction, the total lack of access to state resources and opportunities in the bureaucracy except by military connections, increased the anger and frustration of citizens. The riots of the last ten years have essentially been a struggle against the state’s oppression but fought among victims against themselves. Yet the military, which by its policies and seeming unwillingness to leave politics has been the object and target of anger, has presented itself as the solution to the problem.

4.4. Define the boundaries of the Military

Obviously, the military incursion into our polity have been the most traumatic instigator of violence in Nigeria and the driving force for instability. It is evident that many years of military rule have led us to imbibe a military ethos. Nigerians now act with military aggression and give orders with immediate effect. Yet the military
has been unable to do the most fundamental things with immediate effect: banishing hunger, creating jobs, installing a viable democracy, putting our economy on the tracks, etc. It is clear that the anger of Nigerians against the military is running thin, and a resolution of the nature and character of these relations is necessary to avoid our slide into chaos.

4.5. Dealing with Corruption and Instilling Merit

It was the great Professor Billy Dudley of happy memories who once said that if you ask people who have been taught how to play draughts to suddenly begin to play chess, they are likely to make the same moves in chess as in draughts. He concludes that in the end, what you have is neither a game of draughts nor chess. In a way, we have fused militarism, feudalism and a sprinkling of politics and democracy. The first two are theoretically antagonistic to democracy and yet we are pretending that they can successfully bring forth the third!

More importantly, corruption remains the most invidious obstacle to stability in Nigeria both under the military and the civilians. It shows no sign of being abetted, and yet without a conscious effort at dealing with it, our talk of political stability remains in the main, a mirage. There is corruption in every political system in the world as long as politics remains an activity of human beings. What is necessary is the will by the leadership to instil minimum standards of decorum and morality. It is now commonly argued that in those days, Nigerian contractors were famous for offering ten percent to those in government before they are awarded contracts. Today, Nigerian contractors are awarded contracts and they end up doing only ten percent of the job and use ninety percent for themselves and their collaborators. Such an environment is intrinsically hostile to political stability, to say the least, because unless you decisively deal with these cankerworms, no government policy can be adequately executed. We are moving forward in reverse gear!
4.6. Encourage and respect the Rule of Law

It is evident that we have not been serious about the rule of law in this country. A rather selective approach to the issues of justice does no good to the intricate problems of ensuring justice in a fragile polity such as ours. It is evident that for many a Nigerian, the popular belief is that justice is a commodity that is at best a *cash and carry* commodity or at worst, an auction that goes to the highest bidder. The judiciary is hamstrung, but at the same time, it remains the only succour for the ordinary person. Citizens on the other hand must become more aware of their responsibilities and rights under the law. Without the rule of law, justice is in chains and political stability remains in serious jeopardy. Government must seek to ensure that it respects the judiciary by obeying its rulings all the time, not selectively. It is the only way we can have integrity in the judiciary. The judiciary on its own part must realize that sacrificing professionalism for political expediency is a mortal sin.

4.7. Encourage freedom of Speech

It is a pity that when we talk of freedom, some people tend to think that it undermines authority by encouraging lawlessness. This is only when freedom is exercised in an irresponsible manner, and there should be laws to make those who do so pay. The responsibility of government is to ensure that there are institutions on the ground to guard against reckless expression or application of freedom. To create an environment around which people fear to express their views openly is to preserve chaos and evil in an incubator. Their bottled up anger and frustration will find expression in other forms of violence, and a little incident provides a spark. Free speech enables a government to share its responsibilities when decisions have been made and mistakes are made. In any case, we need many voices of reason in fighting the war for our national integrity. I still insist and believe that as long as a media house is shut without the order of a court of law in this country, an illegality is being perpetrated and the rule of law is threatened. If a citizen of
this nation is a victim an unjust detention even if it is for one day, we have demeaned ourselves. If a prisoner suffers under inhuman conditions, it demeans us. Prisons are to help reform our brothers and sisters. Perfection may not be attainable by humans, in any society, but our leadership needs the courage to struggle to ensure the security and well being of all our citizens. Prayers are said for those in authority, not that they live long, but that they rule in justice to ensure peace and harmony. It is the basis of the legitimacy of a government and the condition for political stability.


I have argued that in theory, political stability is an aberration if by it we mean the achievement of a peaceful equilibrium and an absence of any form of conflict. I have also argued that in principle, conflict is not an enemy of progress. It is a sign of life and vitality. If properly managed, its energy can enhance national growth and hasten integration. In conclusion of this discussion therefore, I wish to make a few observations which hopefully can form the basis of further discussion.

(a) Given the limited nature of our experience with independence and the lack of experiences with democracy, I plead that we become more circumspect in our criticism of ourselves. We need to take a historical view of where we are coming from and how far we have gone in the journey. If we do this, we shall realise that although we have squandered so many opportunities, we have managed to dream some good dreams. They may not have been realised but we should have the humility and the courage to find out where we made mistakes and how. Nigeria, fortunately has not become a basket case in the real sense of the word because despite the poverty, the wealth is still there. As Sony Oti once sang, 'If dem drink our oil, Nigeria go survive'. We still have the oil and that means two things: the West is not about to ignore us despite their shenanigans. Green Peace is demonstrating against the oil companies and their environmental degradation in Nigeria, but there are more serious
lobbies across the corridors of power by oil companies for Nigeria! This is problematic because the oil companies that are campaigning for Nigeria are doing so not because they love us but because our oil is their economic oxygen. The task now is whether Nigeria can really realise that we are into 'injury time' in this game. How much of our people's future can we sacrifice on the altar of economic expediency? If we put our people first, then no amount of external criticism will threaten us.

(b) There are those who have argued that the problem of Nigeria is that of leadership. Leadership in Nigeria seems to be environmentally friendly as it is evident from the extent of recycling of men and women! There are those who feel that the citizens are also to blame for succumbing to a culture of fatalism and letting itself be led by the nose without setting up minimum standards of accountability for their leaders. The solution is not a rise in the tone of both sides because chaos will be the net result. As we are talking here, we know that some very senior citizens including a former Head of State and one of his most senior lieutenants are supposedly still under house arrest and detention. How should past leaders be treated in this country? Should we not lay down a certain degree of moral standards? This is important in dealing with the problem of leadership in this country because Nigerian governments have tended to be vindictive towards their predecessors as it is evident from the lack of continuity in project execution.

(c) The citizens of this country are not helpless and one hopes that they will become more aware of their duties and responsibilities to their nation. The question we must continue to ask ourselves is, what does being a Nigerian mean to me? It seems that there is so much selfishness and concern with personal safety and security to the exclusion of the nature of the environment around us. Each of us must address the issue of the quality of life we want our children to inherit. Being a citizen of Nigeria is not just paying taxes and levies to the state. We the followers must insist on what government owes us, that is welfare and security.

(d) A vital part of the survival of any nation is the level of participation of the citizens of the nation in the matters that concern them. This is a necessary precondition for the success of any serious
policies. In Nigeria, there is too much delegation of power by means that are dubious to say the least. Who wins an election and how does she win in Nigeria? Who contests an election and how does she contest in Nigeria? Who votes and who decides who will vote or what will happen to the vote itself? Who decides who gets what health care centre, school or social service? Politicians tend to sacrifice the need of the greater part of society for their selfish interest. That is why political survival determines the awards of contracts and their locations, thus undermining discipline. The politics of exclusion that we practice cannot lead us to stability in any way. We engage in the politics of exclusion by drawing up dubious conditions that exclude the majority of our people from participation in planning their own future. When we ask contestants for positions to pay deposits in thousands of naira, we are excluding millions of their rights of participation. When we articulate political programmes in languages and manner that exclude millions of our people, we infringe their rights of participation. When we impoverish so many by corruption and planlessness, we are guilty of the politics of exclusion.

(d) The issue of human rights has been with us for the past few years. It is not a coincidence that this trend has become more combative with the climax of military rule. The reality is that this agitational politics has occurred as a reaction to military repression which seems to be a reminder of the agitations of pre-independence days. The point is that there has been a lot of violations of human rights as the unending arrests have shown. If we want to pursue the objectives of establishing political stability, we must set in motion that machinery that will make these agitations irrelevant. It is auspicious to hear that now medical facilities are being made available to prisoners as we heard from the Honourable Minister for Internal, Affairs recently. But we must remember that his project is almost ten years behind time and we can only guess the lives that this delay has cost. The government must create an atmosphere that will enable Nigerians walk tall, with dignity and without fear. Fear reduces the human person and undermines self confidence.
(e) The reverse of politics of exclusion is politics of inclusion, which leads us to the next item in our conclusion. A most fundamental component in our conclusion in the search for political stability is the theme of Reconciliation. The landscape of politics in post-colonial states has always been littered with corpses of political opponents real and imagined. We are talking of the many victims that litter the landscape as a result of our quest for a viable polity. They include the victims of coups (widows, children communities), victims of unjust retrenchment or retirements. We cannot install a permanent political structure without finding ways of dealing with the grievances that exist in this country. Tragically, society is setting in on itself as we witness the explosion of anger in armed attacks on innocent citizens, the rise in hired assassins and those seeking vengeance outside the legal framework. As one government seeks to immortalize itself at the expense of another, we must carefully work out a way of eliminating lingering traces of bitterness and the quest for vengeance. We know what has happened in places like Nicaragua, the former Soviet Union or Argentina. Sincere reconciliation is what we need to avoid the kind of mindless blood-letting that has destroyed Angola, Mozambique and Rwanda. The postponement of redress for injustice and the continued trampling upon and the violation of human rights, the marginalisation of groups or communities from the mainstream of our national life, all these build up anger and aggression. People nurse these grievances and wait for a tiny little spark and a whole society resorts to self destruction.

We only need to ask whether in reality for example, the price of a chicken can cause a war (as the case of the Nunumba and the Kokonba of Ghana), or whether the issue of quoting the Koran alone can cause a riot (as in Kafanchan in 1987), or whether the price of suya can cause the havoc that was Zangon Kataf, or the shooting of an airplane carrying a head of state as in Rwanda in 1994. These are the realities of life and it is not just here in Africa. The killing of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914 on its own could not have started a world war; but it was the spark that ignited burning and buried anger and frustration.
It requires a lot of courage on the part of a leader for national reconciliation to take place. The resolution of June 12th issue is not going to happen when one side believes it has won the lingering impasse. Dialogue remains the only viable option and it will remain a part of our political landscape. We are Nigerians first before we became soldiers and politicians. Governments have set aside court rulings and procedures as long as we can remember. In fact, President de Klerk did not have to go back to the courts to set Mr Nelson Mandela free. He realised that his freedom and that of his nation was tied to the imprisonment of Mr. Mandela. We must find other ways of resolving the crisis of June 12th. Whatever victories we may win now may just be pyrrhic victories. This time, it requires courage to act, and courage is strongest when it makes itself seemingly weak. This is what I believe as a Christian because it is when we are seemingly weak that we are in fact strong.

Finally, political stability needs economic stability. They must be firmly rooted on a moral base. Nigeria should be thankful to God that it has weathered storms that many nations took far more years to deal with. We have survived the conflicts engineered by ethnicity, regionalism, civil war, religion, communal differences, etc. If the Soviet Union had been less deluded and had the courage to go through the issues of ethnic and religious identities, they will not have the kind of explosions that have occurred in that area. Had the Rwandans experienced civil war, things would have been different last year. Had we not fought a civil war, June 12th would have led to civil war; but thank God, we have crossed that bridge. One hopes therefore that we can put the various convulsions that we have had in perspective and move ahead. If June 12th has one lesson, it is that we, the people, will be more vigilant in securing our political gains next time. This is the way to greatness. I conclude by restating that things can only get better for us. But let us have the courage to be sincere in our pursuit of righteousness and justice. Let the prayer of St. Augustine be the prayer of Nigeria when he said: O God, I do not ask you to shelter me from temptations and tribulations, I only ask you for the grace and courage to face them. Amen.
ENDNOTES

0. Full text of a paper presented by Father Matthew Hassan Kukah at the National Seminar on National Image, at State House Kaduna, 7-9 June, 1995.

2. The June 12 1993 presidential election in Nigeria was supposed to have been won by Chief M.K.O. Abiola; but that election was annulled by the Babangida military administration.
Managing Stress Among Rural Poor Women in a Distressed Economy; DEC's Experience.

By

Cecilia Ukamaka Asogwa.


Non-governmental organisations, popularly known as NGOs, are recognised world wide as having greater capability of working effectively with people at the grassroots level. This is because of the nature, policy and implementation strategy of NGOs.

This paper is based on my experience while working with the poor, especially the marginalised rural poor, in the distressed economy of Nigeria. At the end of my presentation, I shall suggest possible patterns which one may adapt in an attempt towards working for a more positive change.

Fifty years ago, Albert Einstein summed up the discovery of atomic energy with characteristic simplicity. "Everything changed". He went on to predict: "We shall require a substantially new manner of thinking if humankind is to survive". Although nuclear explosions devastated Nagasaki and Hiroshima, humankind has survived its first critical test of preventing worldwide nuclear devastation. But five decades later, we need another profound transition in thinking - from nuclear security to human security.

The concept of security has for too long been interpreted narrowly. It was simply understood as security of territory from external aggression; or as the protection of national interests through adequate foreign policy; or as global security from the threat of a nuclear holocaust. Security has thus been related more to nation-states than to people. In the name of global security, the super powers were locked in an ideological struggle - fighting a cold war all over the world.
The developing nations, having won their independence only recently, were sensitive to any real or perceived threats to national identities. Forgotten were the legitimate concerns of ordinary people for whom security symbolized protection from the threat of disease, hunger, unemployment, crime, social conflict, political repression and environmental hazards.

With the dark shadows of a global war receding one can now see that many conflicts are within nations rather than between nations.

For many people, a feeling of insecurity arises more from worries about daily life than from the dread of a cataclysmic world event. Will they and their families have enough to eat? Will they lose or keep their jobs? Will their streets and neighbourhoods be safe from crime? Will they become a victim of violence because of their gender?

You can see with me that Human Security is not a concern with weapons - it is a concern with human life and dignity. Human security means that people can exercise these choices safely and freely and that they can be relatively confident that the opportunities they have today are not totally lost tomorrow.

2. Rural Women and Their Economic Security

When people perceive threats to their immediate security, they often become less tolerant as the anti-women empowerment feelings in some African traditional setting show. Or, where people see the basis of their livelihood eroded - such as their access to potable water - they feel threatened and live in insecurity. Oppression and perceptions of injustice can also lead to violent protest against authoritarianism. This is the case in some Igbo societies of Nigeria where some men despise the newly acquired role of women in our society today, in the form of property acquisition, women-maintained households, etc.

A crucial area of threat to Human Security as it affects rural women is in the field of economics. Economic security requires an assured basic income - usually through productive and remunerative work. But only about a quarter of the world's people may at present be economically secure in this sense. According to the 1994 UNDP
Human Development Report, more than 35 million people were seeking for work, and a high proportion were women.

The problems are even greater in developing countries, where the galloping increase in rural poverty is hitting women hardest. Sixty percent of the rural poor are women; and the number of poor women has increased by 50 percent compared to the 1965-1970 level, as opposed to a 30% increase for men during the same period. Of the 550 million households in the world, 76 million are women maintained households. The largest proportion by far of female-headed-rural households, i.e. 31 percent, is in sub-Saharan Africa; Asia has 9%, while in Latin America and the Caribbean the figure is 17%.

Although rural women produce half of the developing world's food supply - as much as 80% in Africa - they have far less access than men to land, income, training, credit facilities and other vital resources. Although prime producers, rural women have difficulty obtaining plots even in land allocation programme where their share - as equal citizens - is mandated by law. In Nigeria, as is in many other African countries, the fact is that women always come out empty handed or deprived. On account of illiteracy and ignorance on their civil rights rural women lack the self confidence to go for what is their right. Several factors related to of assumed role of women in African societies, some of which are gradually changing, keep on depriving the women of their rights.

From our field experience we discovered that even those women who have some land or avail themselves of productive investment opportunities often find it difficult to farm and invest effectively because they have little access to credit. This, despite the mounting evidence that these poor rural women are credit worthy. In many developing countries, like Nigeria, 30% of the women receive less than 1% of the total credit given out annually.

This discrimination has led to increasing insecurity in income of women and, therefore, to greater stress in their life. Nominal wages have remained stagnant, or may have risen slightly, but inflation has eroded their value. In the area of food security, our experience while working with the rural poor (especially women) is that despite considerable increases in the availability of food in recent years,
some 240 million people (about 30% of the total world poor) are under nourished in the sub-saharan Africa. This situation affects women the more, who are often the last to eat in the household.

3. DEC Investment in the Security of Rural Women.

Agriculture

In DEC, as in many other NGOs, we have been trying to invest in rural women self-help groups which were established in more than 300 villages in States East of the Niger. Our target is to increase food security especially among the rural poor families in these villages. Such schemes being used include training and deployment of women Agricultural Extension Workers in these villages to assist the rural poor with informations of relevant modern farming techniques to improve their farming method and boost output.

DEC also makes small credits available to each woman farmer in these 300 self groups every farming season. This enables them to hire more labour and obtain or diversify farm inputs. In this way they increase their agricultural output and make more money. Such credits lines which are opened to rural poor women to enable them increase their agricultural business are obtained by the women through their self-help associations registered with Nnebuife Women Development Association - an umbrella association embracing all DEC' assisted women self help associations in the Igbo speaking states of Eastern Nigeria. The total number of membership being funded annually as of 1995 is 5000 women.

Even though the gravity of the problem on the ground is enormous these schemes among others being carried out by DEC to alleviate the constant economic stress among the rural poor women have had a great impact in their lives. This is because they have gained access to food which comes from access to assets, work and assured income which DEC is enabling them to have.
Health

Another great threat on human security which compounds stress on women with more impact on the rural poor is the question of Health Security. In developing countries, the major causes of death are infections and parasitic diseases, which kill 17 million people annually. Most of these deaths are linked with poor nutrition and unsafe environment - particularly polluted water, which contributes to the nearly one billion cases of diarrhoea a year.

In the rural areas of Nigeria, the threat to health security are usually greater for the poorest, and particularly for children. The fact is that while the poor people in general have less health security, the situation of women is particularly difficult. One of the most serious hazards they face is child bearing. More than three million people die each year from causes related to child birth. Most of these deaths could be prevented by ensuring access to safe and affordable family planning and offering the most basic support at home during pregnancy and delivery with the option of referrals to clinics or hospitals for women with evident complications.

Thus a miracle of life often turns into a nightmare of death just because a society cannot spare the loose change to provide a birth attendant at the time of the greatest vulnerability and anxiety in a woman's life.

The Development Education Centre (DEC) is training and supporting more than 100 village Health Workers annually in all her 300 pilot communities. This is part of DEC's contribution to reduce stress and anxiety often experienced by her target group, i.e. the rural poor women. Health security is improving in the pilot communities with the provision of essential drugs through DEC's Revolving Drug Loan Scheme. These village Health Workers are really creating a laudable impact in the remote countryside where they have been working since 1992, when DEC started this project in her pilot communities.
Managing Stress Among Rural Poor Women

Security From Physical Violence

Another important aspect of Human Security which is so vital to women is their security from physical violence. In no society are women secure or are treated as being equal to men. Personal insecurity shadows them from cradle to grave. In the household, they are the last to eat. At school they are the last to be educated. At work, they are the last to be hired and first to be fired. And from childhood through adulthood, women are abused because of their gender.

True, women are getting better educated and are being employed, often as primary income-earners. Millions of women are now heads of households. In one third of the households in the world as a whole - and up to one-half in some African countries - women produce nearly 90% of the food. But there are still many shock indicators of gender insecurity and physical violence. It was recently estimated that one third of the wives in developing countries are physically battered.

Children who should be the most protected in any society are subject to many abuses. In developing countries, poverty compels many children to take on heavy work at too young an age - often at great cost to their health. For instance, in Nigeria many children are on the street hawking wares morning, afternoon and night, instead of schooling. In the rural areas children are malnourished due to the poverty and ignorance of their parents, especially their mothers.

DEC, through her Community Health Workers, are doing a great work in this direction through the health education programme, organised in village meetings, village schools, churches and regular home visits where greater awareness on these issues is created.

Security in Community and Family

Finally, the issue of community or family security to members is a vital aspect of Human Security, which today is being threatened by societal changes. For example, the extended family system originally offers protection to its weaker members. This is especially so with
widows, and women-maintained households. The principle was that heads of households, including women-maintained households are entitled to enough land, assets, etc., to support their family. So land and landed properties are distributed accordingly.

But cases abound which runs on the contrary. Some members of the extended family turn to become personal threats to the life of a widow and her family. They use culture wrongly to perpetuate oppressive practices hence causing great stress and anxiety to the widow or woman-head of the household.

It is a common fact in Igbo society of Nigeria that most ignorant members of the extended family often perpetuate oppressive practices when it comes to women and land appropriation, inheritance and property rights. This happens even when such women are the maintainers of those households. For example, DEC made a case study Regina Agbo and her husband's kinsmen. Mrs Agbo is a member of DEC self help group in a community in Enugu State. She has been the head of her household since 20 years because her husband became blind after an accident. In 1994, her husband became the eldest man in her village. This entitled him to own and reap all the fruits of palm trees, oranges, kolanuts, etc., jointly owned by the kindred, according to tradition.

In Regina's case the reverse became the case, because some members of her husband's kinsmen are greedy, selfish and wicked. These kinsmen ganged up and refused Mrs Agbo and her minor sons from entering into the landed property or reaping fruits as was done by her husband's predecessor.

The stress of this oppression was too much on Mrs Agbo. The only thing that came to her mind was to carry the case to the Council of elders in the town with kolanuts. But her enemies were proving stronger than her because they had money and influence. According to them Regina Agbo is showing that she knows her rights and can demand for it. They will not allow her.

The case was delaying so much with the council of elders that she sensed foul play. She immediately left with some of his husband's kinsmen and her sons who were in support of her struggles to seek for legal advice. It was at this juncture that Mrs Regina Agbo was
brought to face the fact of her life. One has to bring out money if
the case has to go to court.

Regina Agbo was determined to fight for her right because she
was convinced that she and her family were being denied justice.
She went immediately and sold some of her goods, like a drum of
palm oil which she had used a DEC' loan to procure. From the sales
she made a quick profit which she deposited with the lawyers. An
injunction was got by her lawyer, during the first hearing. She was
directed by the Chief Magistrate to take custody of all her husbands
palm trees, kolanuts, etc., with immediate effect until the case is
determined in court.

This directive by the magistrate, gave Regina a comfortable ground
and confidence to fight the case. She then reaped the palm-nuts and
made enough palm oil which she sold in order to get enough funds
for the case. The case later ended in her favour and that of her
family.

This is a case of an evidence of women empowerment, and
Regina's story has encouraged many women being deprived of their
rights to demand for justice.

DEC has intensified her community-based awareness building and
advocacy workshops in many remote villages to create awareness on
issues that hinder women development and self actualization.
Customary and traditional practices which dehumanise women like
the performance of certain widowhood rites, genital mutilation of
young girls in the name of female circumcision, and so on, are all
the concern of DEC.

It is my observation that some of these traditional practices are
breaking down under the steady process of modernization. The
extended family is now less likely to offer support to family
members in distress. Traditional language and cultures are in some
places withering under the onslaught of mass media. In addition,
many oppressive practices are being fought by people-oriented
organisations, like DEC. Through legal actions, like the case of Mrs
Regina Agbo, there is a reduction in the suffering and the oppressive
practices against women in our society.
4. Conclusion: Practical Recommendations

(a) People ready to commit themselves towards working for social justice in a distressed economy must become first of all aware and conscientized on the issues that encourage the distressed economy. This is because one cannot be said to be acting positively for any cause when one is ignorant of the matter one is trying to solve. Therefore, there is greater need for social analysis by church and social workers.

(b) On getting conscientized, such individuals or groups should plan with their target audience (i.e., those severely affected by the problem which is under consideration) on how they themselves can engage in concrete analysis on the issues at stake through discussion and dialogue.

(c) Mobilization and conscientization are an arduous task and need greater self-sacrifice, patience and understanding on the part of the facilitators. These have no other alternative than to carry their enthusiastic group or individuals with them while planning for a programme aimed at finding a solution to their problem.

(d) Remember that there is no easier way of finding a solution to your problem other than to start working at it, no matter how small your action plan seems to be. Hence, the call for active participation by any individual or group of persons in any positive plan geared towards solving individual or societal problems merits support.

(e) I strongly suggest a joint project with the Justice and Peace Commission of Enugu Catholic Diocese to establish the Justice and Peace self-help associations which will embrace men, women and youths of certain age, who will be mobilized and conscientized through the relevant Educational Programmes to be set up by the Commission. When these are based on local church stations and parish levels, the self-help associations will create real opportunities for the rural poor.

(f) The Justice and Peace Commission in the Diocese is expected to give an official backing to enthusiastic individuals who are ready and committed to the stated objective. Such support should be in form of training the leaders of each group who in turn facilitate and
conscientize others in their groups towards a more positive action for change in our society.

Bibliography


Theology at the Service of the People

by

George Ehusani

1. Sociological Context: A traumatised people
   in a distressed land.

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, is endowed by the
Creator with enormous natural resources. The country is blessed
with vast arable land that stretches between the delta region of the
deep south, through the tropical rain forest of the south west to the
savannah region of the north. There are abundant water resources
not only in the south, but also in the north. The climate is mild,
favourable to an all-year-round production of food and cash crops.
In terms of mineral resources, Nigeria could be said to have more
than its fair share of nature's endowment. They include petroleum,
natural gas, iron ore, lime stone, and tin. The country is also
abundantly blessed with human resources. It is the most populous
country in Africa, with 88.5 million people, and an overwhelming
majority of them young people. Nigeria has been blessed with
intellectual giants in the field of Medicine, Engineering, Law,
Theology and Literature, including a Nobel laureate for literature.
By God's endowment, Nigeria is supposed to be a land flowing with
milk and honey.

Yet, the mass of Nigerians have been stripped naked by a corrupt
and callous elite. The mass of Nigerians have suffered in the hands
of a succession of despotic, decadent, vision-less and reckless
leadership. They have been humiliated, pauperised and reduced to a
state of destitution by combined forces of military dictatorship,
political subterfuge and economic profligacy. Nigerians have lost
their individual and collective pride to the excesses of autochthonous
conquerors who recognise no order expect that established by
mammon. Everyday, thousands of our country men and women are
dying of starvation and otherwise curable diseases.

Nigerians have today turned scavengers, as thousands of them
could be seen daily, rummaging through garbage dumps for sour
food, rotten fruits and used clothes. Our streets are lined up with
young people, who, ever before they know what life is, must put up
with the indignity of begging for a living. Nigeria is today putting up
with the ugly sight of young boys and girls, some of them graduates
of secondary schools, polytechnics and universities, dangerously
running after moving vehicles, to sell some miserable wares. Now
and again, they get knocked down by the fast moving vehicles. The
educational system in Nigeria has virtually collapsed. While the
children of the rich and powerful are sent to elite schools and
colleges at home and abroad, those of the lowly class are left to
roam the streets, with no access to knowledge nor promise to gainful
employment.

Yet side by side with this state of near-destitution of the majority,
is the affluence and conspicuous consumption of a few super-rich
Nigerians whose wealth and privilege have multiplied to about the
same degree as the misery of the masses. Millions of naira are
squandered daily in a life of vanity and debauchery by our military
dictators, political chieftains and economic fraudsters. The
indigenous conquerors of our land surround themselves with
sycophants and praise singers. In the fashion of primitive feudalism
they take chieftaincy titles and buy honorary doctorates, and get the
poor to amuse them with reckless abandon. Nigerians have no
freedom, even to complain about their condition, as their best
Newspapers have been proscribed for venturing to write the truth.
Labour Unions have lost their autonomy. The oppressive
government now dictates what happens in many of the Unions, so
they can hardly negotiate better conditions for the distressed
workers. When they attempt to stage peaceful demonstration against
their oppressors, they are confronted with deadly harassment by a
brutal police force. Today, thousands of people who are mere
suspects languish in jail under sub-human conditions, some for
upward of five or ten years. Many of them have never been
formally charged to court for any offence. A number of these
detainees die in prison of abuse and neglect, and hardly any account is taken of them. The extent of police brutality and extra-judicial killings in our land is mind boggling.\(^2\)

A consequence of this structural injustice, the corruption, the abuse of power and the impoverishment of the people is the prevalence today in our land of violent crimes, the breakdown of law and order, the widespread resort to drug abuse, the menace of secret cults, and the near total loss of spiritual, moral and family values. In December 1994 we heard of the brutal beheading of Gideon Akalu in Kano. In January 1995 we heard of Bosede, the three year old girl, into whose head a six inch nail was driven at Ibadan. And at the beginning of April 1995, we heard of the barbaric murder of an Irish nun at Warri.

These are difficult times in our country. As a people, Nigerians have been going through a prolonged nightmare. In the Communiqué issued at the end of their September 1994 meeting, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria declared itself "moved by the misery and agony of the individuals and families in Nigeria, who are unable to live worthwhile lives and fulfil their obligations and aspirations." They expressed their conviction that "this misery and agony is not God's design...." And in the communiqué issued at the end of their last meeting in March 1995, the Conference noted that the Nigerian people were "profoundly distressed, even traumatised, as they live in a patently dysfunctional society that gives the impression that there is no governance." They recognised the Church's role as the conscience of society, and pledged their commitment to a type of education that will promote people's freedom, empowerment and integral human development.

2. The Task before Nigerian Theologians

The foregoing is the sociological context in which the christian minister is called to carry out the task of evangelization and pastoral care, and in which the theologian is called to carry out his divine discourse. Theology is defined as faith seeking understanding (St. Anselm). The faith of the Nigerian Christian today seeks understanding within the above dismal context. Thus, in doing their
"God-talk" Nigerian theologians are confronted with a socio-cultural matrix or locus that the Bishops' Conference describes as not only distressed, but even traumatised! The historical experience of those to whom the Christian faith is being preached in Nigeria, and who must find meaning for their religious preoccupation is one of poverty, disease, oppression, widespread abuse of human rights, structural injustice, dictatorship, large-scale corruption, unemployment, ignorance, violence and death.

Nigerian theologians are confronted with the task of defending or explaining the hope that is in them (1 Peter 3:15) in the midst of a people held under siege by an abusive, exploitative, fraudulent, callous, and greedy elite. Theology in our land should be much more than rhetoric. It should be a dynamic engagement in the process of seeing, judging and acting, armed with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Nigeria needs a theology that challenges the status quo and those who are satisfied with it. We need a theology for the oppressed and marginalized people, and for those who struggle for justice. We need a theology for those who hunger for bread as well as those who hunger for justice in solidarity with those hungering for bread. What should be most important for Nigerian theology is not only its scientific profundity, but its service to the people. What should be most important is not its fidelity to any particular philosophical system, but the ecclesial life ("communio") it generates.

The vast majority of Nigerians, who are today abused, marginalized, and consigned to the fringe of life, will hardly embrace a religion solely for its intellectual content, no matter how profoundly formulated. Nor will they embrace a religion that only offers salvation for the soul after a miserable existence in this world. Religion for the people on "the edge of society" is a matter of satisfaction or hunger, freedom or slavery, safety or fear, prosperity or disaster, life or death. Those on the "edge" have no time for abstract theories. Intellectual abstractions are a luxury that they cannot afford. Only incarnate truths, dogmas and doctrines would make meaning to them. The truth about a good, just, loving, compassionate, all-knowing and all-powerful God, as well as the
truth of Divine Revelation, of the Trinity, of the Incarnation, and of the Resurrection, will only make sense to a suffering people if such truths take flesh and offer hope of some reprieve in this world, with a promise of ultimate victory in the next.

Nigerian theologians are today challenged to formulate the Christian message in such a way that it brings hope to a despairing people. They are challenged to present the message of Jesus Christ as Good News to the agonising people of Nigeria, who, like the children of Israel in Egypt or Babylon, are going through a prolonged nightmare under a succession of merciless taskmasters. Nigerian theologians are challenged to provide soothing answers to the many questions arising from the hearts of our distressed people. Only in this way shall their preoccupation be at the service of, on behalf of, and for the benefit of the anawim (poor) of Yahweh in Nigeria. If, however, they keep their heads in the clouds, and settle for abstract theories and sterile formulas that are largely disincarnate, then their preoccupation shall be worthless in the eyes of the "wretched of the earth." As long as their misery lasts, the people on the fringe of society shall consider all dis-incarnate theology (i.e., "God-talk" that is devoid of practical liberating dimensions) as a bourgeois enterprise that further alienates them, an enterprise which will provoke their resentment. Of what use is a theology that generates books, but does not generate life? Do we improve the lot of poor, hungry people by simply reading kitchen recipes to their hearing?

What the poor, humiliated, oppressed, and marginalized people of Nigeria are yearning for is a "God-talk" that is consoling, reassuring, empowering and promising. They want to hear of an all-powerful God that is both capable and willing to remove from their shoulders the awful burden of the oppressor that crushes them. They want to hear of an almighty God that breaks loose the slave master's chains and sets the bonded free. They want to hear of a just God that dethrones the powerful despot and elevates the lowly victim. They want to hear of a loving God that provides food for the hungry, health for the sick, deliverance for the demonized, joy for the sorrowing and peace for the troubled. Christian theology must help the poor in their quest for life, for bread, and for dignity.

Holy Scripture reveals that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, develops an intimate relationship with his people, and takes a caring interest in the day to day life of his people here on earth. For a pilgrim people, He is a pilgrim God, who travels with them and shows them the way. He establishes a covenant with Abraham in which he promises prosperity to him and his descendants. He commits himself to be a friend of those who treat Abraham well, and a foe of those who curse Him.

Now the Lord said to Abraham, "Go from your country and your kindred and your fathers house to the land that I will show you. And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and curse him that curses you; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves" (Genesis 1:1-3)

The God of Moses, Joshua and the Judges is a compassionate God who hears the cry of his oppressed people and is moved to action to free His people from oppression, and to give them back their dignity. He says to Moses:

I have seen the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers, so I know well what they are suffering. Therefore I have come down to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians.... Indeed the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have truly noted that the Egyptians are oppressing them. Come now! I will send you to Pharaoh to lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt (Exodus 3:7-10).
As stubborn Pharaoh would not let the suffering people go, Yahweh intervened with a powerful hand. He brought them out after inflicting a number of plagues on the Egyptians, and made them cross the red sea on dry ground, while their enemies who gave them a chase perished in the sea (Exodus 8,9,10,12; Exodus 14:26-31). In their long road to freedom, Yahweh accompanied the people in the form of a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night. When in hunger and thirst they cried to him in the desert, Yahweh intervened by providing manna and quail, and water from the rock of Massah and Meribah (Exodus 16:17).

The God of Samuel, David and Solomon, lives as king among his people, showing them the way. He is the conscience of the nation who defends the weak and lowly against the excesses of the rich and powerful. A good example of this is the story of David's sin against Uriah, the assignment of the prophet Nathan, the repentance of David, and the death of the child born to David on account of the sin (2 Samuel 11 and 12).

The God of Elijah, Isaiah and Amos, is the God of holiness and justice. He is the defender of the poor and the weak, and the protector of the widow and the orphan. Through the prophets, he exposes the injustice in the political and economic structures of the society, and denounces the hypocrisy of the religious leaders who not only fail in their duty as shepherds, but are also often a tool in the hands of the kings for the maintenance of unjust structures. The God of the prophets is a God who provides food for the poor widow of Zeraphtah, and who removes the shame of leprosy from Naaman the Syrian army commander (1 Kings 17; 2 Kings 5).

The God of the Virgin Mary, of John the Baptist and of Simon Peter, is one who in Jesus Christ takes flesh and lives among his people. In the eyes of the Virgin Mary,

He has shown strength with his arm, He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly; He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich empty away... (Luke 1:51-55)
In John the Baptist the Lord confronts the powerful but corrupt Herod who unjustly takes his brother Philip's wife. He confronts the soldiers, the tax collectors, and religious bigots who cheat, defraud and intimidate the people (See Matthew 3)

In Jesus Christ God comes:

... to preach the good news to the poor
... to proclaim release to captives
and recovery of sight to the blind
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord ...(Luke 4:18)

In Jesus Christ, God comes that his people might have life, and have it to the full (John 10:10). For the sick, he brings comfort by performing miracles of healing; for the possessed or demonized he brings freedom by performing exorcism; for the hungry he brings satisfaction by multiplying loaves and fish; and for the oppressed and marginalized in society he brings relief by challenging the power structures that perpetuate the injustices against them. He does not rationalise their material or physical condition, nor does he encourage blind resignation to their suffering. He does not abandon them to their plight, nor does he simply prepare them for heaven. Rather, in each case, he does something concrete to alleviate the pains of those who suffer, while promising full and definitive victory in the Kingdom of God. He gives the poor, oppressed and marginalized people of today reason to hope, when he tells them:

Blessed are you that hunger now for you shall be satisfied.
Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh...
But woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation.
Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger.
Woe to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep ...
...(Luke 6:2026)

In Jesus Christ, God demonstrates a special love for, and affinity with the poor, the lowly, the stranger, and the sick. He goes as far as
to say that our admission into the Kingdom of God depends on how we treat these classes of people, for what we do to them, we do to him:

Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me...." "Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Matthew 25:31-45)

4. "The Word Became Flesh": Theology As Incarnate "God-Talk"

The foregoing survey sought to demonstrate that biblical theology is neither abstract nor esoteric. It is a thoroughly incarnate "God-talk." The Patriarchs, Prophets, and the New Testament Evangelists and Writers engaged in theology as a lived experience, not the preoccupation of an arm-chair theorist. Some of the most theologically profound writings in the Scriptures emerged in an attempt to communicate to others the experience of God breaking into human history, at a particular time, and among a particular people, rather than a conscious attempt to apply philosophical systems to explain a certain "deposit of faith."

The central message of the Gospel of John, and indeed of the entire Christian Scriptures, that, "The Word Became Flesh And Dwelt Among Us" (John 1:1-18) is not to be understood as a metaphor. It is a real historical experience. The implication of the Incarnation therefore is that the timeless God relates in history with a particular people, and assumes or takes into serious consideration their conceptual frameworks, their linguistic categories, and their general socio-political and cultural matrix, which now become the locus of divine discourse. This is so because God's visitation of humankind can only find expression in human form, culture and
language, for God meets people where they are. Since the mystery of God itself remains inexpressible, theology must be about people, their faith, and the experiences and ideas they have of God and the world.\(^5\)

Thus, the revelation of God's power and might, the message of God's holiness and justice, the truth about God's mercy and goodness, and the mystery of God's love and compassion, are to find expression not only in human language and the linguistic categories of a particular people, but also these truths must find expression within a certain sociological context. The truths are bound to mean different things to different people, in accordance to, or in consonance with the particular age, historical experience, and the socio-political and economic state or circumstances of the bearers and recipients. The truth about God's holiness and justice, cannot provoke the same feelings in the slave and the slave driver at the same time, just as the truth about God's love and compassion cannot evince the same reaction in the oppressor and the oppressed at the same time. We find this position illustrated in the reaction of different categories of people to the person and message of the prophets of old, and of Jesus Christ.\(^6\)

What constitutes theological discourse is a "God-talk" whose formulation and expression are always historically contingent. The particular historical, sociological, political and economic circumstances of a people are a necessary mediating context for the people's theology. Only a dis-incarnate theology would attempt a "God-talk" among people of diverse socio-cultural contexts using the same linguistic and philosophical categories. Yet the whole system is understood by some as universal theology. But from the foregoing discussion, we dare say that the notion of a universal theology runs counter to the logic of the Incarnation. When the Word took flesh, it did not become a universal human person. It assumed the flesh of a particular person, who lived in a particular place at a particular time. This Word that became human not only spoke the language of the particular people among whom He took flesh, but he also used the historical experience, the world view and the culture of those people as the medium of his divine discourse.
Theology therefore fails to fulfil itself as "faith seeking understanding," when the faith-response of a particular people in a particular milieu is imposed on others living at different times, and under different circumstances. It is from this point of view that serious questions may be raised about what many orthodox catholic theologians call "Universal Catholic Theology." Much of what we study and teach in our Theological Institutes and Seminaries today are truths about God developed within the socio-cultural context of post-Enlightenment Europe, and mediated by the categories of Neo-Thomism. The particular "God-talk" which satisfied the ultimate yearnings of post-Enlightenment Europe may not satisfy the ultimate yearnings of post-Colonial Africa, because the cultural matrix of the one is different from the other.

While God is the same for all times and places, neither post-Enlightenment Europe nor Neo-Thomism, has such a claim to universality. Yet theology loses its quality as "God-talk by humans" if it is not mediated by human language. Much of what we teach in our Seminaries and Institutes as theology may be the outcome of the faith experience of a particular people that lived at a particular time, but it may not represent the African's contemporary faith experience. Indeed, much of what constitute the text of the theological discourse in our Seminaries and Institutes today may be answers to specific questions a particular people raised at a particular time, but questions which today's Nigerian believers may not be asking. As I have written elsewhere,

...some of the contents of the theological knowledge imparted in Africa are irrelevant for the African context. A lot of the doctrines and pastoral programmes of missionary Christianity are answers to questions that are not being asked by African Christians of the twentieth century, but they are answers to questions asked by generation after generation of European Christians. Meanwhile, the Africans have their own questions, such as those about the place of ancestors, the phenomenon of spirit possession, the menace of evil spirits especially in the form of
witchcraft, which are hardly ever addressed in theological discourse.

Our people have questions concerning what to do with fruitless marriages, or when exactly marriage assumes the status of indissolubility. They have questions about mandatory celibacy for the ministerial priesthood. And in the context of the mass impoverishment and marginalization of the African peoples under despotic and repressive post-colonial regimes, our people are raising serious questions about God's goodness and his justice, and what Christian salvation consists in. They are asking seriously whether the promises of Christ for freedom, liberation, and salvation are just a matter of a pie in the sky, or whether there are existential dimensions to these promises that can improve their circumstances here below.

These fundamental questions of the contemporary African believer receive very little attention in the curriculum of our Theological Institutes. Every year we produce graduates of Theology who are expected to minister to the profound needs and aspirations of the African believer. We now have hundreds of "PhD" holders in Dogmatic Theology, in Biblical Theology, in Moral Theology, in Pastoral Theology and in Spiritual Theology. Yet after years of training in Philosophy and Theology, many Catholic Pastors who are also Theologians are rendered redundant in their parishes and chaplaincies while the unlettered village medium, oracle woman/man and priest-healer perform the real task of "feeding the sheep" and "tending the flock." Now, if the Theology we are studying and teaching is, as it were, "scratching where our people are not itching"; if, in other words, we are doing a theology that is not inculcitated or contextualized, then we may ask: whose interest is such a theology serving?

Bernard Lonergan says that theology consists in conscious reflection upon the message of the gospel in a specific situation, in terms of history and the human spirit. He says that "theology mediates between a cultural matrix and the role of religion in that matrix." Indeed antecedent to every theology is a locus and an orientation. In a complex world such as ours, in a world of plural
cultures and a diversity of contexts, the idea of a universal theology hardly makes sense.

Theology should be a reflection of the truths of God within the context of the faith experience of a people. It is supposed to be genuinely and truly an ecclesial enterprise. It is not the exclusive preserve of theologians. It does not belong to professional theologians. Theology is supposed to belong to the people of God, or the community of faith. But over time, we seem to have hijacked this divine discourse, this "thinking about God," this "thinking about life in the light of the gospel of Christ," away from the people, and constituted it into a specialised science, available only to a few egg-heads. We seem to have quarantined the language of divine discourse which belongs to all believers to the library or lecture hall where only "experts" are admitted. In this way we seem to have alienated the vast majority of our people from that holy preoccupation by which their-experience of God in history and the work of God in their midst, is interpreted and expressed. In this way we have robbed theology of its dynamism, and consigned it to a safe but irrelevant pigeon-hole. But theological language needs to be liberated from its bondage to "elitism" on the one hand, and "Eurocentrism" on the other. The locus of christian theological endeavour must be shifted from the academy to the church-community where it truly belongs. Otherwise christian theology will come to be seen as another instrument of alienation, rather than the vehicle of salvation which it is meant to be.

5. Theology as Prophetic Ministry within the Church

Theology as divine discourse is not meant to be an intellectual pastime. Rather it is a religious enterprise that has practical repercussions for society. The Church's theological enterprise therefore should in itself be an agent for the transformation of the human society. When liberated from its bondage to elitism, theology can be adequately utilised for the realisation of the prophetic ministry of the church. When liberated from its captivity to the world view of post-Enlightenment Europe (with its tendency to rationalise everything), theology can once again become a veritable
instrument for the emancipation of the people of God not only from spiritual bondage, but also from all the forces that subjugate them on the social, economic, political, and intellectual levels. This is what theology was for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This is what constituted divine discourse for the children of Israel under Moses and Aaron. This is what "God-talk" meant for the prophets who knew God closely. And this is part of the logic of the Incarnation.

Prophets are the visionaries of their time. When all others are blind, prophets are the ones granted to see the handwriting on the wall, to interpret the signs of the times, and to see the light beyond the tunnel. Prophets analyse the situation on the ground in the light of God's wisdom and commandments. They possess the vision of the life as it ought to be, and with this vision they can give the much needed hope to a suffering people. Prophets speak for God under different circumstances. They are endowed with rare courage not only to denounce evil in general, but also to name the specific human agents of evil in society. They remind society that our God is a God of justice, and warn evil doers of the inevitability of nemesis. They tell the poor and oppressed or the victim of injustice not to despair, because God is capable of intervening and turning things around. Prophets give reason for the poor to hope. They assure "the remnant of Yahweh" that all is not lost. The poor on the other hand see prophets as those who formulate their desperate cry into a divine discourse, which will soon win for them freedom and liberation.8

Theology must assume this prophetic role for and on behalf of the suffering people of God in Nigeria. Our people are traditionally a very religious people. They often turn to God at times of crisis, disaster or epidemic, and seek His intervention. They often look up to the ministers of God - the priests, the mediums, and the chief custodians of their religious beliefs, for explanation or interpretation of what is happening to them, and through the agents of God, they seek for liberation from the spiritual and material forces that oppress them. The distressed and traumatised people of Nigeria today are looking up to Christian theology for answers to the many pressing questions of their hearts. The dire circumstances of today challenge the Nigerian Theologian to let his "God-talk" take flesh in the lives
of our people. The situation on the ground call for what some writers describe as "incarnational discipleship" on the part of the theologians - a discipleship whose passion for justice, equity, well-being, liberation and salvation, will provoke not only powerful statements, but also concrete prophetic action towards realising the liberation of the oppressed, the conversion of the oppressor, the empowerment of the poor, the practice of authentic religion, and ultimately, the salvation of all.9

6. The Church - Called to be a "Wounded Healer"

Like Jesus Christ, the Church is called upon to carry out its prophetic ministry in the world as a wounded healer. The kind of power which Jesus Christ exercised is the kind which shines through weakness. It is the power of the beatitudes, the power of the cross. It is the power rooted in love, compassion, forgiveness and vulnerability. However, since the era of Constantine when the Christian religion became legal in Europe, the Church has had the constant temptation of assuming worldly power and privilege, and it has very often fallen into this temptation. Whenever this happens the Church misses its chance of witness to the true power of Christ. When this happens, the Church loses its real power, and often its real people. Rather than transforming the existing order of the domination of the weak by the powerful, the Church has often adapted itself to the order, and provided a sacred ideology that sustains the status-quo. Harvey Cox notes that when the leaders of the empire joined the church, rather than a "christianization of paganism", what sometimes took place was a "paganisation of Christianity." He says that the Church took up the empire's institutions, its laws, its bureaucratic centralisation, its ranks, and its titles.10

In circumstances of grave injustice, especially that of a gargantuan disparity of privilege for a tiny class and misery for the vast majority, we cannot be effective instruments for the liberation of the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized when we operate from posture of power. Where social injustice is prevalent, Jesus associates with the poor, the weak, the lowly, the marginalized, and
the abandoned. The Church will not be faithful to Jesus Christ its head when it allies itself with material (political) power. The pursuit of material power (Latin "potestas" - power of domination, wealth and privilege), robs the Church of its real power (Greek "exousia" - spiritual and moral authority, the type Jesus Christ exercised). "Potestas" - the power of domination, wealth and privilege, is a cancer in the Body of Christ, the Church. The logic of material power is malignant. It cripples the Church's mission. It divides the ruler from the ruled. It imposes a gulf between the clergy (in whose hands "power" is vested), and the ordinary laity (who are passive objects of the power the clergy exercises. In this way "potestas" squeezes out the charismatic essence of the Church in which everyone has a gift to offer. Cox believes that worldly wealth and privilege, especially when it seeps into the church is not only unjust but also rots the fibre of those who hold it, thus depriving them of the joy of salvation.

To be truly prophetic, an alternative vision of the Church, which is not rooted in power, wealth and privilege is needed. There is need for conversion in the self-perception of the institutional Church in many parts of the world including Nigeria. Bishops, priests, nuns, and theologians, need to abandon the perception of Church in terms of power and privilege, and begin to assume their posture of weakness and vulnerability through sharing the life of the powerless Christians in the slums and shanty towns, the detention cells and prisons, the factories and plantations, the dirty neighbourhoods and crime-ridden alley, where people live, suffer and die. When this happens they will begin to see the work of God with new eyes, and hear the gospel of Christ with new ears. The Nigerian theologian must initiate a process of "de-clericalization" of the Church in such a way that the entire "people of God" in our land (who are largely abused, oppressed and marginalized today) may blossom within the context of their particular faith experience in the light of the gospel. When the theologian does his divine discourse from this "locus", a new orientation would emerge. Leonardo Boff says that
Christianity will surely find its roots when it takes its position on the margin and creates its theory and practice from that margin. After all, Jesus, the apostles and the first Christians lived on the margin of the powerful society of their time. The gospel as good news is heard with all its impact only by those who are (actually or by option) on the margin of society. There that gospel rings forth as liberation for the oppressed, justice for the impoverished, and a political voice for the marginalized.  

Westmoreland-White and companions put it this way:

We need incarnational solidarity with the poor and others who are discriminated against, those who suffer, those who are different from us. They teach us about where our securities are and reveal the deeper dimensions of our calling. Without such ongoing contact we lose this essential vision.  

7. Theological Training as Education for the Promotion of Integral Human Development

The Lord Jesus Christ says that he has come so that human beings may have life and have it to the full (Matthew 10:10). He says he has been anointed to proclaim release to captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and to set at liberty those who are oppressed (Luke 4:18). He says he is the light of the world, and anyone who follows him will never walk in darkness (John 8:12). He says he is the way, the truth and the life, and that no one comes to the Father except through him (John 14:6). He tells all those who labour and are overburdened to come and he will give them rest (Matthew 11:28). He assures his followers that when the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed (John 8:36). He teaches the way of the Kingdom of God, he cures the sick, he liberates the demonized, he feeds the hungry, he forgives sinners, and promises eternal life to those who follow him faithfully. So Jesus is the way to integral (human)
development. The salvation which he offers is all-embracing: he forgives sins, feeds the hungry, he cures the sick, he opens the eyes of the blind, he teaches the ignorant, he challenges the sinful structures in society that push some people into sub-human existence, he gives freedom to captives, and he bestows eternal life to all who come to him.

Theological training should therefore be seen as education for the promotion of life in abundance. It is to be seen as education for the promotion of human development in its most comprehensive and elevated form. Theological training should promote freedom from all forms of bondage and captivity on the spiritual, social, economic, political, and intellectual levels. What makes the Christian message Good News is that Christ makes possible abundant life here and now, and eternal life in the hereafter. With the coming of Jesus Christ, the kingdom of God has been inaugurated. Its final fulfilment is at the end of time. But for now the agents of the kingdom, including Catholic Theologians must be passionately involved in the promotion of the values of the kingdom, including love, forgiveness, justice, freedom from all the forces that hold human beings captive. Theological training for ministers and agents of evangelization should therefore include the dynamics of social transformation, including education in social analysis, education in fundamental human rights, education for justice and peace, education in the techniques of mass conscientization, and education in the methods of empowering the poor, the weak, and the marginalized. In this way theology shall become a veritable instrument for the realisation of integral human development.

Our Seminaries and Theological Institutes must not be perceived as centres for indoctrination. Nor should the training of future ministers be perceived as the taming process to facilitate the assimilation of the oppressed into the prevailing system. On the contrary, these institutions should be seen as centres for the practice of freedom, liberation and salvation. They should be seen as centres of hope that keep the dream of freedom alive, even as we journey through the valley of tears. In this way the theological enterprise shall assume the status of a sacrament, a saving act, for the people.
Nigeria today perishes for lack of knowledge. There is an absence of intellectual rigour and critical thinking even in academic circles. What appears to be in place is the cult of mediocrity, whereby professors of political science for whom democracy is an article of faith, legal luminaries who hold the title of "Senior Advocate of Nigeria," and who have sworn to defend the rule of law, and highly respected religious prelates, who are expected to hold truth as sacred, now bow before ruthless feudal lords and callous military despots. Many of those whom Nigerians look up to for a sense of direction, have become sycophants, praise singers and propagandists for the oppressors of the Nigerian people. Their action is a serious betrayal of their education and the mission they owe to succeeding generations of Nigerians.

In the face of this national embarrassment, Nigeria is in dire need of theologians who are visionaries, to liberate people from bondage, and open the way for justice, peace, and the abundant life which the Lord promises his people. Our people have never in history witnessed this degree of impoverishment, oppression, enslavement and betrayal. This is why we need theologians, endowed with the wisdom that comes from God, equipped with the vision that comes from Jesus Christ the Light of the world, and moved by the passion that comes from the Holy Spirit, to make a powerful intervention in God's name now on behalf of the distressed people of our land. We need patriotic but fearless theologians who will demonstrate to the men and women of this land that:

A true patriot is one who cares deeply about the happiness and well-being of his country and all its people; not one who says he loves his country... A true patriot will always demand the highest standards of his country and accept nothing but the best for and from his people. He will be outspoken in condemnation of their shortcomings without giving way to superiority, despair or cynicism.
8. Conclusion: What must we do?

What the above reflections mean for the leadership of the Church at various levels, and for theologians, is a more ardent appreciation of the prophetic ministry of the Church amidst an oppressed and distressed people. The situation on the ground presents a great moral challenge to the Church - that of keeping hope alive among our people. Our people have heard many fine statements from the Church. They have heard the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council proclaim that "the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the men of our time, especially those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well." They heard the Fathers of the 1971 Synod say: "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appears to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the gospel..." They have heard many powerful statements from Pope John Paul II on global justice, on the fundamental rights of the human person, and on solidarity. The latest of these statements is the encyclical letter "Evangelium Vitae" issued in March 1995.

The Nigerian Bishops themselves have issued several powerful statements in the last few years in defence of truth and for the promotion of justice in our land. They include "The Theologian And the Challenge Of the Third Republic," April 1992; "A Nation Adrift," July 1993; and the communiqués of the Bishops' Conference of September 1993, September 1994, and March 1995. These powerful statements however need to take flesh in the life and work of the Nigerian theologian. They need to be accompanied by prophetic gestures, inspired by theological reflections that are pregnant with the promise of freedom, justice, liberation, peace and reconciliation. What our people need today are prophetic gestures, emanating from theological reflections, that will break the yoke of oppression while offering a healing balm to the deep wounds of our people.

Our theologians must now get to work, and as a matter of utmost urgency, formulate a methodology for "incarnational discipleship," by which the truths and mysteries of the Christian faith, along with
the powerful statements of the Magisterium, will take flesh for the liberation and salvation of the oppressed masses of contemporary Nigeria. When David took Uriah's wife, and had him killed at war, (an act of grave injustice), the prophet Nathan confronted him with the truth and told him to his face "you are the man." When King Ahab killed Naboth and confiscated his vineyard, Elijah confronted him with the truth and said "I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do what is evil in the sight of the Lord" (1 Kings 21:20). John the Baptist did the same when Herod took Philip's wife unjustly. These were acts of non-violent confrontation undertaken by men of God who were acting by the inspiration of God. Beyond the powerful statements we issue now and again in denunciation of injustice and the abuse of human rights, what specific acts can we engage in as Christians in confrontation with the agents of evil in our society? If it is true that evil persists in the world and in our country because good people refuse to act, then, what is permissible for a Christian in her/his bid to resist evil in the Nigerian society?

We know that violence is out of the question for a Christian. Any resort to violence in the bid to overcome evil is in itself already tinted with evil. But the world has seen many forms of peaceful resistance that are efficacious. We know of peaceful demonstrations and protest marches by which a group of people that has been denied its rights, along with sympathisers, make a public outcry against the authorities on the streets, flashing protest placards and singing protest songs. This method was used very much by the oppressed Blacks of the United States under the dynamic leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who was a Baptist minister. It proved to be a very effective method too in apartheid South Africa under the leadership of people like Bishop Desmond Tutu. In the heat of the crisis over the annulment of the June 12 election, some of the civil rights organisations in Nigeria attempted to use this method to bring an end to military rule, but they never recorded the desired success, largely because the call for such protest marches did not receive a nation-wide response. What can the Christian theologian do to give religious legitimacy or moral authority, and, indeed, popularise this method of civil resistance? In Nigeria, the government of the day seems to know how efficacious peaceful
demonstrations and protest marches are, and that is why at various levels the officials now rent crowds to march out along the streets and into government houses, with pro-government posters and placards. In this way the authorities have hijacked one of the few avenues for protest available to oppressed people. Shall the good people of this country sit back and watch this fraudulent display by the agents of evil? What can the Church do to retrieve this method from government and give it back to the masses?

Conscientious objection, hunger strike and workers' strikes are recognised in Catholic Social Teachings since the era of Leo XIII as legitimate means of resisting unjust laws or protesting an injustice done to a group within the society. In what ways can the theologian develop and make widely known these methods of civil resistance for use by Christians, in addition to prayer and fasting, towards bringing about change in society? These methods were used very much in pre-independence India under the inspiring leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Has the time not come in our country for the leadership of the Church to promote these methods among the faithful nation-wide, as part of the ways of bringing about social change?

Chief Gani Fawehinmi is a foremost defender of civil rights in our society. He has been harassed, assaulted and detained several times for his protest activities. As a lawyer, he institutes several charges in court against the government wherever he comes across cases of gross violation of human rights. In recent times he launched a political party which he called "National Conscience," in defiance of a government which had rolled out a decree banning political parties. His action was an act of civil disobedience against an unjust regime. Of course he immediately lost his freedom. He was detained by government agents. But he has made a point. Today if Chief Fawehinmin stands up to talk, Nigerians will listen, because they know he fights and suffers on their behalf. Will the leadership of the Church sit back and have a Muslim become the conscience of the nation? Shall Christian theologians sit and watch, while a Muslim champions the movement of national conscience. What about forming a strong 'Catholic Lawyers' Association of Nigeria', fully sponsored by the Church to constantly challenge unjust
regimes and their laws in the nation's courts? What specific contributions can priests and religious women and men who are lawyers make under the present circumstances of Nigeria?

The Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria has a Justice and Peace department. All the dioceses are supposed to have Justice and Peace co-ordinators. There are Justice and Peace Commissions and Committees on national, provincial, diocesan and even parish levels. Beyond the mere distribution of financial aid from such agencies as Missio, Misereor, and Caritas, in what ways are those in this department involved in the struggle for justice in Nigeria? It is true that in many dioceses the co-ordinators have succeeded in doing a lot of developmental projects for their people, but should they not also be engaged in the struggle to rid Nigeria of the evil structures in our society that have made the majority of our people so poor, so ignorant, so vulnerable and so dependent?

As the Catholic Theological Association of Nigeria marks its tenth anniversary this year, the task before the Association, and before each member is enormous, because it is the theological arm of the Church that must supply answers to most of the above questions. After ten years of existence and at least four major conferences dealing with social issues, if CATHAN has not made much impact on the socio-economic and political environment, then perhaps it is time to examine our orientation, change our focus, plan new strategies, draw out new plans of action, and formulate new methodologies for the Church's involvement in the social transformation of Nigeria. Indeed the challenges are many, but with God on our side, all things are possible.

ENDNOTES

0. A Paper delivered at the 10th Anniversary Conference Of the Catholic Theological Association of Nigeria (CATHAN), SIST, Enugu,
April 18 to 21, 1995


4. See the story of Naboth's vineyard in I Kings 21.


6. Compare the reactions of Herod and the Three Wise Men, the Pharisees and sinners like Mary Magdalene or the woman caught in adultery, Pilate and the women of Jerusalem.


11. Harvey Cox, op.cit., p. 47.


15. Vatican II, Gaudium Et Spes, 1.

BOOK REVIEW


Incredible and chilling story! A horror trip! This is the feeling one gets from reading *Above the Law*. And yet it is an account of what is happening in the Police Stations of Lagos. It reflects what happens in most police cells in Nigeria. The horror stories recounted take place within the precincts of that agency whose primary task is the defence and protection of the life of Nigerian citizens. From the account of Chukwuma, the Nigerian police turn their guns and their instruments of torture on innocent citizens or on those awaiting trial who have not been proven guilty. Some of these they maim, physically and psychologically, for life; some others they simply kill.

What one reads in *Above the Law* compares well with the accounts of the golgotha which African slaves passed through in the Americas. The Lagos police routinely torture detainees by letting them hang in the air for hours, shooting them in the limbs, or simply by attacking any part of their body with glowing cigarette ends. Our law enforcement agents may inflict pain by inserting broom sticks or pins into male genitals and bottle necks into female genitals. They beat detainees with horsewhips or with live electric cables and batons; they administer electric shocks, perform mock executions, remove finger nails and cuticles with pliers, and deny food and medical attention to detained Nigerians in order to get confessional statements from them. According to Chukwuma:

As you are reading this report, some detainees in Lagos Police Stations are crying out in pains and anguish as their bodies are being severely lacerated with horse whips and electric cables. Their eyes and anus are probably being shot at with canisters of irritant gas. Not a few others are hung in the air for hours with the aid of ropes tied to ceiling fan hooks. This is usually done in the police torture chambers with the torturers shooting indiscriminately at the walls and threatening to kill the suspects if they don't "confess". The resistance of many is weakened by "shock batons" and chairs which are periodically plugged to electricity thereby compelling victims to sign or write "Confessionals"...torture is usually inflicted at the early stage of detention when suspects are required to make statements. (P. 54)

Slaves are understandably human beasts of burden. But Chukwuma is recounting lived experiences of Nigerian citizens who may or may not be guilty of the crimes for which they are detained. They have a right to legal advice,
which they normally do not get; they have a right to a fair trial, but more often than not they are not charged to court for months and even years. Those who are bailed or released have to bribe the police. The detention rooms in Lagos and other Nigerian police stations are simply hell on earth. The congestion is better seen than described. More than twelve suspects may be routinely locked up in a room that is supposed to accommodate four bed spaces. A detainee at the Federal Intelligence and Investigation Bureau, Alagbon (the premier police station in Nigeria), where twenty people may share a room space, told the CLO,

We don't sleep well. There is no room for that comfort! What we do is sit down in rows and open our laps so that others could sit in. If you must close your eyes for some minutes, you would rest your head on the shoulder of the person sitting in front of you. You would not even be allowed to stand up as you would be breathing down on other inmates. (P. 28).

Many die from torture, lack of medical care and congestion. The police dump them routinely at the Ikeja General Hospital. In Appendix I (pp. 131-153) Chukwuma gives a list of corpses of people suspected to have died under extra-judicial circumstances, which the Police in Lagos State deposited at the Ikeja General Hospital mortuary between January and September 1992. They number 423 corpses. The CLO accuses the Lagos State Police for being responsible for many of these deaths.

From the narration of Chukwuma and from an experience of police cells in Nigeria, it appears that the prison is a more secure and humane place than the police detention rooms. According to the account, the worst thing that may happen to a suspect is to be accused of armed robbery. One may even be framed by the police as armed robber. Many irresponsible killings by the police are simply reported as killings which happened at shoot-outs with armed robbers. But innocent citizens at detention rooms and check-points are routinely killed by our law enforcement agents and "protectors of our citizenry". The culprits are hardly brought to book; unless the victim happens to be an "important" person. The highest the police command may do to dismiss incessant complaints by aggrieved relatives is to order an "in-house probe". According to the CLO, the in-house probe is a euphemism for "cover-ups".

The aim of this book of horror is to create awareness among Nigerians and the world community about the inhumanity lived by Nigerian citizens. The cover and title page is arresting - it is the revolting colour picture of an amputee holding a freshly amputated leg to the eye of the camera. This book is written to remind Nigerians and her law enforcement agents of the gross devaluation of human life which the agents are paid to protect. It is to challenge ourselves to ensure that each and all have access to justice and human rights. In part two of the book, appendix iv to appendix vii, the author reproduces the relevant United
Nations code for law enforcement officers, the UN basic principles on the use of force and firearms by law enforcement agents, the UN declaration on the protection of all persons from torture..., and the UN principles on the effective prevention and investigation of extra-legal, arbitrary and summary execution. These indicate for all how the police and other law agents should comport themselves. Chukwuma sees a ray of hope in the declaration of a newly appointed Inspector General of Police, Alhaji Ibrahim Coomassie that he would address the weaknesses of the Police Force. But it is a hope that may be short-lived, for there appears to be no firm commitment to reform the police force and other law enforcement agencies.

_Above the Law_ is a book that should be read by all Nigerian citizens. It is a great contribution to our struggle to free our citizens from all manner of indignities and to create a society where the life of each and all is respected.

Elochukwu Uzukwu c.s.sp.
## PREVIOUS EDITIONS

**Vol. 2 No. 1 April 1989**

ISSN 0794-8670

**Church And Polities In Nigeria**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foreword</th>
<th>The Ecumenical Association of Nigerian Theologians (EANT)</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fr. E.E. Uzukwu</td>
<td>Church-State Relations in the Early Church and the Crisis facing the Christian Church in Nigeria</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. C.I. Ejizu</td>
<td>Ethics of Politics in Nigeria: the Christian perspective</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev. Canon S.I. Omoera</td>
<td>A Theology of Nigerian Politics</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishop J. Onaiyekan</td>
<td>State Secularity and the Nigerian Christian</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. A.O. Erhueh</td>
<td>The Contribution of Christianity to Politics in Nigeria: A. Historico-Theological overview</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Vol 2 No. 2 - Vol. 3 No. 1 Nov. '89 - Apr. '90**

ISSN 0794-8670

The Power Game: *'Kaduna Mafia' And The Church In Nigeria*

| Editorial: | | 4 |
| Dr. Bala J. Takaya | The Kaduna Mafia and the Church in Nigeria | 6 |
| Bishop J. Onaiyekan | Strategies for Islamic Expansion in Nigeria - A Christian Response: Notes and Reflections | 16 |
| Dr. Bala J. Takaya | The foundations of Religious Intolerance in Nigeria: Backgrounds for understanding the Maitatsine phenomenon | 31 |
| Ibrahim Musa Ahmadu | Peace and Stability in Nigeria. The Role of the Church | 44 |
| Rev. Dr. Obiora Ike | Church and Contemporary Nigerian Society (Social Teachings of the Church) | |
### Human Rights - The African Perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O.C. Eze</td>
<td>Nigeria and Human Rights - Prospects and Problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. Hurbon</td>
<td>The Slave Trade and Black Slavery in America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.I. Ejizu</td>
<td>Human Rights in African Indigenous Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.M. Ahmadu</td>
<td>The Rights of Christians in Islamic States of Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Muoneke</td>
<td>Women Discipleship and Evangelization (Luke 8:1-3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O.U. Kalu</td>
<td>The Protestants’ Protest for Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.Nkinda</td>
<td>The Particular Juridical Order of African Churches: Application of the Principle of Subsidiarity and Decentralization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.E. Uzukwu</td>
<td>Human Right in Africa - Contextual Theological Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.R.A. Ozigboh</td>
<td>The Definitive Rehabilitation of Bishop Shanahan: A Review Article</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Book Review**

  Reviewer: Peter Ik. Okonkwo, CMF

  Reviewer: Francis Njoku, CMF


Vol. 5/1 : 1993 ISSN 0794-8670

Structural Adjustment Programmes: An African Christian Response

Editorial..................................................1

J.M. Walioggo

The Role of Culture and Religion in Authentic Development of Africa.........................3

U. Simson

Should We Develop? And In What Direction?........23

Obiora Ike

Development in Africa: Cultural, Ethical Religious Considerations..........................32

J. Mihevc

The Theology of Structural Adjustment..................44

B. Ikegwuonu

Self-Reliance of Spiritan Young Provinces and Foundations in Developing Countries........61

M.H. Kukah

The Price of Faith: Money in the Economy of Salvation............................................72

Book Review


Vol. 5/2 : 1993
ISSN 0794-8670
Democratization Process In Africa (Multiethnicity And African Nation-States)

Nicoué K. Broohm Political Power, Multietnic Territories and Democratic Renewal in Africa

B. Abanuka African Traditional Communities and Multiethnic States

J. Okoro Ijoma Nigeria’s Path to Western Democracy 1900-1960: A Historical Perspective

C.U. Illegbune The Legitimation of Government in Africa

Reviews and Review Articles

1. For Sovereign National Conferences in Post-Colonial Africa.


Reviewer: Elochukwu E. Uzukwu


Reviewer: Iwuchukwu Oliver

Vol 6 No 1 : 1994
ISSN 0794-8670

Elochukwu Uzukwu A Servant Church in a New African Nation: Leadership as a Service of Listening

Cora Twohig-Moengangongo Paradigms of Power

Meinrad P. Hebga Universality in Theology and Inculturation

Emefie I. Metuh Two Decades of Religious Conflict in Nigeria: A Recipe for Peace

Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria: Communiqué

129
### Vol 6 No 1: 1994  ISSN 0794-8670
#### Power, Authority and Leadership: African and Christian

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elochukwu Uzukwu</td>
<td>A Servant Church in a New African Nation: Leadership as a Service of Listening</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cora Twohig-Moengangongo</td>
<td>Paradigms of Power</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meinrad P. Hebga</td>
<td>Universality in Theology and Inculturation</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emeftie I. Metuh</td>
<td>Two Decades of Religious Conflict in Nigeria: A Recipe for Peace</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria: Communique</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Vol 6 No 2: 1994  ISSN 0794-8670
#### The African Synod - Initial Results and Reflections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Onaiyekan</td>
<td>What We Saw and Heard At the African Synod</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tharcisse Tshibangu</td>
<td>The Special Synod For Africa and the Tasks of African Theology</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chukwuma J. Okoye</td>
<td>The Synod Challenges the Church in Africa</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amuluche Gregory Nnamani</td>
<td>The African Synod and the Model of Church-as-Family</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paulinus I. Odozor</td>
<td>Thoughts on an African Christian Theology of Marriage</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Editorial</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Francis Duniya</em>: The Zangon Kataf Crisis in Respect of Minority Culture in Northern Nigeria</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I.W. Orakwe</em>: The Prison and You: A Study in Diminishing Social Responsibility in Nigeria</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Prison Chaplains Communiqué</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Matthew Hassan Kukah</em>: Political Stability and the Leadership and the Inevitability of Instability</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Cecilia Ukamaka Asogwa</em>: Managing Stress Among Rural Poor in a Distressed Economy: DEC’s Experience</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>George Ehusani</em>: Theology at the Service of the People</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Review</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>