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FREEDOM IS MORE THAN A WORD

Towards A Theology of Empowerment

Obiora Ike

8

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CONTENTS

Foreward

Introduction

SECTION 1: DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

CHAPTER ONE:

Potentialities for Development in Traditional, Social and Economic Structures in West Africa..... 16

CHAPTER TWO:

Concrete Facts on Development Through Self-Reliance: Chances for Africa, The 'AFOS' Experience in Nigeria.35

CHAPTER THREE:

The Role of Non-Governmental Organisations in Agricultural Development.49

SECTION II: THE FACE OF THE CHURCH IN AFRICA

CHAPTER FOUR:

The Priest in the Modern World-Inadequacies in the Priestly Formation in the context of Nigeria..... 62

CHAPTER FIVE:

The Church and the Promotion of Human Values and Meaning in Africa.....80

CHAPTER SIX:

A Historical Overview of the Social Teaching of the Church, the underlying Theological Motivations and possibility for Application to the corresponding Social Problems of Africa in the light of the Apostolic Exhortation 'Ecclesia in Africa' ...94

CHAPTER SEVEN:

Jesus Christ: The Social Challenge..... 133

CHAPTER EIGHT:

Human Rights Education and action as service: a challenge to the Christian Churches.....156

SECTION: III BEYOND OUR CULTURES:

CHAPTER NINE:

The Plight of Widows (Cultural Practices vis - a - vis the Christian Worldview).....176

CHAPTER TEN:

The Religious Aspects of Improving the Status of Women and Widows.187

SECTION: IV: MERCY IN A MERCILESS SOCIETY:

CHAPTER ELEVEN:

Prisoners Standing in Need of Reconciliation. (Biblical and Theological perspectives).....202

CHAPTER TWELVE:

Theology of the cross - a Theological Investigation into the reality of the Cross in the Prison Environment..... 223

CHAPTER THIRTEEN:

Islam and Social Change in Africa (Approaches to and Perspectives of Social Transformation in Nigeria).....242

CHAPTER FOURTEEN:

Regionalism, Ethnic Conflicts and Democracy in Africa.....264

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The Mission of Social Work.....269

FOREWORD

Entering the Catholic Institute for Development, Justice and Peace -CIDJAP in Enugu, Nigeria, one is welcomed by the words:

I have come that they may have life
and have it to the full. (John 10:10).

This is the inscription in the beautifully designed terrazzo floor at the entrance to the building. It is the *raison d'être* for the life and work of Fr Obiora Ike, the author of this book. It expresses his life's mission to the struggling people of Nigeria.

In 1986 when he returned from doctorate studies in Europe, he brought with him a deep commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to the Catholic Social Teachings of the Church, and to his own culture. He started in earnest that year by establishing the Catholic Institute for Development, Justice and Peace and in the past ten years this has grown from strength to strength. It is the focal point of many of the justice and peace and human rights activities in Nigeria today. It is also from here that the works and writings of these international lectures emerge. He is deeply involved at grassroots level, whether it be in the prison, the hospital, the law courts, on the farm, in the classroom or the Church; whenever there are issues of human rights and justice to be addressed.

I do not intend to comment on the individual lectures on the wide range of topics presented in this book. I believe that is not necessary - they speak for themselves. What I would like to do is to introduce the man behind the writings, who has been an inspiration to me for many years. Fr Obiora, whose name very appropriately means 'the heart of all the people', is a deep thinker, philosopher, theologian, animator, inspirer and leader of God's people. He is a man who is utterly selfless and humble, with integrity and wisdom beyond his years.

You will observe from his writings that he is completely in touch with the reality of all these issues of justice and peace. He is very

versatile and widely travelled, widely read and well informed of issues globally and locally. His life is truly Christian, being animated with zeal, to bring the fullness of life to the people, especially the poor and oppressed.

One will be aware in reading this book that life in the Spirit and action are one for the author. We live in a time of Spirit-filled opportunities, a Kairos moment, like that of the early Christians called to a deep level of faith. We live in a time of great change, of great opportunities, of great imbalance. We are called to make courageous decisions, to speak out boldly in our world of injustice, discrimination, oppression, corruption, wars and exploitation. In these lectures we meet someone who identifies himself with Isaiah where he says: 'He sent me to give the Good News to the poor.' (Isaiah.61:1). What is also needed in our present Kairos moment is one who is conversant with the present moment, with the practical side of human life, with all that is going on in the secular world, the world of politics, of economic development and of new technologies. Pope John Paul II reminds us of this in *Christifideles Laici* when he says that, in this way you bear witness to the new world in Jesus Christ by taking part in social, economic and political activities.

To be truly effective, one's practical involvement must be supported by knowledge, by reading and by study. The Catholic social teachings reflect this often, but particularly in *Pacem in Terris*: To permeate a culture with healthy principles and to breathe life into it in the spirit of the Gospel, it is not sufficient to be illuminated by faith and inspired by the will to do good. It is necessary to have a great deal of knowledge, technical skill and vocational experience, to respect the laws and standards of all worldly things, to commit oneself in society's institutions, and vigorously to influence them from within as well as to subordinate one's actions to the moral law.

Fr Obiora Ike has certainly accepted this challenge, and through his writing and lecturing on the international scene is providing a much needed contribution in the field of awareness of human rights and

justice and peace issues from the African continent. He is doing the people of the First World a great service by sharing this knowledge of his own people and bringing to one's awareness their present plight. His capacity for presenting stimulating lectures grows annually, so that you enjoy the challenges presented in this volume. I am quite sure that in years to come he will be producing many more thought-provoking lectures in this field. May this be the first of many volumes which motivate us to bring the fullness of life to the people of our planet.

Sr. Josephine Mary Threlfall, SND
Former Coordinator, Women's Programmes
Catholic Diocese of Enugu
Nigeria.

Introduction

The awesome problem of social injustice, particularly in what are termed the underdeveloped nations of the world, challenges the conscience of the human family today more so perhaps than at any other period. The untold suffering everywhere visible in the world is tangible evidence of the lamentable consequences of such a situation. But with the modern period another cancerous disease, more menacing still because it is even more devastating, made its appearance and, paradoxically enough, its first inroads have been made among these nations which are thought to be the most 'civilized'. The disease of which we speak involves the interior disintegration of man himself. The most outstanding thinkers of our day, those at any rate who still believe in the primacy of the spirit over matter, are united by their common concern, and even the human family itself is beginning to take cognizance of the danger.

Due to its incredible technological advances, the modern world now provides a radically altered setting for the human drama. Proud of his conquests and his newly won power over nature, modern man seems each day to make further advances in his subjugation of the forces of nature. However, as man's mastery over nature accelerates by virtue of his expanding scientific and technological knowledge, his mastery over the interior universe of his own personality diminishes. As he penetrates deeper into the worlds revealed by his microscopes and his telescopes, he becomes increasingly unintelligible to himself. In his determination to subject the whole cosmos to his own will man has rendered himself incapable of directing his own life. Because modern man has been set free from the tyranny of nature by his power to control its forces, we would expect him to have consecrated himself more unreservedly to the things of the spirit; however, like a caged animal, nature has turned its supposed master, making him its slave and at the same time subjecting the spirit to its own whims.

When man forsakes the spirit, he loses all else in its wake. Man is no longer deserving of the name, for a truly human life always implies the primacy of spirit over the world of matter. It is the spirit which enables man to plan and accomplish the subjection of nature, and the cities arising majestically from our hills and plains, together with the machinery pouring out of our factories, bear eloquent witness to man's spiritual prowess. Sculpture, music, art, and literature are all monuments to the human spirit's capacity to engender the beautiful. Love is possible only where spirit is to be found, whether this love embraces but two persons, a whole community, or even the whole of the human family. But when the values of the spirit are menaced, the whole human personality is endangered, for man's desires, machines, cities, and world, turn against him with a vengeance, determined to crush him beneath their accumulated weight. Thus man sees his vaunted power over nature slip from his hands once again, for he has ceased to be a human person. Today we find ourselves confronted with the gigantic task of undoing or rather of re-doing what has already been done.

Even a mere nodding acquaintance with history shows us that one proud civilization after another has seen its star fortune wane and finally disappear. If we look back down the long and tortuous road of human history we will find that very few of these civilizations fell beneath the blows of an invading conqueror; by far the majority acted as their own executioners, gradually rotting from inside and finally collapsing. We take great pride in the Western tradition and in Western civilization, and in order to preserve our Western civilization, and in order to preserve our Western heritage we were willing to take part in the wholesale slaughter of millions and in the infliction of untold suffering upon many millions more. In order to preserve this heritage the great nations of the world have armed themselves, stockpiling weapons capable of annihilating whose continents.

Unquestionably our civilization stands at a critical juncture in human history, but the enemy is threatening to erupt from within the human heart rather than from outside our national boundaries. The disease is already at work within, inexorably accomplishing its work of destruction. And the modern world becomes its enthusiastic accomplice when it holds out to human spirit the lure of a self-sufficient autonomy.

Having sown the wind we are now reaping the whirl-wind. If we would gauge the extent of our own moral failure we need only look to the increase in juvenile delinquency, which is reaching such proportions in some 'developed' countries that it is becoming a veritable scourge. The increase incidence of mental illness and emotional disorders offers us a further indication of the tragic situation in which modern man finds himself; primitives in many areas have need of doctors for their bodies, but the civilized have need of an ever larger army of psychoanalysts, psychotherapists, and psychiatrists in order to safeguard their mental balance. Perhaps in the not-too-distant future man will set foot on neighbouring planets.

But what will be the interior state of this man? The whole of the human family must give ear to the solemn and still contemporaneous warning of Jesus Christ: 'What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his immortal soul?'

Let me hasten to add, however, that we not only do not have the right to bridle the staggering progress made in modern times, but we have an urgent obligation to work at this task rather than run from it. Let us not forget, however that we will have laboured in vain if we do not at the same time strive to make man aware that he possesses an immortal spirit. We have to remake man so that the universe may be remade through him, in conformity with a pattern of order and love.

As our opportunities for a fuller life and greater enjoyment multiply, it becomes all the more imperative that we understand that these are only means to a higher end. We stand in need of a new spiritual strength if we are not to become their slaves. We have need of a more profound love if we are to avoid monopolizing these things for ourselves to the exclusion of our brothers. It is a simple fact of experience in the modern world that the greater the complexity the more urgent the need for technical know-how, and hence as the world grows in complexity we stand in need of a profounder life of the spirit if we are to build a stable world. If man and the universe in which he loves are to attain their fulfilment, it will not be sufficient any longer simply to help man rediscover his soul, it is essential that he be offered that 'soul-supplement' for which Bergson was already calling at the turn of the century.

But let us go still further. If the human spirit is today reeling under the blow dealt it by the world of technology, it is precisely because man has forgotten, ignored, or denied his God. Man's freedom can choose on or two poles: either he can attach himself to God by detaching himself from the material, or else he can attach himself to the material by detaching himself from God. No man can serve two masters. In short, if man is presently in critical condition, it is because he has opted for self and the material over and against God and the spiritual.

The world holds a fatal fascination for modern man. Man's productivity is constantly on the increase, and yet in his continual dissatisfaction he devours what he has made without ever attaining fulfilment. He is trapped in a vicious circle in which his needs increase more rapidly than his power to produce novelties to satisfy them. Attempting to reap the fruits of his material progress, he finds himself kneeling before these idols which he has created and which are the new gods of the modern world. Divided at the deepest level of his personality, condemned to continual struggle against his brothers, modern man grasps at every straw promising

material well-being and tries to cling to it for his own personal enjoyment.

In spite of his failure, modern man stand admiringly before the world in which he sees himself and his genius mirrored. Bedazzled by his technological accomplishments, he forgets to look to the God to whom all glory belongs. As his power over the forces of nature widens, modern man loses sight of the omnipotence of God, making idols of the good things of this world or seeing himself as the god of creation. In this way civilized man abandons the one true God, and in spite of his declarations to the contrary, builds a world from which God is excluded. A subtle form of atheism perhaps, but quite as effective as its more blatant manifestations.

In the pages that follow, the author, Rev. Fr. Prof. Dr. Obiora Ike, Director Catholic Institute for Development Justice and Peace (CIDJAP) and Vicar General Catholic Diocese of Enugu, a fulfilled Roman Catholic pastor, contextual theologian, seasoned philosopher, a dynamic and liberal thinker, Human Rights Activist, rich in experience and widely travelled succinctly presents freedom as our option.

The aim of this booklet is to prove that Freedom is nothing but the power to become fully oneself, the power to realize fully one's potentialities .

For an existentialist like Fr. Obiora Ike, Freedom is something lived in concrete existence. It is existential. It is lived rather than a mere *fiatus vocis* or an intellectual truth which comes through knowledge but through man's involvement in the concrete circumstances of life.

We are called to be free, act freely, live freely, think freely and walk freely. The author has authentically lived out this freedom in his own life, realized it in many and is working diligently and zealously to make it the lot of the rest of his brothers and sisters.

One might ask: How can one be Free? Freedom is not absolute. It is always bound at the same time. The topic of freedom has been the major pre-occupation of man through the ages: "who is free for what?" "what is free for who?" Fr. Ike knows and He shall try also to prove it once again in the following pages that Freedom is our fundamental option.

When will I finally gain my freedom, the adolescent wonders. Give us bread and freedom, the working class shouts, and in order to win this freedom or to defend it against attack, the workers is quite prepared to fight and even, if need be, to die. When society wishes to punish one of its members, it simply takes away his freedom. And yet, for the vast majority, what is freedom anyway? Nothing more than the removal of every form of constraint, the opportunity to do whatever one wants, wherever and whenever he wants to. Clearly a mere caricature of genuine freedom of spirit.

In addition to the absence of every form of physical constraint, authentic freedom presupposes a complete detachment from self with a view to commitment at a higher level. In this regard, we have to win our freedom. Human freedom is strictly finite and hence can only find fulfilment in the supernatural order. God alone is perfectly free. In this life, only God's most intimate friends, those who are furthest advanced in the ways of holiness, know the meaning of true freedom.

The text that follows is thus meant to be a means to foster vividly the author's belief and work motif that 'man is born free, but is everywhere in chains'. Professor Ike through these his many challenging lectures and more others outside the scope of this publication wants to free man from the chains of poverty into the castle of plenty and abundance; the chains of underdevelopment into the rays of *technological advancement*; the chains of over-dependence into the fabric of self-reliance; the chains of unbelief into the grace of witnessing; the chains of cultural anachronism and chauvinism into the gospel of incarnation and inculturation; the

chains of enslavement, deprivation and imprisonment into an encounter of dialogue and reconciliation; the chains of fundamentalism into a table of tolerance, dialogue and brotherhood, and to pray that the water of baptism may sacramentalise our blood of ethnicity. This is the 'Mystery' that is his hope and his prayer.

The book is, for convenience, divided into five sections, section I in three chapters deals with the current issues of development and sustainability. Section II in five chapters discusses the face of the church in Africa. Section III in two chapters x - rays some African cultural practices vis-a-vis the Christian worldview. Section IV in two chapters exposes the burden of imprisonment and the need of Reconciliation. Section VI in three chapters makes a clarion call for unity, solidarity, cooperation and collaboration in our endeavours irrespective of our different religious confessions.

In these pages, Rev Fr Prof Dr Obiora Ike offers to all and sundry (politicians, theologians, students, entrepreneurs, clergymen, religious men and women, social workers etc) a veritable compendium on Freedom, authentically, concretely and realistically understood which contains the vital leaven of the gospel for the benefit of human society.

Leonard Chidiebere Ilechukwu
Research Officer
Catholic Institute for Development Justice and Peace
(CIDJAP), Enugu.

SECTION 1:

DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

CHAPTER ONE

POTENTIALITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT IN TRADITIONAL SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STRUCTURES IN WEST AFRICA.

SECTION I

Introduction

The subject of my lecture is to identify potentialities for development in Traditional Social and Economic Structures in West Africa.

The topic is as exciting as it is difficult for what is Africa, who is Africa, and where do the identities and the differences start or end? The answers to these questions expose a poor medley of contradictory answers.

Within the continent itself, there is a dramatic *petitio principii* in vogue. The Ogbunike Clansman, ignorant of the geography and politics of Africa, is categorised as an 'African'. For him, he is an Ogbunike man.

The standard Masai or Kikuyu clansman who is antagonistic to the Kenya National idea and reality is designated an 'African'. The Yoruba, Igbo or Hausa tribesman who consider Nigeria not as a nation but merely a geographical expression and who fight the Nigerian Nation, answer to Africans. In Uganda, there was a policy and praxis of 'Africanisation' which identified Tanzanians as aliens. Right now, there are religious, ethnic, political and tribal conflicts within Liberia, Togo, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroun and all over the continent.

International Symposium on Rationality Inherent in Cultures: the Right to Indigenous Development, organised by Theologie Interkulturell AM Fachbereich Katholische Theologie der Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität Frankfurt/MeV, Germany, at Conference Hall, Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau, Frankfurt from 19th - 21st November, 1992.

Nigeria today, for example, is a country with over one hundred million people. A notable external similarity is the colour of the black skin. But its people have about 250 languages, different values, ideas about life and cultural patterns.

Nigerian society is so diversified that with a journey from the northern part to the south of the same united country, one actually feels as though one has travelled through many nations in one country. The difficulty in discussing easily a Pan-African identity would be readily understood from this example. You would, therefore, ladies and gentlemen, see with me that to talk about Africa and its heritage, one has to trail on grounds that contain major *petitiones principii* and contradictions. We have before us the search, as Heidegger would say, 'for knowledge which is capable of being on the lookout for something and seeing it as it really is'. The search for and the seizure of that being (knowledge) which can be properly called and identified as African seems to be as ontological as the description of this ontology may be phenomenological.

Background:

In June this year, *Theologie Interkulturell* of the Faculty of Theology, University of Frankfurt, organised a Colloquium whose focus was to determine the rationality inherent in cultures with the aim of finding the basis for one Human Right for all the Right to indigenous development. The participants discussed elaborately and intensively from various backgrounds and experiences the cultural, ethical and religious aspects of development, the present situation of events in Africa, the pre-colonial and colonial tragedies which have virtually paralysed growth in the continent, coupled with man-made and/or natural hindrances to full development. The Colloquium, I understood, was part of the preparations for this dignified International Symposium.

As a participant at this Colloquium, I maintained, as I still do, that the failure of so many development projects and strategies in Africa

could be attributed largely to the fact that many westerners ('European experts') and genuine agencies concerned with Justice and Development unfortunately thought of development solely in economic and technological terms, seldom recognising the place of other important elements inherent in the idea of development, such as the ethical, cultural and religious notions (Max Weber), and thereby presented a lopsided and anti-cultural understanding of the term. Could there ever be authentic development without man that is without the human society's ethical, cultural, social and religious background in view?

One fact which confirms the foregoing is the idea that many economic development models conceived in western nations and found workable there when transported to African Nations failed woefully. They failed because the 'experts' considered in isolation the concept of development primarily from the point of view of economy and technology, when this idea was rather broad and integral. Of course, such models did work in the industrialised northern developed nations themselves, but failed upon trial elsewhere. One of Germany's greatest sons and thinkers, Max Weber, recognised decades ago that there is scope for closer investigation of the ways in which development entails ethical choices that are sustained in their turn by religious world-views of widely differing cultural origins. Max Weber demanded in an analogical fashion that there is need to search for innovative potentials in other cultures of the world which have the ability to carry on and sustain a self-reliant (independent) rationalisation and modernisation. Because of the specific affinity of religion to rationality, Max Weber accorded religion a primary role in this process of rationalisation and modernisation (ref. Max Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 3.Aufl. Tübingen, 1968, pp.594 ff).

Culture of course is not static.

Even though culture refers to the entire way of life of a people past and present, there is always evidence of a dynamic interplay of

factors necessitating progress, adaptation and interaction. Cultural-change therefore is a constant challenge for a people to maintain their cultural continuity in the face of new conditions. It is not just the transfer of technology or economy that is at stake. More at stake is the search for categories for the definition and evaluation of cultural, ethical and religious conditions relevant to the development and modernisation potential of Africa.

What we need in Africa are avenues for creating a basis for categories which determine development potentials forming the basis for authentic development. Attempts by people of non-western cultures to develop themselves according to their priorities, innovative rationality, cultures and world-view have all too often been dismissed as irrelevant; they have been interrupted and stopped, as historical records testify, by abrupt abortions of the pre-colonial (slave trade), colonial (foreign imposition) and neo-colonial (internal alienation) strategies which interrupted the political, economic, social, cultural and technological possibilities for development within Africa. This is not the place to narrate the multifarious tragedies of the black man. History books and our own practical experiences have much to tell about this anomaly which Anierobi Ngwube describes as 'ethical savagery, moral barbarism and moral cannibalism'.

Persistent Ignorance about Africa.

Let me focus on another matter which is of major importance as it is in itself a *petitio principii*. There exists also in Europe an embarrassing ignorance of what is Africa, its culture, its people and its destiny. We do not blame Europe. We blame ignorance. Much of what is known or written about Africa has been done by Non-Africans, most of whom are European intellectuals and 'experts' and much of it is blackmail. A general tendency has been to 'look down' on Africa and Africans as the 'continent of hunger' 'the white man's grave', 'the land inhabited by lions, scorpions, reptiles and monstrous animals', 'the cannibal peoples of the Forest and equatorial regions', 'the land of slaves', 'the continent of heat',

'dumping ground for the wastes of the Western world', 'a continent to exploit its mineral resources', 'the land of black people with black souls as dark as the devil and destined to be the wretched of the earth', 'the dark-skinned people whose religion, culture, politics, art, etc. is uncivilised and primitive' in its degrading understanding. Thus, whatever is *bad* is given the term black:

Black Magic
Black Market
Black Money
Black Business
Black Devil
Black Religion
Black is *Bad*.

This and many other prejudices (sometimes held in good faith) have been formulated by Western anthropologists, scientists, historians, travellers, adventurers, writers, cultural ethnologists, politicians, traders and missionaries, among a host of others whose prejudices, misleading books and false authority about this continent have led many innocent truth seekers and interested listeners astray. A mirage therefore hangs over the continent. Such negative, misleading and false views about Africa seem none the less to prevail in some quarters still, despite several attempts by honest and objective persons/scientists to present *Africa* as it is, in its entire practice and even before Greek civilisation arrived (Davidson, B., *Discovering Africa's Past*, London, 1978).

The Igbo people of Nigeria worked on iron at a time when historically Europe was still in the stone age as Ngwuibe Anierobi has written elsewhere: 'In every civilisation you find the African Architect'.

For us Africans, a symposium of this nature has its worth and value in the fact that it grants us the opportunity to say, without an interpreter, what is and what is not Africa or ourselves. An opportunity to reverse the frames of reference; to establish our values differently; to give new definitions from an African frame of reference; leading to interpretation, perceptions, goals,

responses and behaviour patterns which make Africans authentic without necessarily contradicting the universal truths that guide mankind.

The reality of Africa is more complex than many think. It is dangerous to treat the continent as one piece. It is clearly not a famine-stricken continent, for example, even if natural and man-made causes unleash famine in some areas at different times. Africa is the name of the continent located in the Eastern hemisphere of the earth, south of Caucasian Europe, south of Mongoloid Asia, between the Atlantic and the Indian Oceans. It is the continent where scientists teach us that man first arose, where art, religion and philosophy commenced, where civilisation began, and it is the fatherland of the dark-skinned people who, beginning in the fifteenth century AD were massively, racially and globally taken by aliens into slavery. It is the continent which poses itself aesthetically as a question mark, which from time immemorial has attracted men of all races, and continues to call on its descendants to embrace its fatherhood by all means.

Africa is the continent inhabited largely by and belonging to the race of dark-skinned people. Africa continues to claim its children by imprinting its colour on its children wherever they may be and however they are 'produced'. Africa also marks out its children impressing its clear physical and cultural features on them, no matter the continent or country in which they possess legal 'citizenship'.

Section II

Potentialities for Development in Traditional, Social and Economic structures in West Africa:

People who do not look back to their ancestral-cultural heritage cannot look forward to posterity. (Ozor Neife Ozoike, ninety year old man from Umana Ndiagu, Nigeria).

The Kenyan novelist, Ngugi Wa Thiongo, in his book *Devil on the Cross* graphically portrays the nature of Africa's tragedy in the face

of the continent's present problems of internal and external degradation in a moving parable about the peasant farmer and an Ogre. He writes:

The Old Man told me ... of a peasant farmer who used to carry an Ogre on his back. The Ogre had sunk his long nails into the neck and shoulders of the peasant. The peasant was the one who went into the fields to get food, the one who went into the valleys to fetch water, the one who went to the forest to get firewood and the one who did the cooking. The Ogre's job was to eat and thereafter sleep soundly at the back of the peasant. As the peasant became progressively thinner and more depressed at heart, the Ogre prospered and flourished, to the extent of being inspired to sing hymns that exhorted the peasant to endure his lot on earth with fortitude for he would later find his rest in heaven. One day the peasant went to the diviner, the diviner told him that the solution was for the peasant to boil some oil and pour it on the nails of the Ogre when he was fast asleep. The peasant said: 'What if I should burn my back?' The diviner said: 'Nothing good was ever born of perfect conditions. Go home.' The peasant was saved from certain death only when he did what he had been advised to do by the diviner. (*Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Devil on the Cross*, London, 1988, p.62).

It is sad and tragic to note that while the peasant farmer in Ngugi's parable found the courage to follow the diviner's advice unto salvation by burning part of his back with oil and successfully killing the Ogre, many people on the continent have neither found the wit nor the pluck to free themselves from certain alienating, anti-cultural and exploitative tendencies from the East, the West or even from introduced religions operating now in Africa, whether Christianity or Islam.

A return to the origins and a hard look into certain areas of our African culture should lead us to develop out of these original sources, internal potentialities for development both in economic, political, social and other fields. This is my aim to this section,

and I shall single out the family, art, religion, land, property, communality, law, political organisations, economic enterprise, birth and death, as areas for reflection.

In the past, there is ample evidence to show that programmed efforts to develop Africa built on the basis of Euro-American and Arab-Islamic experiences and influences instead of the basis of peculiar history and culture of Africa boomeranged and did not benefit the citizens of the continent. This has resulted in the total collapse of the external paradigm by developments orchestrated and pursued by hosts of development advisers and experts. These models collapsed because, like the Marxist model in Eastern Europe, they were external ideas lacking their roots in the mind, culture and philosophy of the people and thereby side-stepping adaptation which is the only possibility for assimilation of alien cultures for internal progress.

As a result of this mal-adaptation, this paper has joined the call by many well-meaning researchers and social scientists in Africa and elsewhere to conclude that a *long-lasting and effective development* in Africa must work out its own development models from our local civilisations. No matter how 'sub-standard', 'under-developed', primitive and slow it may be, Africa and Africans, as things stand now, cannot make long-term progress, if we do not move at our own speed, learn from our past, slow as it may be, and gradually build a progressive, constructive and authentic Africa. Thus, religion, ethics, technology, culture, social-structural organisational patterns existent in Africa's local cultures will grow to become taproot models of development which can last and lead to the much needed integral development of the continent.

The Large Family

It is not easy to make generalisations about Africa. One area where many Non-Africans see the original African lifestyle is in the family. The essence of community, sharing, 'live and let live' and togetherness was shown through the large family. The family was

a sign of *life*. Loneliness was unknown. The large and extended family offered a possibility for social security and social insurance.

John Mbiti's famous saying still holds in Africa: 'I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am.'

Marriage showed in traditional society that *love* is communal, not individual. Marriage was a union of two families, two clans, two villages and not just a private love relationship between two persons (male and female). The communal dimension strengthened the longevity of marriage and reduced separation/divorce. Egoism was reduced. Marital love and care was a societal responsibility. Worldwide today there is a crisis of the family expressed via divorces, population control, new models of child upbringing, etc. Could these problems not receive a different method of solution in the context of Africa?

Art

The people of the continent distinguish themselves from others in many forms and matters, art being one of them. African Art (in spite of variations among the many African societies) shares the same characteristic form, never embodies or presents suspense, essentially offers its music, artefacts, poetry, drama, sculpture, folk tales and paintings in such a way as to vividly establish equilibrium and to glorify harmony. African art often portrayed society. Its typical power was illustrated in terms of a specific philosophical preoccupation, namely force. Force is, to the pure African, vital. It is a universal, omnipotent energy to which all thought and action are related. To exist is to live vigorously, for active force is existence and existence is force. If existence and vital force are together, then neither of them may be overcome. Hence the aesthetic establishment of symmetry, balance or equilibrium as essential to the production, distribution and appreciation of African Art. And hence harmony as a fundamental aesthetic goal. There is a need to discover original African Music and Art and the spirit of harmony behind it as a way of solving conflict situations in the continent today.

Religion

Art points beyond itself. From a philosophical point of view, art points to the Divine, to religion. Every work of art says to the beholder: Look beneath and beyond me for what I represent and say it is more than what you see. Deeply expressive yet modest, it concerns itself with life, in faces and figures showing man in his nature and activities in the stages of his ancestry, birth, life, death, mystery and power. Here again it must be said that African Art, because of the said philosophical preoccupations, is never a question of matter alone: the element of spirit which is the breath of the Divine, of God, of God in man, is always present. For the African *everywhere* is a vehicle for religion, as John Mbiti reports:

Traditional religion permeates all the departments of life. There is no formal distinction between the sacred and the secular, between the religious and non-religious, between the spiritual and the material areas of life. Wherever the African is, there is his religion... In traditional Africa there are no irreligious people. To be human is to belong to the whole community, and to do so involves participation in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of the community ... African people do not know how to exist without religion.

Traditional African religion is non-institutional. It is communal in the same way that African art products are peculiarly the expressions of some community. One exists in an African Society through active participation in the art, religion and philosophy of the community. This *Geist* is here called *Communalism*, the theory of which is also called *Communalism* by many African thinkers. In this communalism, participation as theory and as praxis is of course of crucial importance. Because the earth provides the goods of this world-food, trees, sand, water-and also consumes the goods of this world- burial, decay, human beings taken back to the bowels of the earth-the earth was worshipped and respected. This worship was a female-oriented type of religion, thus the Earth is seen as 'Goddess'- a constant recipient of water from Heaven (the male God); a giver and taker.

Land

In pure African Society governed by a humanistic community spirit, *land* belongs to no one. Land belongs to the people. The individual, and hence the family, have the right to the sacred and secular utilisation of the land, but not appropriation in the absolute sense. For as Chancellor Williams observes:

Land is seen as God's gift to man for use as a sacred heritage, transmitted by the forefathers as a bond between the living and the dead, to be held in trust by each generation for the unborn who will transmit it thus to the last generation.

How could we reconcile this existent traditional view of the land with the border clashes for land prevalent now on the continent? What new interpretation could be given to the land so that it assumes its original African connotation, namely a heritage to use and to pass on to the oncoming generation?

Property

In African societies, property was a gift of God to someone. Property had no meaning if somebody accumulated too much for himself. The wealthy shared their wealth with others: in other words, property was a '*Social Mortgage*' - a thinking that could become very useful today. Respect for nature, the environment, the trees, the water was dynamically practised. Only *needs* were tampered with in a religious sense. Exploitation was limited. Is it possible in today's world to look at property less as acquisition and more from the point of need? Africa could avoid extreme materialism if only we could look inwards to discover our rich cultural heritage and place property in its right perspective as African culture demonstrates.

Communality

Taking the above together, the pure African society is fundamentally egalitarian. It is *Communalistic*. In this society, every member has the right to a home, the right to equal protection before the law and traditions, the right to work, the right to care for others

and be cared for whenever necessary, the right to protest and the right to rebel (even against the final decision of the community), the right to training, aid and other forms of education, the right to participation and leadership in government, art, religion and philosophy, and the right to inheritance and equitable sharing of all the benefits and undertakings of the communality. These facts are part of the most remarkable achievements of the African - most remarkable because the African held to these fundamentals, age after age, as if clutching to the last threads of life itself.

The African communality spiritually validates and establishes the psychological soundness, emotional sanity, social profitability and the individual benefaction that the *multiple-wives system* encourages. Its humanist quest for the fulfilment of all proper human instincts, for the promotion of love and peace, for the satisfaction of the deep bio-social impulses of all women (not just a few women in a community) where women far outnumber men and its will to perpetuate the family, the clan, the ethnic group, the '*Polis*' and the race go far beyond the term 'polygamous' together with the infinite brood of wild implications, racist connotations and libidinal overtones that attend this term.

Respect for Elders

Old age in African culture is a gift of the gods, a sign of wisdom, a reward for good life. African societies generally respected the elderly and cared for them. The old lived within the given family milieu and were guaranteed stability and historical presence. When an old man dies, it is like the tragic destruction of a library in Europe. Among the requirements of the tradition is the principle of *respect for the elders*. For they are transmitters of past experiences, the existential links of the past with the present, and the nuclear bearers of tidings to the unborn, the ancestors, and the spirit-gods of the nether-world. The elder is the democratically chosen representative of each extended family or clan in the democratic government of the '*Polis*'. He is a leader, never a ruler, being an instrument for the execution of the religious, moral, philosophical and political will of the people, who remain the first

and final source of governmental power. This form of respect for the elders and the inherent promotion thereby of continuity in tradition frowns at Methusalean authoritarianism, foxy Machiavellianism and wheelchair romanticism. Hence the assertion of Casely Hayford:

It is the duty of the head of the family to bring up the members thereof in the way they should go, and by family you must understand the entire lineal descendants of a head pater-familias. It is expected of him by the state to bring up his charge in the knowledge of matters political and traditional. It is his work to train up his wards in the ways of loyalty and obedience to the powers that be. He is held responsible for the freaks of recalcitrant members of his family, and is looked to keep them within bounds and to insist upon conformity on their part with the customs, laws, and traditional observances of the community. Nor is the elder a candidate for dictatorship or tyranny, for to the degree that he represents the sovereign idea and receives the attendant homage and respect, to that same degree must he respect their time-honoured laws, traditions and sentiments. He may be called into account should he act or talk otherwise, and may in serious cases, be deposed or asked to die. He leads but never rules, he guides but never governs.

Values

In African cultures there was evidence that virtually the entire creation had a meaning, known or unknown to mankind. Creation was not meaningless. The universe had a purpose in the mind of the creator. Thus religion, sacrifice, worship rites and rituals characterised mankind's response in Africa to the 'God of Creation' 'Chineke'. Every tree has a name and meaning. The seasons have a name and meaning. Every individual creature had a 'Chi' or personal deity (spirit) that was guiding it. There was no chance of accident. Value was given to sand, water, stars, in fact all nature. Agricultural seasons, economy, social life, culture, law, trade and art pointed beyond themselves. 'See beyond me for I represent the

deity among men.' Thus, a deep religious world view prevailed.

The Ancestors

Humanity had continuity and history. Ancestor worship expressed the respect and debt of the present generation to those who lived before, and this respect guaranteed to the present that the yet unborn would honour the dead. In other words, the living-*dead*, the ancestors and their worship showed belief in the continuity of *life* (Eternal life) and continuity of the human race in a historical respectful dimension.

Faith Worship

Because the earth provides the good of this world, food, trees, sand, water and also consumes the goods of this world, burial, decay, human beings taken back to the bowels of the earth, the earth was worshipped and respected. This worship was a female-oriented type of religion, thus the Earth as 'Goddess' a constant recipient of water from Heaven (male god); a giver and taker.

Social Roles

The gender issue (male or female) determined the roles of people in traditional society. In agriculture, in trade, in economy, in social life, in politics, in every aspect of culture, there was clarity as to the roles of men or women and their interdependent functions. Some of these roles were based on nature (e.g., the woman gives birth to children; the man climbs trees), or based on traditional roles (e.g., the man goes hunting, the woman plants greens around the house). The question of the emancipation of women (from what?) is a European question which came when roles became juxtaposed and confused.

Celebration of Birth and Death and Events

The phenomenon of life, whether in birth or in change of life through death was highly celebrated and an occasion for feasting. This attitude to life, seeing life and death as a gift thus celebrating it, enhances the dignity of human life and encourages the

community. This practice is very persistent up till now and is exemplary. Celebration by means of feasts and events encourages community harmony and peace.

Love for Children and Procreation

African societies love children and still do. The barren are very sad. It is a curse for which religious rites are performed. In such a society, the future is guaranteed where there are children. The family is strengthened. Abortion is not a topic!

Human Rights/Ethics

The rights of the individual were guaranteed only within his clan or village milieu. Outside his clan or village, rights ceased to exist. The right to life, to movement, to freedom of speech and otherwise, to religious practice, all these were possible within the ambience of the immediate cultural existence and were fully guaranteed. People outside this milieu were not automatic recipients of these rights but could acquire them by good behaviour and peaceful coexistence. Ethics, do's and dont's, and morality were given a divine sanction, not a rational/human explanation.

Law

The function of law was to preserve the given community. Law came either as tradition handed over by the ancestors or as a social construct agreed upon by the given society. Law was not alien. The need for the law led to its obedience.

Political Organisations

Traditional African societies guaranteed full participation of all in the village communal responsibility of government, whether it was republicanism (Igbo Society), or controlled monarchy (Yoruba Society), or theocratic-feudalistic system (Fulani). In all, the principle of *palaver* or communal debates for consensus was possible. Government and the affairs of the village concerned everyone. The age grade system, the market, the industry of arts and crafts, social checks and balances including the use of moral

physical or other *sanctions* guaranteed the political existence of the *unit*.

SECTION III

Conclusion

The conclusion of this paper is a humble postulation that individual human beings living in a society are the basis of any meaningful development. Human resources, not just capital, nor income, nor technology, nor material resources, constitute the ultimate basis of the wealth of nations. Catholic Social Teachings identified this noble truth during the Vatican Council, for the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* explicitly states: 'Man is the author, the centre and the end of all social and economic life. Economic developments must remain under man's direction.' (GS, n.63).

To put this in plain language: 'Development is for man, not man for development'. A country which is unable to develop the skill and knowledge of its people and to utilise them effectively in the national economy will be unable to develop anything else. In this connection, therefore, we can mention that Africa's search for progress certainly moves on in spite of notable setbacks. There are many positive developments and we mention them briefly:

A Fresh Look at Africa's Signs of Hope

Africa is a youthful continent: two-thirds of the population are below thirty years and on the whole are better educated than their elders, more urbanised and more knowledgeable about the international scene.

The crisis of confidence and the broken psychology of the African after the colonial trauma seem to have disappeared gradually with the rebirth of self confidence, new African art and a mass of literature. People now think of their continent as the prime mover rather than the object of its own development. Many people prefer to take an internalised critical view rather than copy other people, or always blame other people for their problems. Africans are waking up to the fact that Africa has to develop not just to survive with outside help. The Masai, the Igbo, the Bini, the Kikuyu, the

Fulani never believed in self-pity or defeat.

There are signs of cultural revival in many countries. Local music is on the increase. African dresses and attire are in vogue. The use of local languages, aesthetics, art, advertising and various forms of culture is everywhere noticeable. In the Christian churches there is a call to indigenisation and acculturation to elevate the African identity by means of local church music and rites, in spite of seeming official opposition from the central authority of these churches.

The economic record is more varied than is often imagined and fortunately does not always reflect decline and drift, except for war-ridden zones. Improvement in living standards such as housing, feeding, education is taking place, even if new problems in the same areas are coming up due to inadequate policies, rising populations and official mismanagement. Nonetheless, resources abound if only they could be well utilised. Signs of economic recovery, using Western indices, are there and many nations of Africa are resetting their priorities alongside economic reform,

Enterprise is a popular tradition in Africa as is the market economy. Some more effort should be channelled to move from 'private survival to collective take-off'. Africans have to wake up to the fact that self-development and self-reliance are the only guarantee for a long-term economic survival, rather than surviving solely on the charity of the outside world.

Change and Challenges

The United Nations Deputy Secretary-General and Interim Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) told the eighteenth meeting of the Conference of African Development and Economic Planning Ministers in Addis Ababa on 20th - 24th April, 1992, that change necessitates challenge (ISSA B. Y. Diallo, in the *Courier*, ACP EEC, n.134, July/August 1992; Bruxelles, ISSN 1013, 7335, p.59):

The world is changing and Africa particularly is changing with it. The most obvious signs of change there are at the

moment are basically that many conflicts in and between states are being settled, notwithstanding the resurgence of others, that a move is being made towards democratic systems of government, thanks to the will of the people themselves, and that there is increasing awareness that better inter-African cooperation will speed up economic integration like the signing of the charter setting up the African Economic Community in Abuja on 3 June 1991. (ibid. p.59).

The big challenge for the rest of this decade is in encouraging economic and social change with both a forward-looking and inward-looking analysis, promoting regional cooperation in a political, economic and social climate which is constantly changing and is already having noticeable effects in the countries of Africa.

After three decades during which the United Nations adopted international development strategies, Africa has looked at its disappointing economic results and realised that it has itself to do most of the work required to meet its growth targets. Afro-pessimism is destructive and surely not a way to view the continent.

The current drive for economic, political and social reforms in line with worldwide developments is to be encouraged and not greeted with polite expectation, resignation, fear, exclusion or worse still, division. Africa is on the move in spite of centuries of oppression and aggression. Not all that has been labelled 'development' has been proved after some time to be development proper. After critical evaluations, we are today able to see that technology and its progress may lead to a higher level of communication and production among men, including the mastering of the environment; but many human beings have become degraded, marginalised and reduced in their worth, basic dignity and in their rights because of this negative form of technology.

Technology, yes, but not at the cost of man's dignity. It is not everything developed in America and called 'development' that must qualify in Africa as development. In other words, there is an added need in Africa, based on our values, to set out new criteria for development within *Africa*. What we have done in the last few

minutes is to arouse interest in this search and to call on Africa's sons and daughters, including our friends all over the world to share in this new search for authentic human development.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCRETE FACTS ON DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SELF-RELIANCE: CHANCES FOR AFRICA, THE 'AFOS' EXPERIENCE IN NIGERIA

Development is a vast topic but one can identify three broad aspects of it-economic, political and cultural. True development must mean the development of man-the unfolding and realisation of his creative potential. A developed society is one that is capable of recurrent self-renewal. Development does not start with goods and things; it starts with people-orientation, organisation and discipline. The main thrust of African development and that of any formerly colonised and/or enslaved people in this twentieth century must be in the direction of self-reliance. The new strategy will demand a greater spirit of innovation, hard work, greater utilisation of domestic resources and particularly the involvement of the masses, especially at the local level, in the development process. The new emphasis on self-reliance and the direct involvement of the people in the process of development and the identification of goals, their planning and implementation is a product of experience. Fostering self-reliance is closely related to the democratisation of the development process-the active participation of the people in the conception, planning and implementation of development goals.

Since the 1980s almost all African countries have been in the grip of deepening crises. These increasingly lead to more wide-spread poverty, social disorganisation, loss of confidence in leaders, and unrest. The depth of these crises, the fact that they are still worsening and the length of time required to halt-let alone reverse -deterioration,

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are not adequately understood by most decision makers, professionals, mass media communicators, businessmen or workers and rural labourers. Failure to grasp and to communicate the seriousness of the situation is dangerous. It limits or delays needed action and encourages attempts to do too much, with too little selection of priorities, and to go on much as before. Inevitably, this results in failures and inefficiencies which erode self-confidence, increase the power of creditors, aid donors and other outside forces, and cause public distrust of all statements by government and decision makers.

More than any other continent, Africa has to cope with the problem of small nation-states and, in consequence, sub-regional and regional cooperation is indispensable for long term development in virtually all sectors of economic activity. This point was stressed in the Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa (1981). It also needs to be emphasised that foreign aid has a great role to play in African development, most especially by assisting African countries to overcome the structural deficiencies inherited from colonial regimes and to realise the tremendous potential for development which abounds in the continent. However, foreign aid would be much more constructive if it responded to internally generated reforms, rather than those imposed from outside (especially when imposed by donors as a condition of aid), and if, at the same time, greater success with economic cooperation and integration in the continent provided more fertile ground on which national and multinational efforts, assisted by foreign aid, could attain higher levels of productivity.

Africa will not be built by foreign aid policies and experts directed from outside. The industrialised countries diffuse an ideology of development, modernisation and progress which serves specific interests. It consists of such ideas as the international division of labour, economic *laissez-faire* and political control of rural labourers' and workers' organisations, often backed by more or less overt state violence. The International Monetary Fund (IMF)

imposes social and economic conditions which amount to nothing less than political decrees whose impact is disastrous. The current Nigerian experience with the IMF and the World Bank is a textbook example of foreign aid and foreign expert advice that are a bind. Nigeria was in economic distress and approached the IMF and the World Bank for expert advice and assistance. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank brought their desks into the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and told us they wanted a Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), a massive devaluation of the naira, a 100 per cent deregulation of the economy, privatisation of government enterprises and a removal of all forms of subsidy including the one on petroleum products. We tried hard to please the boss in the hope that he would put in a kind word for us on our debts, or forgive us our sins of profligacy. We introduced Second-Tier Foreign Exchange Market (SFEM), International Foreign Exchange Market (IFEM), Foreign Exchange Market (FEM) and International Bank Exchange (IBE) all in the effort to find a realistic rate of the naira. The aim was to let the currency float and find its level. Being a currency that has no lifebuoy, the naira sank from 58 kobo (Nigerian) to the dollar (American) in 1980 to 1.52 naira to the dollar in 1986, and all the way down to 85.00 naira to the dollar in 1996. Since SAP, inflation has risen from 51 per cent in June 1989 to over 400 per cent in 1993. Interest rates have shot through the roof - from 10 per cent in 1987 to anything goes per cent in 1996.

The negative cumulative effects of all these measures and economic harsh realities are enormous. There has been a massive loss of jobs¹ by private and public sector employees, closures, takeovers, and mergers of companies and an extremely low capacity utilisation by the surviving companies. Real income has plummeted by ten times since 1985 while wages are crawling behind. Amenities have deteriorated, though their charges have gone up. Agriculture is in

See appendices (i) and (ii) for some unemployment figures.

a state of abject neglect, imports are increasing while exports are nothing to write home about. The socio-economic triangle is getting narrower at the apex, denoting a small fabulously rich minority, and broader at the base denoting a greater pauperisation of the masses and the systematic elimination of the middle class, the engine room of any nation's development.

On the positive side, the economic downturn in the country has liberated the creative energy of the people and excited innovations in a desperate bid to find better feasible alternative means of livelihood. The Government on its part established the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and the National Apprenticeship Scheme (HAS) but both measures have not substantially salvaged the economy. *The Government has gone a step further to actively encourage 'small medium scale entrepreneurs' whom it hopes can effectively help in checking economic slide and turn in the country.* This last clarion cry from the Government for economic resources explains why and how the 'Small and Medium-Scale Entrepreneurs Promotion and Training Association' (SEPTA) Enugu, came to be conceived and born in October 1992.

In February 1993, SEPTA as a non-governmental organisation (NGO) obtained its first foreign financial aid from the Federation of Catholic Entrepreneurs of Germany (BKU). By December 1995, SEPTA got more German benefactors like the Kolpin Family and MISEREOR. Within barely three years of its existence, SEPTA has been able to make a modest investment of half a million naira (.5 Nigerian naira) in Bank shares, and give seventy-seven of its members a total soft loan of over five million naira (5,427,800.00 Nigerian naira) according to need and ability to repay the loan. All the loans totalling 5.4 million naira issued so far by SEPTA, were derived entirely from foreign sources - BKU/Kolpin Family and MISEREOR all in Germany. What is very pertinent to our present discussion of 'Development through Self-Reliance in Africa' is the pleasant surprise SEPTA has in enjoying the peculiarly German policy of 'help for self-help'. These German benefactors

strongly believe in sowing seeds *not* fruits; and the loan revolves to get to more deserving members. To the extent that the German benefactors insist on and get regular reports on how the loans are disbursed and an evaluation report on the performance of every loan beneficiary, they have a loose control of the loan money. But more importantly, SEPTA has its own elected Board of Trustees and its own locally appointed non-SEPTA members and Project Officer who ensure that the loans are judiciously and equitably distributed. Here is our SEPTA Organisational Structure:

SEPTA General Assembly (200 members)

The African Fund

SEPTA Board of Trustees (8 members) Self-Employment (AFOS)
3 Independent Members 3 SEPTA Members

2 BKU German Office Members

Project Officer

(non SEPTA member)

For the Guidelines for the Management of African Fund Self-Employment (AFOS) Revolving Credit Fund, see appendix (iii).

SEPTA, Enugu, is an autonomous Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) duly registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission, Abuja, Nigeria, as a legal body with a Constitution. Its aims and objectives are:

- a) the promotion and development of skills required for small and medium-scale entrepreneurs;
- b) training of small and medium scale entrepreneurs and their staff;
- c) the granting of industrial and financial assistance to small and medium-scale entrepreneurs;
- d) the promotion of continuing industrial education to small and medium-scale entrepreneurs; and

- e) the provision of facilities for the acquisition of necessary capital assets for the establishment of small and medium-scale enterprises.

It is important to note that SEPTA is free to do business with and/or receive financial aid from any local or foreign person or group of persons without informing its German benefactors. Moreover, if for any reason, SEPTA should discontinue, the financial aid received from Germany cannot be transferred to Germany in cash or kind.

SEPTA, Enugu, has its local participatory Evaluation Committee which monitors and appraises the projects and programmes of all its loan beneficiaries, in order to ensure effectiveness and enhance the envisaged development, failing which, development will be stale and backward-looking. The evaluation could open up new channels, methods and directions to a more realistic approach to social development.

The BKU German Office has an indigenous Kenyan AFOS Executive Committee rendering the same help for self-help in Nairobi. The AFOS approach to development in Africa as exemplified in SEPTA, Nigeria and Kenya, tends to remove collective self-reliance from the level of rhetoric and mere declarations to the level of active and practical policies and programmes. And the AFOS development function fundamentally encourages the development of indigenous African human resources including the strengthening of family life and the preparation of African people to improve their own lives as they contribute to the national development. The major difference between this development function and the system maintenance function is that the latter focuses on remedial and rehabilitative operations usually involving the most vulnerable sectors of the population, whereas AFOS development function aims at a broader social coverage and at a broader social policy and at the strengthening of indigenous African local institutions to make them more capable of meeting the

aspirations of the African population. The approach is both economic and social and supplements the efforts of indigenous Africans in their own cultural milieu. It can rightly be described as a process by which the African people emancipate themselves from material want by enhancing their productive capacity, as well as maximising the democratic content of their social relations.

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Appendix (I)

ENUGU STATE FEDERAL MINISTRY OF EMPLOYMENT, LABOUR AND PRODUCTIVITY STATISTICS OF UNEMPLOYED PROFESSIONALS AND EXECUTIVE STAFF AS AT OCTOBER 1993.

S/NO	Professionals	Male	Female
1.	Architects	82	48
2.	Civil Engineers	190	19
3.	Mechanical Engineers	97	18
4.	Electrical Engineers	104	20
5.	Chemical Engineers	121	53
6.	Surveyors	102	16
7.	Chemists	101	61
8.	Geologists	48	46
9.	Agronomists/Agric. Scientists	115	66
10.	Vet. Doctors	74	47
11.	Pathologists (Med)	57	43
12.	Graduate Teachers	145	107
13.	Non-Graduate Teachers	150	83
14.	Lawyers	57	36
15.	Personnel Managers/Officers	113	82
16.	Editors/Journalists	55	19
17.	Statisticians	111	51
18.	Accountants (Professional)	55	51
19.	Accountants (Others)	56	50
20.	Admin. Officers	64	56
21.	Managers (Firms)	83	38
22.	Bank Managers	51	41
23.	Insurance Managers	73	50
24.	Managers (Transport)	117	39
25.	Store Purchasing Officers	75	36
26.	Dieticians/Nutritionists	81	35
27.	Laboratory Technologists	55	56
28.	Computer Engineers	77	31
29.	Nurses	57	43
30.	Social Workers	88	54
31.	Accounting Assistants	127	73

32.	Draughtsmen	101	51
33.	Laboratory Assistants	76	59
34.	Bookkeepers	94	46
35.	Bank Clerks	92	59
36.	Stenographers	84	61
37.	Secretary Typists	81	76
38.	Computer Clerks	77	36
39.	Storekeepers	97	34
40.	Salesmen	122	45
41.	Marine Engineers	86	29
42.	Sheet Metal Workers	89	22
43.	Catering Officers	115	91
44.	Leather Technologists	90	37
45.	Meteorological Technicians	63	75
		<u>4,048</u>	<u>2,189</u>
		=====	=====

Appendix (ii) UNEMPLOYMENT STATISTICS IN NIGERIA AS AT AUGUST 1995

S/NO	Employer	No of Staff No of Staff Ear-marked Sacked for lay-off
1.	Nigerian Security Printing and Minting Co. Ltd.	1,000
2.	Central Bank of Nigeria	500
3.	National Social Insurance Trust Fund (former National Provident Fund)	61
4.	Nigerian Airways	2,000
5.	Nigerian Custom Service	54.9% over 10,000)
6.	Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation	11,000
7.	People's Bank of Nigeria	300
8.	Kwara State Civil Service	7,000
9.	Cross River Civil Service	10,000
10.	Enugu State Civil Service	5,300
11.	Allied Bank	700

12. Tropical Commercial Bank	125
13. Progress Bank	436
14. African Continental Bank	735
15. Co-operative and Commerce Bank	541
16. Pan-African Bank	441
17. National Bank of Nigeria	300
18. Mercantile Bank	200
19. United Bank for Africa	54
20. Financial Institutions Training Centre	15
21. Savanna Bank	1,000
22. Nigerian Missions Abroad (to be closed)	7

(Source of Information: *Newswatch*,
September 18, 1995, pp.16-19)

Appendix (iii)

MANAGEMENT OF AN AFRICAN FUND SELF-EMPLOYMENT (AFOS) REVOLVING CREDIT FUND RULES

A. The Project and its Objectives

The Federation of Catholic Entrepreneurs in Germany (BKU) regards it as a specific task to promote small business in developing countries; to encourage capable and entrepreneurial persons to start or to develop their own business and to employ and train other people.

This initiative is directed to African countries and it is called: African Fund Self-Employment (AFOS). The idea is to find an established church, independent Catholic NGOs (non-governmental organisations) in different African countries capable of handling a local fund in the most responsible and reliable way. The BKU will preferably cooperate in Nigeria with SEPTA (Small and Medium Scale Entrepreneurs Promotion and Training Association) Enugu. The headquarters of BKU is Koln (Cologne), Germany. All correspondence and inquiries should be addressed to the German Office (here called GO):

BKU

Attn: Dr. Johannes Stemmler/Mr. Borsfeld Bund
Katholische Unteraehmer
Durrenerstrasse 387
D-500 Cologne-91
Germany.

B. Local Management

The Board of the local NGO works as a Trustee for the supervision of the local AFOS management. The names of the Board Members and the decisions of the Board concerning AFOS are to be transmitted to the GO. It will nominate an AFOS Executive Committee (EC) (of 3 persons, and other independent members) who decides on credits in connection with AFOS. These independent persons must be nominated as Committee Members, i.e. *not* members of SEPTA. The Committee nominates and supervises the person who is in charge of the administration of the fund (Project Manager). The names are to be transmitted to the GO; this also holds for application and contract forms and the credit rules issues by the local management.

The Chairman of the Executive Committee will submit annual reports to GO confirmed by all Committee members at the end of February at the latest to GO. The report is to contain:

Name and address of the borrowers, age, family status, purpose, amount, terms of credit, repayments and individual balance, type of business, sex, result of credit assistance, employed people, names of sureties;

Total amount and list of loans given and paid back, balance total.

C. The Purpose and Volume of Credits

Borrowers should either work in handicrafts, be formerly or informally trained in production, trading, agriculture, services, industry or apply for the loan in order to get a higher vocational

training for better paid specialised jobs in exceptional cases. The business should have the potential to grow and develop. In order to ensure its economic future, the proposed business must be realistically planned.

An additional objective is to introduce borrowers to the formal banking system.

Each loan should be given to one entrepreneur responsible for the repayment up to a maximum of the equivalent of five thousand Deutschmark (5,000 TDM). Larger credits are in each single case subject to GO's confirmation.

The individual credit may be charged with an extra fee of maximum fifteen per cent (15%) for the administration, but as low as possible. Also a compensation for the local inflation rate should be charged to maintain the volume of the local AFOS. A one hundred per cent (100%) return payment is to be agreed.

From repaid loans new credits may be given to other or the same entrepreneurs.

The fund is to be deposited with a local bank account, the name of which (name and number of account) is to be announced to GO.

D. The Borrower

The borrowers can be persons regardless of sex, ethnologic group, race or Christian denomination.

Borrowers must have a good reputation and an experience of several years self-employment, or proven success in the already existing business. Two reputable sureties should be named by each borrower. The borrower should have at least a two-day training in bookkeeping and a correct handling of the loan by the NGO before the loan is disbursed. He/she must be willing to accept more consultation training and control if this seems to be necessary. The costs may be charged to the client, at least partially. A constant follow-up is necessary to ensure that the money is invested in the business.

The local credit rules to be set up by the EC must not be contradictory to the AFOS rules. All loans will be judged by their economic soundness not by sympathy or charity. The local AFOS management should propose to GO which regions they are able to serve.

E. How to Transfer the Credit

After the decision is taken positively, the borrower receives a written contract. It may be necessary that a part of the loan is used as a business capital. Until full repayment, the goods should remain the property of the local AFOS.

When the credit is granted for commercial transactions, the Board may rely on personal reputation, correct handling, prompt repayments and sureties.

The credits may be issued for a maximum of three or five years, and if agreeable in each single case the beginning of repayments may be deferred up to one year.

If the borrower has problems with repayments the Committee may allow deferment. In case of fraudulent behaviour, legal action must be taken to recover the money.

F. Repayment and Control

If for any reason, SEPTA should discontinue, the local AFOS must not be re-transferred to Germany.

In this case and when it seems to GO that the administration has not done well, GO is entitled to determine the local AFOS. GO is also entitled to send a delegate and make an unannounced control at any time and to check all accounts, credits, and papers of the local AFOS.

Any increase of the local AFOS by new transfers from GO is subject to correct and successful local management and sufficient

fund raising by BKU. Good reports and actual information will be a help.

The Board Members of SEPTA and the Members of the EC will work on an honorary basis, while the Project Manager could be paid a certain amount from the administration surcharge. They are to do their job as a private engagement; there is no personal liability for the loans given.

These rules are regarded as a basis of agreement between the GO and the SEPTA and are to be signed by:

CHAIRMAN OF SEPTA

CHAIRMAN OF THE LOCAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

THE LOCAL PROJECT MANAGER

THE CHAIRMAN OF AFOS COMMITTEE

CHAPTER THREE

THE ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS IN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

I. Introduction

I have come with a basket full of greetings and appreciation to the initiators of this international workshop from the non-governmental, research oriented, non-profit-making charitable and religious-humanitarian organisation named Catholic Institute for Development, Justice, Peace and Caritas (CIDJAP) in Enugu Nigeria.

CIDJAP is recognised by the Pontifical Council of Justice and Peace in the Vatican and is a registered non-governmental organisation in Nigeria under the Corporate Affairs Commission.

CIDJAP has links and cooperation agreements with various local, regional and international organisations and has actually carried out certain agricultural projects together with these organisations since its inception in the last ten years (1986-1996). Permit me to mention but a few of these institutions that are relevant in the scope of our present workshop on Agricultural Development in Africa. Centre for International Agricultural Development Cooperation (CIADCO) of the Ministry of Agriculture, State of Israel; Barneveld International College, The Netherlands; The Landesregierung, Vorarlberg, Austria; The Landwirtschaftliche Berufsschule, Hohenems, Austria; The School of Agriculture, Nieder Osterreich;

Paper presented at an International Workshop on Market Gardening Farm Association and Food Provision in Urban and Suburban Africa organised under the auspices of Bar-Ilan university, Ramat Gan Isreal and the Netherlands-Israel Development (NIRP) and International Co-operation Centre, Isreal Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the Green Beach hotel, Netanya, from 23rd-28th June, 1996

The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Ibadan, Nigeria;

The Catholic Agency for Development and Peace, Montreal, Canada;

The German Catholic Bishops' Organisation for Development Co-operation (MISEREOR), Aachen;

The Pontifical Missionary works in Aachen, Germany;

The IRED (*Innovations et reseaux pour le developement*), Niamey, Nigeria Republic;

The Theological Faculties of the Universities of Bonn and Frankfurt (Germany); Tilburg (The Netherlands); and the Enugu, State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), Enugu and the University of Nigeria (UNN), Nsukka, among others.

Our link with the FAO; UNICEF; UNDP; UN-NGLS among others has continued to grow in content and extent. Just as an introduction, furthermore, it may interest you to know that CIDJAP works in several rural communities in Nigeria in the campaign against hunger, ignorance, disease and injustice in the world.

CIDJAP dictates values and their orientation via education, social ethics; Catholic social teachings, training and leadership programmes; alternative financing; lobbying for the weakest and the marginalised; management /organisation and the development of relevant, adaptable and appropriate technologies in our context. CIDJAP acts both as a facilitator and an agent for development in coordination with donors and partner agencies and thus attempts to help our rural and urban populations to respond adequately and actively to the various problems of our society, be it in strengthening the culture of civilisation and democratisation, or the efficient management of goods and services, or in the promotion of advocacy for human rights and dignity and the sharing of experiences gathered for mutual benefit and partnership. After all, the goods of the earth are for all, and not for some only (CST) RN: MM). Networking therefore appears as a very important tool in

the realisation of these noble ambitions.

In carrying out practical projects, we have enriched others and have also been enriched. Only when humanity realises that 'what affects you, affects me' will there be a better integrated response to the social question worldwide. The great Christian apostle, St Paul, realised this fact when in the year 63 he wrote: 'No one lives for himself only. We live in and for the community.' (Letter to the Romans).

II Born to Die : The Situation of the World's Poor

The facts on the ground show that there are certain unacceptable inadequacies in our world such as the news that:

More than 1 billion people live in absolute poverty and more than half of them go hungry daily;

More than 2 million children die annually of easily preventable infectious diseases;

1.3 million people, roughly a quarter of humanity, lack access to safe drinking water;

Over 120 million people worldwide are officially unemployed; 80 million children don't even attend primary school (*Earthaction Parliamentary Alert*, February 1995; Social Summit Background Information).

Meanwhile, global military spending, despite a decline since the end of the cold war, still equals the combined income of the poorest half of humanity. Against such a background, what else need we say? It is an unjust, unfair, inhuman and degrading situation which needs to be challenged and changed.

III The Case of Nigeria

With all its resources in human, material, space and other potentials for wealth, Nigeria and many other African nations are agriculturally dependent, import food, are agriculturally underproductive and lack adequate modern agricultural technology and services, etc. etc. Basic needs are often not met and the various global pronouncements on Freedom, Civilisation, Technology, etc., are but pep talk.

Nigeria's citizens are hungry and many of them die young. The cities are overcrowded with Lagos, Kano and Ibadan attempting to score population counts of about 10 million people each.

The morbid picture of Nigeria (and this stands as a paradigm of many societies) is that of lack of:

- basic education for the majority of people;
- basic health care, clean water and sanitation;
- basic children's immunisation;
- material care of women;
- adult literacy;
- proper nourishment;
- decent housing, jobs, free environment.

The ingredients for agricultural productivity are there: land, labour and capital! What happened? Agriculture is said to be the mainstay of any nation. Yet Nigeria's agricultural output is somewhere around 10%. Answers are always attempted but the results are not forthcoming. How can we feed 120 million mouths by import of food and export of crude oil, as was actually the case in the 1970's and 1980's. Against such a background, what else need we say? It is an unjust, unfair, inhuman and degrading situation which needs to be challenged and changed.

Young people are still abandoning the rural villages for the cities to do nothing. Crime is increasing. This is the setting where NGO's

are jerked into action.

IV The Justice and Peace Farms-A Model

With this motto-'To teach by doing'- the CIDJAP in 1986, supported by good people, started the Justice and Peace Farms, located in the rural community of Ugwuomu Nike, approximately 25 kilometres of bad road (untarred, erosion-aggressed) from the city of Enugu (2 million). Up to date the local and State governments have not given a listening ear to repair these roads.

Yet the farm supplies a large percentage of the food needs of the State. Who would wait for government under these conditions?

The size of land is approximately 190 hectares; it has two sizeable lakes and flowing rivers all the year round and an evergreen original forest which is productive. The goals of the Farm at its inception included:

- To make agriculture more attractive and lessen the emphasis on crude oil and other products.
- To encourage young people in the locality to stay at home instead of running away to the big cities.
- To increase food production in both livestock and crops of all types.
- To improve the living conditions of the whole of the adjoining rural population (15,000 people) in various ways (education, sanitation, health, social services, etc.).
- To grow to become self-reliant by profitable agricultural practice.
- To create cooperative farming in the spirit of *Moshav* and *Kibbutz* (subsidiarity and solidarity).

Environmental productivity and alternative systems. Encourage others to start such projects, no matter how small. Improve self-help and pave the way for sustainable improvement in the living conditions of the people, especially the poor.

V The Role of NGOs in Agricultural Development

The Environment and Development file of the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Services (NGLS) carried a dossier in Vol. III, No.8 of December 1994. This is so rich in content in our area of discussion that I have included it as an appendix to this paper because of its relevance and appropriateness.

The caption on the issue in question is Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD). The aim of SARD is to reflect on 'how to harmonise agricultural Development with nature in order to respond to the growing realisation that modern agricultural practices are simply not sustainable and will not ensure food and fibre needs into the coming century' (ibid.).

The various points raised in the document, which deal with Agenda 21 and follow-up of the UNEC, need a serious restudy and survey as we discuss this matter further within our given scope and context. The basic point is that Development concerns people - Agriculture is a fundamental dimension of development for NO FOOD NO LIFE. Agriculture without ecological responsibility is dangerous. The *Mad Cow* disease in April 1996 in the United Kingdom may be a modern pointer to this situation. The dimensions are varied: soil erosion, depletion of aquifers, pollution of water sources, loss of biodiversity, high vulnerability to crop and animal diseases, waste of resources and the demise of rural communities due to rural depopulation; it is the heavy reliance on chemical pesticides and fertilisers, with mechanical energy replacing human labour, which have made the role of NGOs urgent, relevant and highly necessary.

Non-governmental organisations are called upon and urged to fill a gap between the people and the Government; between the people and the environment; between the north and the south; between the people and their foreign world which is ever in change; between

the Government and its lack of orientation, or rather lost identity. Non-governmental organisations in the language of SARD are called to champion the 'battle for recognition of the social and environmental damage being caused by economic growth, terms of exchange on world markets and the increasing divorce between natural processes and agricultural development'. (ibid.)

This role can be carried out in manifold ways and we shall now attempt a brief outline, not exhaustive and not in order of priority of the various roles of NGOs.

To establish dialogue and provide opportunities for exchange of experiences between governments, international organisations, academic and training institutions, so as to enrich the traditional concepts surrounding development and to encourage the emergence of innovative points of view with regard to the fight against poverty.

To create networks and linkages. People in developing countries, poor and oppressed population groups, require partners to participate in their processes of development and liberation. NGOs have a function here, to link up groups and organisations between the developing and industrialised societies to offer bold and enduring partnership.

NGOs feature particularly in facilitating and promoting development programmes for disadvantaged or oppressed population groups, such as cultural minorities, women, children, agricultural labourers, migrant labourers, refugees, victims of political persecution. These programmes aim to facilitate the organisation of self-help structures and activities by these groups, or may offer protection against human rights violations.

Agricultural improvement must be people centred. NGOs move from thought to action, from theory to practice. It is not just saying but doing. This explains the success of the Justice and Peace Farms which is based, not on what I can theorise about, but on what I

have achieved. In action, NGOs have a lot to give.

The need and the search for self-reliant options, self-financing, do-it-yourself methods, help to self help is the most credible and reliable method of development which many NGOs can use, against the dependency and cheap commercialisation antics of traders and some multinationals which believe in manipulation, the dependency syndrome, and perpetual hegemony. Food is traded for a vote at the United Nations lobby. It should be clear to many that development ultimately originates in the people themselves, and embraces all areas of life as a complete whole (including economic activity, inter-human relations, politics, religion, law, culture, etc.). Consequently, the NGO's role is to assist people so as to strengthen them in their desire for independence and self help, and to enable people to shape their own lives, both as individuals and communities, as they themselves wish.

Because people develop and liberate themselves, NGOs can only play the role of support through solidarity and development cooperation which involves exerting influence wherever there is need, especially in cases of injustice and violence to bring about justice and true reconciliation. This is called advocacy.

It should become clear in the field of agricultural development that the purpose of any development project is to sustainably improve the lives of people. This is possible if there are long-term processes in which the people clearly recognise their situation, learn to understand how they can change it through their own efforts and with the assistance of others, and acquire the will and capability to do what is possible and take the necessary steps with courage and responsibility. NGOs must measure their success in how far they assist self-confident communities and movements of the poor to emerge as agents of self-development.

In the areas of basic education, primary health care, rural development, urban development, human rights issues and democratic participation, NGOs can show how the interlink creates

the relevant dynamism which catapults development towards the expected heights. There is need therefore for such activities to integrate a number of sectoral approaches; agriculture and animal husbandry are improved, taking into account both economic and ecological criteria. Access to natural resources such as water, land and forests is improved and rights are allocated more fairly. People's long-term security and sense of responsibility towards the natural resource base on which their lives depend increase if and when they also have access to markets, to credit and savings programmes; to basic health services, to basic education, and to extension inputs. They also increase where people are able to build resources and form capital themselves rather than always losing it as a result of inappropriate agricultural policies, over-indebtedness, environmental destruction or displacement, etc.

Even in urban development environments, NGOs can help people to own a small piece of land on which to live, to plant on, trade the goods, organise self help vocational training structures, relevant employment prospects, creation of small business, etc. Especially in the urban centres, there is need for greater decentralisation of agricultural programmes which are geared towards enabling people to participate more actively. The name of the game is less government at each level and therefore fewer taxes. NGOs can make this work if they form pressure groups with clear and articulate plans.

The aim of the NGOs must remain to enable people, especially the poorest, to reach a certain measure of satisfying their basic needs for food, shelter and a healthy environment, through 'educating the spirit and preserving our planet, not ignoring the ancient, traditional wisdom of humanity' especially of the developing countries.

Conclusion

Permit me to conclude with some observations, for as we draw near to the close of the twentieth century we do owe ourselves a reckoning.

Many of you would definitely agree with me that this century was history's bloodiest. It gave us, besides several regional and local wars, two world wars which claimed in a brutal manner the lives of more than a hundred and fifty million persons. Beyond the war dead, there were millions of prisoners of war, refugees, displaced persons and migrants, destroyed goods and property. Psychologically, socially and morally shattered persons still abound in our midst and we have yet to cope with all the consequences. What is, however, worrying is that as we approach the twenty-first century, there is no guarantee that it could not be bloodier. The indices on the ground do not allow for laughter. The poor are getting poorer. Hunger is increasing. Jobs are not easy to find. People abandon their homes for free slavery. Africa is impoverished.

With all the achievements that mankind was able to make in technology, science, spacecraft, medicine, agriculture, education, political information and communication; social and economic achievements which make us regard the world today as a *Global Village* and achievements which can usher in a new era for peace, progress and prosperity for mankind in the new millennium, the risk is still there that if the lessons of the twentieth century are not learnt from the ashes we see, we shall repeat the mistakes of this century even in the twenty-first (God forbid).

These mistakes can be summarised thus:²

Even under conditions of nihilism and hopelessness, better than cowardice is fidelity to truth. The point is that what humanity calls *Truth* does exist and matters. Even for those unsure whether there is a God, a truth is different from a lie. From fidelity to truth, inner liberty is wrested. In fidelity to truth lies human dignity. Nothing is dearer. What we see around us is the glorification of lies and

falsehood. Someone must tell us why 40,000 children die each day for lack of food. Someone must tell us why tractors are supplied to African nations but no spare parts. Why must we be colonised, neo-colonised and hear people ask: why are they still poor? It should be clear that we human beings do not own the truth. Truth is far larger and deeper and leads us where it will. It is not 'merely subjective', for after all is said and done, we obey the truth and it leads us where it will alas, for some of us too late.

The boast by dictators of all shades, whether of the right, the left or the centre that dictatorship is more vigorous than 'decadent democracy' has in our times been seen to be empty. It led to concentration camps. Now that Stalin, Mussolini and Hitler are dead, the time has come to kill also their worldview in any groups or persons who carry on with this unacceptable human tyranny, be they military dictators in Africa, Asia or Latin America; be they monarchs who exploit the people, be they economic tyrants and capitalists who have hijacked what belongs to all in the name of the 'free market without social responsibility', etc. They lie. For poor people, the principles of democracy (the rule of law, limited government with checks and balances) are better than dictatorship.

The claim that socialism is morally superior to capitalism, and better for the poor has been proved to be empty. It did in fact pave the way for serfdom. Freedom cannot grow, it cannot even survive, in every atmosphere or clime. Freedom needs clean and healthy habits, sound families, common decencies, and the unafraid respect of one human for another. Freedom requires the exercise of conscience. Can there be a free society among citizens who cheat, do not work hard, cannot be counted on, who flout the law, who prefer to live as slaves, content in their dependency so long as they are fed and entertained? Although modern thinkers first worked out, as neither the ancients nor the medieval philosophers did, the practical principles of the threefold free society- *Free in its polity, Free in its economy; and freed in the realm of conscience and inquiry*-the twentieth century has been seen as the most ideological.

² Ref. Michael Novak in his lecture 'Awakening from Nihilism' Templeton Address, Westminster Abbey. May 1994.

It created unfree people. Democracy is the world's first great practical lesson of our time, learned at a fearful cost. For those of us in Africa, the lesson is yet to be learnt. Some military dictators still believe that dictatorship is contextual. They lie, for only free persons can control a free world and relate to a free humanity. There is still much work to be done.

Finally, the theory that 'everything is relative' is vulgar and could, and does in fact, undermine the culture of liberty so that so called free institutions may not even survive the twenty-first century. Could everything actually be relative? Does only opinion matter?

But this is to give Mussolini and Hitler, posthumously and casually, what they could not vindicate by the most wilful force of arms. Those who surrender the domains of intellect make straight the road to fascism. Totalitarianism, as Mussolini defined it, is '*La Feroce Volonta*'. It is the will to *power unchecked*. Vulgar relativism is an invisible gas, odourless, deadly and now polluting every free society. 'Do-as-you-please' prepares the jails of the twenty-first century. Those who undermine the idea of truth do the work of tyrants.

The time has come for us to sit up, to speak the language of virtue, of character, of nobility and of hard work, as entrusted to the Hebrews by God in the commandments and retranslated in the life of Jesus the Nazarene as gentleness, kindness, equality, justice and peace.

It requires vision, invention and dynamism to move forward. For many of us from the Third World, it is a constant struggle to maintain free societies in economic, political and cultural dimensions. This however is our task.

SECTION II:

THE FACE OF THE CHURCH IN AFRICA

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PRIEST IN THE MODERN WORLD INADEQUACIES IN THE PRIESTLY FORMATION IN THE CONTEXT OF NIGERIA

In accepting the invitation to deliver a lecture on the topic **The Priest in the Modern World - Inadequacies in the Priestly Formation in the context of Nigeria**, I am conscious of the manifold dimensions involved and the attendant difficulties of discussing openly and frankly a topic that is so relevant today, yet so noticeably neglected. One notices within our Igbo Church hierarchical milieu an unbelievable pattern of pretence (or is it sycophancy?), 'immaturity', fear and let me say it, apparent insincerity in the name of 'utilitarian conservatism' when issues of substance, doctrine, ethics, religion, etc., are at stake. This, of course, is foreign to our ancestral heritage. We could not become more Roman than Rome; more Catholic than the Pope. Our forefathers were noble, God-fearing but always bold, frank and truthful. The ancient Igbo had an adage: 'Eziokwu bu Ndu': 'Truth is life'. Unfortunately, many modern compatriots prefer the apathetic, deceptive and degrading attitude of allowing a *status quo* to continue even when the generality suffer, the Gospel is hindered, and the truth compromised. Let it be said boldly and clearly that this insincerity in addressing issues exists in the corridors of those in authority as well as those led by authority. This is what I shall try in the following pages to portray and lay bare.

My paper is presented, therefore, from the academic viewpoint but also from the practical, involved and committed experiences of a priest who has gone through three junior seminaries in Nigeria and

Lecture presented at a Seminar on the Apostolic Exhortation 'Pastores Dabo Vobis' organised by the Queen of Apostles Seminary, Owa Imezi, Enugu Diocese, at the Queen of Apostles Seminary, Owa Imezi on 22nd March, 1993.

three senior seminaries both within and without Nigeria *en route* to the priesthood of Christ. I have gathered comparative experience and stand a good chance within the catholicity and universality of our *one* sharing of the priesthood of Christ to be able to ask questions and to formulate personal unbiased judgements.

My interest in this topic is also natural. Being a priest myself, being exposed to the exigencies and contradictions of priestly formation and the realities of the world, being personally involved in the formation of priestly candidates over the years in various capacities, I am desirous to say in my own way and pattern, the experiences, joys, distastes and suggestions for priestly formation in our local church today as I conscientiously deem fit. I owe it as a Gospel duty to my church. I may be wrong, but I claim the competence and the good conscience of saying with my own words and in my own manner my rejection of certain aspects of priestly formation today and my desire of what I expect it to be. I shall appeal both for a change in formation strategy and of course in spirituality which in many cases has been nothing else than ritualism. To quote Pope John Paul II:

It is equally certain that the life and the ministry of the priest must also adapt to every era and circumstance of life ... For our part we must therefore seek to be as open as possible to the light from on high in order to discover the desires of contemporary society, recognise the deep spiritual needs, determine the most important and concrete tasks and the pastoral methods to adapt, and thus respond adequately to human expectations. (JP, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n.55).

The Modern World (1960 to date)

It is precisely in this cultural and historical context that the last Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops took place. Dedicated to the 'formation of priests in the circumstances of the present day', its purpose was to put into practice the Council's teaching on this matter, making it more up-to-date and incisive in

present circumstances. (JP II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 2,6). The document *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, published on 25th March 1992 (Feast of the Annunciation) as a post-synodal apostolic exhortation, is the product of several synodal assemblies prompted by local, regional episcopal and pontifical meetings and study sessions since 1965 (the end of the Second Vatican Council) 'with the intention of applying to various situations the Church's rich and authentic teaching on life, ministry and the formation of priests'. (JP II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 3,1).

Over the past forty years, tumultuous and dramatic changes in the world had also caught up with the Church.

Widespread introduction of automation into many spheres of productive activity; the increase in the cost of energy and raw materials; intolerable pollution by industries; the emergence of peoples under subjugation into the international political and economic scene; the development of information techniques, telematics, micro-changes: the vicious circle of inflation and unemployment; the unjust imbalance in the international economic equation on the North-South axis; the endangerment of world peace on the ideological front of the East-West; the loss of a sense of culture and corporate work style; the marginalisation of the agricultural sector; the massive exodus of people from the rural to urban centres; the separation of work from its relation to the family; the undervaluing in some societies of the vocation of motherhood. (JP II in *Laborem Exercens*).

Contradictions and tensions abound in the world of today to an excruciating degree. These are both negative and positive in consequence for the larger world. Society is increasingly witnessing a powerful thirst for justice and peace, an interest in the environment and respect for nature, a more open search for truth, a greater effort to safeguard human dignity, a growing commitment to international solidarity, and a new ordering of the world in

freedom and justice. There are developments in science and technology, 'in the exchange of information and the interaction of cultures; there is a new call for ethics, that is, a quest for meaning, and therefore for an objective standard of values which will delineate the possibilities and limits of progress. (JP II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n.6).

From a religious point of view, there still persist ideological prejudices and the rejection of religion *vis-a-vis* its search in many parts of the world. The young churches have a fervour and youth that is dynamic and active, but they suffer too from a martyrdom of persecutions from state organisations and parallel religious competitors. The proliferation of many sects is a case in point which challenges the credibility of prevalent modes of Gospel witness, yet gives clear responses to the love of God. (JP II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n.6).

Further developments on the negative side in modern times would be a 'desperate defence of personal subjectivity which tends to close it off on individualism' (JP II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n.7) rendering it incapable of true human relationships. This leads to loneliness, to hedonism and to a flight from responsibility. There still exists in the world of today 'practical and existential atheism,' for the individual no longer needs God; he has become fully liberated into self-sufficiency (JP II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n.7).

The break-up of the family and an obscuring or distorting of the true meaning of sexuality 'adds to the negative phenomena of the time'. This corresponds to the lure of the consumer society that sets sex for sale. Nationally and internationally there is the contradiction of worsening social injustices and the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, the fruit of 'inhuman capitalism' (JP II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n.7,5).

The gap between the affluent and the indigent has increased

intolerably. Further problems include the growth of individualism, subjectivism in matters of faith and the selective ambiguity to choose what suits one from the catalogue of the credo. Churches are growing empty in many parts of the world as they are getting filled in others. Generally, the scarcity of priests is common and poses the greatest problem, for in many societies, laymen now perform the functions of the priest, including celebrating the Eucharist.

At the end of the Second World War in 1945, the Church discovered that it had to act immediately to face the challenges of a modern post-war industrialised and questioning society. The Second Vatican Council was a truly God-inspired ecumenical gathering 'to consider the signs of the times and translate them in the light of the Gospel'. (GS II).

At the end of the Second Vatican Council in 1965, the Church had theoretically forecast the modern world and its problems, but she lacked the will and the courage in many cases to face the consequences and allow the ball she set rolling to roll on. She was also unable to stop the ball from rolling further.

One major problem grew gradually from the ruins of the War and magnified itself in time to a point of crisis. No doubt, bombed cities in Europe were being rebuilt, economies and productivity were high; a new world order had arrived, giving room in 1948 to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Yet all these had opened the way more to the crisis both within the Church and in the outer world, namely the *crash* of authority.

The year 1968 marked the apex of this crisis characterised by the university revolutions in the USA and throughout Europe, in the quest for new freedom, for autonomy, for responsibility, including the ability to sin and to make mistakes. People had seen that 110 million lives were sacrificed under the absolutist fascist and

authoritarian governments led by Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, etc. Individual liberty would prevent this from ever happening again; thus the quest and the hue and cry for Freedom.

This quest was marked by strike action, wake keepings, music, new Pop and Jazz tunes, new styles in fashion and dressing, art and drama; film shows and libertarian intellectual developments epitomised by the school of existentialism which insisted that the modern man had at last arrived and needed to be free.

The picture was the same everywhere: 'All we are saying is give us a chance'. Authority was under fire everywhere and the world would never be the same again.

Great thinkers and artists such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Gabriel Marcel, Albert Camus and G.K. Chesterton led the way starting in France with the discussion of *L'être et le néant* (Being and nothingness) and placing *Freedom* as fundamental human value, in fact an absolute destiny. 'To be is to be free'. They distinguished in the *Dasein* (Being) a mode of *sein in sich* (being in itself) peculiar to non-human categories of existence and *sein fur sich* (being for itself) which is concerned in a way with will, with choices, with autonomy, for 'not to choose is a choice'. The autonomous individual had arrived. He wanted nothing else but his own freedom.

In Germany, thinkers like H. Marcuse, Max Horkheimer, Adorno, in Britain B. Russell and K. Popper; and in Catholic theological circles K. Rahner, H. Kung, Hans Urs von Balthasar, B. Haring and Henry de Lubac, were quick to add that freedom had a dimension which was responsibility; for it is not just to be 'free from' but to be 'free for' that should constitute the operation of this new found freedom.

Needless to say, down here in Mama Africa, the black man had also started to fight for himself. Nationalist leaders championed

the cause of anti-colonialism shaping the room for self-rule in country after country. Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, Chad, Nigeria, Tanzania, Zambia, Uganda won their *Independence*. Independence! That is the word, for there may be no end to this search, as Azania (South Africa, Angola and Mozambique) continue their struggle for independence even in 1993. Between 1960 and 1970, over forty African countries once held in tutelage and bondage by seven Western Nations, namely, France, Britain, Portugal, Italy, Spain, Holland and Germany, had grown into autonomous geopolitical zones. The quest is still on in many countries.

The crisis had also caught up with the Church. Vatican II was not far-reaching enough in consequence for many clergy. Between 1960 and 1970, over 20,000 priests left the priesthood, a trend that has more or less continued into our own time. Paul VI exercised judicial prudence and laicised over 13,000 priests, many of whom married before his death. Several sisters tore their gowns and habits, left their convents and joined the wide world. Monks did the same. The trauma has been historically likened to the Protestant Revolution of 1518-1552 during which Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, Henry VIII and others challenged the authority of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, and until today the revolution has left the scars of the division facing us glaringly *a-facie*.

The liturgy once held in Latin gave way to local languages, hymns and drums. *'Missa luba'* replaced *'Missa gregoriana'*. Those who loved to sing or hear the Gloria and Credo in Latin had to make do with the *'Ogene'* and *'Udu'* rendering of *'Otito dili Chukwu'* and *'Ekwem na chukwu'*. The priest would now face the faithful at Mass, not give them his back in utter ritualistic and isolationist abnegation. People who came to worship would shake hands properly in a horizontal perspective, dance to the *'Ogene'* and *'Udu'* and clap their hands in church, a phenomenon which was

unthinkable twenty years ago in Nigeria.

Of course, opposition was stiff and hard line traditionalists refused the Vatican II *aggiornamento*, insisting on the Tridentine Rites of the sixteenth century, thereby excommunicating themselves from the universality of the Ecumenical Council's decisions. May the Lord heal the wounds and receive the souls of the dead who died in arrogant ignorance.

Worldwide, young female university students and their mothers would attend Mass without a veil over their heads (an affront to St Paul), wear trousers like men; and play the guitar and pop music to the extent that *'Dies irae, dies illa'* is virtually now extinct. Priests replaced their black maxi-soutane with trousers and shirts to the chagrin, nay, the scandal of 'little minds' who did not know that priests were human. Female Religious Institutes produced dedicated women desirous of seriously following Christ in poverty, chastity and obedience, but alas, without any formal sisters' dresses. They looked lay! Female layreaders featured on the sanctuary, delivering the readings to a large audience, thus taking over or rather getting more involved by castigating male chauvinism. Girls started serving as Mass and with their charm, beauty and innocence, adorned the sanctuary, making concrete the statement: 'God does not make distinctions among human kind' (Acts of the Apostles). More shocking initially for an unprepared Christian faithful was the distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful by lay men and women, with the Bishop's permission. Currently, there are concentrated efforts and concessions, even from highly placed church dignitaries, to accept the consequences of the trend which has already begun, namely, to accept the ordination of women as deacons and priests and secondly to accept that the time for optional celibacy has come. The debate is ongoing; thanks to God as to the latter, it is more a practice and discipline issue than it is a doctrinal matter. I am very optimistic that whatever the results, this Church of Christ, built on the rock

of Peter, will continue to wax stronger and stronger because in the long run it is Jesus Christ who began it, not man. What matters is *love*, as St Paul would say:

These three: Faith, Hope and Love. But the greatest of them all is Love. (I Cor. 13).

W.B. Yeats considers the trend anarchy, but is it really anarchy? Why must the centre hold?

Turning and turning in the widening gyre. The falcon cannot bear the falconer; things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world. (W.B. Yeats: *The second coming*).

Inadequacies in Priestly Formation in Nigeria Today

To start with, I quarrel with the term 'formation'. I prefer to use the term training or another acronym. Can we really form another human being? Into whose image and likeness?

The Fear of Freedom

Pathologically and understandably too, there is a contradictory 'policy which eulogises God's freedom to man' (Gen. I, II, etc.) and yet fears for the consequences of this freedom. We all believe that God made man a free being and there is no alternative to freedom.

No amount of slavery in wealth can buy us dignity. Yet poverty in freedom is greater. Fear lives in the Church (Rahner) and in the world (Metz, J.B.) and this fear is basically what I call the 'fear of freedom syndrome'.

Against the background of the autonomous, mature and free individual, authority fears the rebounding consequences of freedom when extended to subjects. There is not enough time to exhaust this topic. But a few instances would suffice to show how mature men and women are virtually pastured and led like sheep in a uniformity that often neglects differences, God-given talents and subsidiarity.

Some of our seminaries are filled with immature, unhealthy and anxiety-ridden personalities who as authorities are more or less sycophants, not allowing freedom but containing and controlling it. What do we make of a seminary rule that says on page one that the seminarian is '*Segregatus ab hominibus*' (separated from other people). Do we live in the air?

The various seminary rules, the ringing of bells; the chasing after people; the misconception of the Mass (crowd) as doing the right thing; the persecution of the individual, subjective minded; the repression of talent; the attempt to recreate human beings into an image that conforms to the will of the Bishop, the Rector, the Teachers, the Community, the Family, etc. must stop. It cannot go unchallenged.

Allow the individual to speak for himself. Authority must allow freedom - today considered a fundamental right. The subjects must also be open to freedom, ready to use it in responsibility. It has just got to start somewhere.

St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, the great scholastics, and the Second Vatican Council declaration on religious freedom, put the official Church position on this topic as a classical example of the respect for individual rights, individual conscience, individual freedom for all in principle.

It is freedom from many forms of external hindrance to the person as he seeks to make his own choices, to express his own convictions, to be true in the public sphere to his own conscience; Christian freedom is positive, for it is bound by loyalty to God's will revealed in Christ'. (John I. Bennett, 'Freedom', in *A dictionary of Christian Ethics*; Ed. John Macquarrie; SCM Press, London, 1976, p.134).

If this principle is applied, the fear of authority in allowing freedom would cease. I urge that the seminary education adopt this method.

The search for *uniformity* is communist, socialist, not Christian, e.g., seminarians going out of the compound, visitors, study, games, prayer times and forms, etc.

Fear and Anxiety

Very akin to the fear of freedom, that is, the inability to allow people to be what God intended them to be, is what I consider fear and anxiety. In manifold forms, people live in utter fear and suspicion and this not only depersonalises them but also creates a psychopathology in them.

I remember very clearly my life as a young seminarian studying theology in Innsbruck. The Rector and the seminarians ate together at table, lived in the same house and went to the bar for casual drinks at random. The sight of the Rector instilled joy, never fear-unlike my experience as a seminarian both in Bigard and at Ikot-Ekpene. To see the Rector and other authorities even pass by 300 metres away from our windows meant fear. One put on the soutane immediately, did up the buttons and rushed oneself into appearing sane. In Innsbruck the '*Servus*' greeting did the magic.

The Rector would invite you to a tea or coffee and discuss any issue under heaven in freedom. If you objected, he respected your views. If you were in error, he tried to point it out. Yet, the image of the authority was that of a colleague, not of an SS Officer set to find out your faults and send you home. Allow me, therefore, to use the term 'Estrangement from self' as that which fear instigates. The seminarian of today is no longer a unity but a confused bundle of complexes and nerves, so dissociated, so alienated from his true self that he sees himself less as a personality than as a battlefield of conflicting loyalties

One of the more favourable descriptions of the Nigerian seminarian is to say that he has an anxiety complex. I can confirm that from a professional point of view an increasing number of seminarians are

afflicted with neuroses, complexes, fear, irritabilities, psychoses, ulcers, anxieties and frustrations. Few of them have the felicity of the good Afro-American uneducated lady who said:

When I works, I works hard; when I sits, I sits loose; and when I thinks, I goes to sleep sound.

There is a lot of anxiety about economic security, health, social prestige, sex, education, survival in the seminary, rules and authority, witch-hunting, and a hostile society that is happy if their son does not become a priest.

To put it quite frankly, 'there has never been an age, there has never been a human being in the history of the world without an anxiety. But not everyone has an anxiety complex' (Fulton Sheen, *Peace of Soul*, p.15). The Book of Job depicts the story of anxiety in the life of one man. The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5) is a warning against the wrong kind of anxieties. We have in our times reached a stage where in many seminarians we have produced 'the restless soul' (St. Augustine) filled with dread *Angst*, or in Heidegger's words "*Sorge*" (worry). '*Dasein ist Sorge*' 'self existence is worry'.

The basic cause of this anxiety is to be found in the system of seminary training which tries to separate the sheep from the goats.

In some cases, it is a witch-hunting exercise summarised by many in authority: 'You have no vocation'. The sight of the Rector and other authorities sends chills down their spines.

Respect for Conscience and Spirituality

I must start this section with a basic ethical approach on conscience. The word is a key term in Christian ethics, a foundation stone of traditional moral theology. Traditionally, it has not been thought of by Christians as a special faculty, or as an intuitive 'voice of God within us', but simply as 'the mind of man making moral judgements'. This is how St Thomas classically defined it (q.v.). Strictly speaking, conscience decides in a particular case what is to

be done or avoided in the light of a grasp of general moral principles which St Thomas called *Synderesis*. Conscience, then, is a judgement of the practical reason at work on matters of right and wrong. There is an element of emotion in the workings of conscience because, when the reason decides what OUGHT TO BE done we feel emotionally divided if we partly shrink from doing it.

In the same way, if the moral reason passes judgement on what HAS BEEN done we feel either pangs of conscience or feelings of approval, whichever way the judgement goes.

Because man is a "fallen" creature, the pains of conscience are very familiar and, paradoxically, the more sensitive in conscience we become the less we are likely to enjoy a "good" conscience. This has been the clear testimony of those whom we think of as the most saintly.

The traditional Christian teaching is that it is a Christian's absolute duty to obey his conscience. This does not mean that conscience is infallibly right. It can err because judgement may be corrupted by interest, because it makes errors concerning facts, or because it wrongly estimates tendencies and possible consequences of an action (there can be no certainty in advance about these). But the traditional Christian view is that an erring conscience (objectively considered) must be followed. We must take responsibility for our own decisions before God and follow what at the time our moral reason prescribes.

We may of course decide to give someone else the duty of deciding for us (as, for instance, when someone takes a vow of poverty, chastity and obedience), but that decision must of itself be a conscientious one. Even then if subsequently we are ordered to act against our conscientious judgement, we should disobey (JP II; *New Year Message* 1991: 'if you want peace, respect conscience'). None of this teaching is meant to make absolute prejudices. It is assumed that the judgement is a conscientious one, and that

reasonable care has been taken to consider the relevant factors in arriving at it. It follows that we have a duty to educate our conscience. If we make mistakes because we have not troubled to put our consciences to the school of Christ we are blameworthy.

To educate conscience is to allow the mind of Christ to be formed in us (I Cor.2:16) so that it grows in sensitivity. The right environment for the education of conscience is life in the fellowship of the Church. Here we shall draw on the resources of prayer, sacramental grace, Bible study, etc. But these aids do not exhaust the sources of education for the conscience. Nevertheless, the final decision must be ours, not another's.

Having gone this far, I am afraid to make this point bluntly that a basic inadequacy in priestly formation in our context is the neglect of private good conscience and the authoritarian imposition of laws over the candidate. Our priestly vocation does not derive from the Bishop, the Parish Priest, the Friend Priest, the Community, the Family or the Seminary Authorities.

Our vocation is a direct response to the Good Shepherd who as Mark writes:

He went up to the Mountain and called to himself those *whom He wanted*, and they came to him. (Mark 3:13-19).

Our priestly vocation is a direct personal and intimate relationship between the candidate and Christ the Lord. The love of God and the response of the subject are mysteries inextricably bound by the depth of the 'Economy of Salvation' and the union with Christ. The commitment of the ordained priest is made primarily to Christ the Saviour and to the Christian community, the Church, the Bishop and the family, symbolically and secondarily.

We must be Christlike, not Bishoplike, not Father X-like, not Mother Y-like. Here, I discover that sycophancy, pretence, eye-

service, personality cult, godfatherliness, etc., distort this deep spiritual union between the candidate and the God who calls. Of course, if authority does not insist on this fundamental theological orientation in the young student looking for support but presents him with a replacement for Christ, the candidate may eventually become a priest but he is not committed. He searches in his priesthood for Father A. and Bishop Y and Parish Z, and failing to find them, crisis creeps in.

I suggest that education towards independent thinking, maturity, personal growth and conscience-bound decisions be encouraged. Our priesthood is a direct contract between Christ and us. There is no direct intermediary, except subsidiary sacramental signs, as during the ceremony of ordination.

Socio-Political and Pastoral Awareness

The world we tried to portray initially of real men and women-consumers, addicts, crime-prone, individualistic, unjust, etc.-is not a world found in the sacristy or in the pulpit. The signs of the times dictate that serious study of socio-economic and cultural-political education must become an integral part of mission and evangelisation today. We are no more isolated catechism teachers but givers of bread and water. 'Jesus began to do and to teach'. In a document entitled 'Justice in the World', the third Synod of Bishops held in Rome in 1971 adopted positions that went far beyond the Second Vatican Council. They introduced the notion of 'Social Sin' (until then sin was personal, except original sin) and declared that the Gospel of Jesus Christ redeems us from sin, including 'social sin'.

We are told that the Christian understanding of redemption includes 'liberation from all oppressive conditions of human life'. Salvation, in other words, has a socio-economic dimension, and divine grace has a political direction.

In the past, popular piety, prayers, rituals, and preaching often presented salvation as God's merciful action of rescue, delivering individuals from the catastrophe decreed upon the world. The Synod considered such a privatised view to be irresponsible in the world of today.

Spirituality is not a hidden sacristy or sanctuary affair: spirituality, to be relevant today, must be translated into a personal stance towards people and society at large. Holiness has a social dimension with a commitment that involves justice. To use the words of the Bishops:

Action on behalf of Justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us a constitutive dimension of the teaching of the Gospel, or in other words, of the Church's mission for the salvation of the human race and its liberation from ever oppressive situations.

The implications of this Social Gospel are to be found in a pastoral methodology approved by the Canadian Bishops:

Belief that pastoral action necessarily includes action on behalf of Justice (Prison Pastoral; Working for democracy; Challenging economic oppression).

Rejection of sharp dichotomies between 'sacred and profane', religion and politics, this world and the world to come, development and evangelisation. Paul VI described the new name for peace as 'Development' in *Populorum Progressio*. This means, education of people; doing projects with and for people; water drilling; farms; the emancipation of women, etc..

Acceptance of the integral link between the service of faith and the promotion of Justice.

Option for the poor, with a consequent entry into social reality from the side of the poor.

Commitment to social change through change of structures, in addition to personal and interpersonal conversion,

Affirmation of the proper role for value discussions in public discourse, e.g. human questions in economic policy debates.

This, I hope, should form part of the curriculum of studies in the seminaries. Logic and morals are good, but they are not enough.

Inculturation

Theological imperialism is a sore thumb in the young church of Nigeria. While Vatican II and the 1968 revolutions were going on, we were involved in a catastrophic war of survival from 1967 to 1970, so that we lag five years behind Vatican II. The time now has arrived for a proper inculturation of Christianity in Igboland.

We cannot plant foreign news on alien soil. The news must be local for it to grow on our soil. The Good News of Jesus Christ must be understood by the Igbo under given local equivalents.

There is thus an urgent call for the study of African culture and thought on the curriculum. While the Gospel breaks the frontiers and either fulfils or judges a culture, each people must be able to formulate an indigenous response to God's invitation through the Gospel. This indigenous response can be reflected in theological formulations of the Christian witness and in the liturgy.

The Rome we quote all the time has challenged us, in fact ordered us to become an authentic African Church in thought, liturgy, expression and content. The fight is now within and seminary training must allow this inspiration to take root. Other areas worthy of mention include:

relationship to women; avoid hypocrisy: (balanced, healthy, open).
relationship of the Bishop to his seminarian and vice-versa; Open: (creative loyalty; creative fidelity; cooperation; constructive father-and-son relationship, treatment of ex-seminarians).

Attitude to *wealth/materialism*: Seminarians are waiting for their car. What vow of poverty is a poor man taking? I wonder what

he has left? He has rather come to take, not to give. Are rich students castigated? Wearing a clean soutane is bad: wearing a perfume is worldly; do rich students who share it risk their vocation? Are they abandoned? etc. (give them chance to sin) Fr. Okere. Encouragement of talents and initiative and self-reliance. No one will run your parish for you. Encourage youthful dynamism-games and dance.

(In Germany/GO) BKU

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CHURCH AND THE PROMOTION OF HUMAN VALUES AND MEANING IN AFRICA

The topic assigned to me is to consider 'The Church and the Promotion of Human Values and Meaning in Africa'. This topic has relevance when we reflect on the sources of faith, tradition and the guidelines proposed in various documents, especially the Church's social teachings. I believe that the work of development and human promotion in African countries is enormous. I still view the churches as the only credible vehicles which in the past and the present have attracted credible relevance in their response to issues concerning the social question. I am confident that what has been achieved is not enough. Therefore this paper challenges us and sets further goals for our continued participation in the promotion of human values all over Africa. The area meant for human promotion is the whole person- individual and corporate.

When, during the nineteenth century, the nations of Europe and North America were convulsed by the impact of industrialisation and the beginnings of capitalism, the Church responded by redefining Catholic social doctrine. The formation of a small group who possessed most of the wealth on the one hand and the increasing pauperisation on the other hand of the new industrial proletariat, who for the most part had no rights, had thrown up a new 'social question', that of social justice. The Church's very first social encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891), shows how that response came about. It deduces from the nature of man the principles of social and political order and describes and analyses existing social conditions. From both it draws practical conclusions for dealing with the actual situation.

Paper presented at the Queen of Apostles Seminary Owa Imezi, on 25th April, 1994.

Whereas the Church's social teaching was in the beginning, and then for decades afterwards, related principally to the industrial countries and their social problems, its scope was broadened after the Second World War. Growing economic and political cooperation and integration, decolonisation, the entry to newly independent countries into the international community, global communication and cultural interaction focused international debate on the development of mankind and all peoples in one world. The starvation and want of millions upon millions of poor and oppressed people became the new international social question.

This shift towards a global perspective was first expressed by the universal Church in the two encyclicals on social questions issues by Pope John XXIII: *Mater et Magistra* (1961) and *Pacem in Terris* (1963), and in the documents adopted by the Second Vatican Council:

Today men are so intimately associated in all parts of the world that they feel, as it were, as if they are members of the same household. Therefore, the nations that enjoy a sufficiency and abundance of everything may not overlook the plight of other nations whose citizens experience such domestic problems that they are all but overcome by poverty and hunger, and are not able to enjoy basic human rights. (MM.157).

Development was thus firmly placed on the Church's agenda. Beginning with *Populorum Progressio* (1967), Pope Paul VI focused attention on development aid and the need to restructure the world economy and at the same time showed the Church's commitment to development to be part of an overall concept of evangelisation (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 31, 1975). These beginnings are extended, developed and intensified in Pope John Paul II's encyclicals *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987) and *Centesimus Annus* (1991).

Furthermore, increasing emphasis is placed on the interrelationship of world peace and development. Thus in 'Justice Creates Peace' (1983), the German Bishops' Conference described development work, alongside the protection of human rights and the creation of a global peace order, as a substantial element of present-day efforts to promote peace, development of the whole person and all people.

The Church's tenet for achieving 'one world' is to develop the human being as a whole. It goes beyond economic growth and embraces values and benefits which industry, commerce and politics cannot provide.

Development means movement, a process of change. By making development or liberation the leitmotif of the 'International Social Question', the Church is stressing the transition from a rather static to a more dynamic concept of society and mankind as a whole (cf. 5GS 5). Hence the principles elaborated in Catholic social doctrine are not insignificant. Indeed, when related and applied to social change involving much conflict they produce standards for determining development targets and ways of achieving them.

The Church's concept for achieving the 'one world' is 'holistic' or integral development. It was expounded in the principal social encyclicals of Popes Paul VI and John Paul II. It has also become the main guideline for development activities sponsored by the Catholic Church in the Federal Republic of Germany (cf. EF 1.2.1).

The quintessence of this concept of holistic development is personal dignity. According to this 'supreme principle' of Church social doctrine:

individual men are necessarily the foundation, cause and end of all social institutions. We are referring to human beings, insofar as they are social by nature

and raised to an order of existence that transcends and subdues nature. (*MM* 219).

Hence, the development effort must be geared to protecting the human person in all its dimensions and fostering its development. The aim is the development of the entire person and- as every individual has personal dignity - the development of all people (cf. *PP* 43).

It follows from this that 'development is not simply synonymous with economic growth' (*PP* 14). Although it has a necessary economic dimension ... since

it must supply the greatest possible number of the world's inhabitants with an availability of goods essential for them to be, it is not limited to that dimension. (*SRS* 28).

Development suited to man's needs cannot be achieved 'without due consideration for the social, cultural and spiritual dimensions of the human being'. (*SRS* 9).

When individuals and communities do not see a rigorous respect for the moral, cultural and spiritual requirements based on the dignity of the person and the proper identity of each community, beginning with the family and religious societies, then all the rest ... will prove unsatisfying and in the end contemptible.

Thus a type of development which did not respect and promote human rights-personal and social, economic and political, including the rights of nations and peoples would not be 'really worthy of man' (*SRS* 33).

Looking back mainly on the socio-economic development strategies of past decades, we see that, to the Church, industrial development (is) not a straightforward process, as if it were automatic and in itself limitless, as though, given certain conditions, the human race was able to progress rapidly towards an undefined perfection. (*SRS 27*).

In order to promote the human being truly holistically in this sense, development depends on values and benefits which the economy cannot provide. It is dependent upon conditions which government alone cannot ensure. And it pursues goals that are not accessible solely to science and technology (cf. *PP 21*).

Hence the Church advocates a kind of development which takes full account of the various dimensions of the human being. Those dimensions are interrelated. They are conditional upon one another and must therefore be developed together. If one element predominates or development is reduced to but one element, then such one-sided development will not succeed.

Solidarity

The international social question cannot be resolved without global solidarity. New alliances of this kind are necessary in order to advance the development process, and not least in order to remove global economic imbalances. The Church is committed to 'a preferential option for the poor'.

One of the foundations of the Church's social doctrine is the principle of solidarity. Action on the basis of solidarity respects the personal dignity of others and seeks to shape social life in such a way that people see themselves as subjects of their own individual development and in this process learn to treat one another as neighbours. Action on the basis of solidarity is one of the original ways of exercising justice, for it is opposed to individualism, which

in turn is inimical to man's sense of community, and to ideas of collectivism which suppress every person's individuality.

Every person should act on the basis of solidarity. But that solidarity must also manifest itself in social systems which counteract and overcome the 'structures of sin', the term constantly used by Pope John Paul II to describe conditions which in many instances exploit the people and are an affront to human dignity. It calls for the removal of social imbalances which place a greater burden on the weak than on the strong.

The international social question cannot be answered without global solidarity, for solidarity is 'the path to peace and at the same time to development' (*SRS 39*). It is the path to 'the common weal of the whole world' (*EF 1.1.1.*), which exists in 'the human and spiritual progress of all men', (*PP 76, SRS, 10*).

That is why the Church encourages the formation of 'new alliances of solidarity' (*ICFB*): both among the poor and between rich and poor, at the individual, national and international level. Solidarity among the nations finds its aim and appropriate expression in a real international system ... which will rest on the foundation of the equality of all peoples and on the necessary respect for their legitimate differences (*SRS 39*).

For an institutional framework, too, it is necessary to ensure and promote a fair political, economic and technological exchange worldwide. If the present 'international imbalance' is to be rectified, a situation in which only the economically strong nations of the North are able to assert their interests, a 'higher degree of international order' will have to be sought (*SRS 43*).

There is a need to establish at international level 'an economic system in which the market serves the common good', that is to say, a system which creates for the poor - whether individuals or

nations - conditions which enable them to improve their situation through their own efforts (cf. *CA 52*).

The present world economic system cannot be described as just, or as market-based in the sense of a market economy tempered by social justice, as long as it lacks equal opportunities for all, including the institutional foundations, and as long as trade and the distribution of goods are so unevenly balanced. In this connection the Church calls for drastic reform of international trade, the world monetary and financial system, the technology transfer and the structure of international organisations (cf. *SRS 43*).

More than others, we as the Church must subject ourselves to the demands of global solidarity. Solidarity must be shown above all towards those who need it most. That is why the whole Church, inspired by the example of the Church in Latin America, identified itself with a 'preferential option for the poor on the basis of solidarity' (*Puebla 1134*). This option should not exhaust itself in mere non-committal sympathy for disadvantaged people in distant countries. On the contrary, by challenging us to work for political and social justice and to oppose oppression in its many forms, it places us on the side of the poor, with their suffering and hopes, their bitter experiences and struggles (cf. 3.2.1).

The Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation.

The problems relating to humankind's survival have also become the focal point of ecumenical discussion within the Christian churches, especially in recent years.

The Ecumenical Process for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation not least through its assemblies in Stuttgart (1988), Dresden/Magdeburg/Dresden (1988-89), Basel (1989) and Seoul (1991), has highlighted these themes. This process is not only important in terms of the social effectiveness of the Church. In their ecumenical dialogue the churches give each other fresh

impetus. Contact with other traditions challenges them to take a critical view of their own approach, of their own teaching and practice. As a result, the documents adopted by consensus during the Ecumenical Process contain, over and above the many statements on specific issues and practical recommendations, several fundamental conclusions which point the way forward as regards the Church's teaching, dogma and activities:

In view of the global problems of our time, the possibilities for joint witness by Christians and other churches must not remain unexplored: 'We are convinced that Christians need to meet at every level of the churches' life to coordinate their response to the threats hanging over the future of humanity. Their witness and life will be decisive.' (*Basel 4*)

The joint efforts of Christians and the churches will only be credible if they show courage and are capable of self-criticism: 'For too long we have been blind to the implications and demands of the gospel in respect to justice, peace and the integrity of creation. Together with others we stand in new need of a new beginning' (*Basel 42*, cf.41-45).

The Churches have jointly advocated that the issues confronting mankind as expressed by the terms justice, peace and environment should be viewed in their global dimension, their critical nature and their interaction: 'We face a cumulative series of interlocking problems which endanger human survival. Together they represent a global crisis' (*Basel 8*). Our ability to meet our responsibility as Christians and as the Church is measured by whether we can cope with the magnitude of these challenges.

The growing awareness of the interdependence of the huge problems facing mankind, clearly manifest in the Ecumenical Process, has led us to pay greater attention in our social teaching and our development work to problems that have long been

overlooked. Now we look not only at the human rights, social, political and cultural aspects, but increasingly the ecological dimension of development as well. There is a growing realisation that where the natural sources of life are destroyed, opportunities for development, too, are lost.

The Socio-Ethical Rationale of Development Work.

If our country is to generate effective impulses for development work aimed at meeting the needs of mankind, there will have to be 'new alliances of solidarity' here too. Institutions, groups and individuals with different religious, ideological and political backgrounds will have to combine their efforts in pursuit of this common goal. Mutual understanding will not always be an easy task, especially where the many interlocking aspects of motivation as well as ethical and conceptual approaches are concerned.

Hence the dialogue necessary to bring about such new alliances relates not only to the specific aims and methods of joint action. The experience of recent decades rather teaches that it also depends largely on the responses to the deeper issues: what is the nature of man and of the world that is supposed to be developing? How and why do we need to take action? What should the fundamental goal be? The extent of agreement or disagreement on such fundamental matters will broaden or narrow down the possibilities for cooperation.

How can extensive agreement be achieved in our pluralistic society? We offer our views on three areas of dialogue we consider to be important: an appreciation of a global convergence of interests; a comprehension of justice which provides a basis for consensus; human rights. The defence of human rights not only explains our common commitment; it is also the doorway to agreement on the basic content and aim of development.

The interest of the North in the Development of the South.

Development cooperation is also in the medium and long-term interest of the wealthy countries of the North. However, to justify it and determine its nature solely on this basis would not be commensurate with the dictates of human development.

In pursuing their foreign policies countries frequently invoke national interests. Where they have a democratic constitution their governments canvass the support of the people, or at least the majority. For some time now there has been a growing awareness that those national interests are not served if they are interpreted too narrowly or too selfishly in order to gain only short-term advantage.

As we mentioned in the introduction, no part of the world can master its problems by being indifferent to the fate of other regions. Widespread poverty in the southern hemisphere swells the northward flow of people trying to flee poverty. It drives people to over-exploit the natural sources of life, thus threatening tremendous damage to the entire ecological system. Moreover, lasting mass poverty increases the threat to world peace. Hence it is in the North's own fundamental interest to promote the development of the poor countries. In order to ward off these global dangers together, and thus safeguard their own future as well, the industrial countries have no option but to form coalitions of solidarity with the developing countries.

The Church does not underestimate this motive for development cooperation. Successive popes have pointed out that the consequences of missed opportunities for development affect mankind as a whole. The various dialogue programmes arranged in recent decades by the Joint Conference of Church and Development in Germany have likewise stressed that we all depend on each other and derive from this interdependence the political force of common interest.

Much would be gained if what is commonly referred to as 'enlightened self-interest' were to produce a policy aimed at mutual medium and long-term advantage in the field of development as well. The question is whether this will suffice to resolve the international problem of development. Our conclusion is that it will not. For one thing even 'enlightened self-interest' can stimulate but limit solidarity. Only where the rich countries derive benefit, only where they themselves will be affected by the long-term global consequences of their failure to provide assistance, will they be prepared to assist the poor countries. This is an inadequate way of easing the burden of the South. Furthermore, such a limited definition of solidarity translates into an inadequate conception of development. It leaves out of consideration legitimate aims and demands resulting from the personal dignity of the poor and thus lacks the central notion which ensures truly human development.

There is therefore no alternative: development concepts are not fully adequate unless they recognise and make allowance for the legitimate interests of others as such; in other words, unless the developed countries think less about their own interests and more about those of mankind as a whole; unless they take the step from limited to global solidarity. This process of seeing our own and other people's interests in terms of the well-being of the world community is the subject of our deliberations on justice and human rights.

Justice.

Justice demands that the exchange between rich and poor countries be organised in such a way that those who are worst off derive the greatest benefit.

Justice as an aim and principle is very important to our society. And it is generally recognised that the relations between industrial and developing countries must be commensurate with the principle

of justice. The response is less unanimous when one asks: What conditions and what modes of conduct are just? What standards can be derived from the concept of justice in the minds of the people in industrial countries for the development of relations with the poor nation?

In the language of ethics and legal philosophy, justice is first and foremost a moral attitude based on the determination 'to give everyone his due' (Ulpian). Seen as an underlying principle of social order, justice implies a commitment to respect the universally applicable conditions of coexistence in freedom. The first among those conditions are human rights. On this level justice demands the same for all. Even where the aim is to achieve greater collective benefit, no one may be prevented from exercising his human rights (cf.p.12). But this does not rule out the possibility of conflicting demands for the settlement of which the law has to provide appropriate rules.

Beyond the level of human rights, differences in social conditions are unavoidable and quite legitimate. But there immediately arise such questions as: What differences are tenable? In which case and to what extent, from the point of view of justice, are inequalities in the distribution of economic and social rights, opportunities and goods, acceptable?

Recent discussion has produced the principle that social and economic disparities are only permissible if they 'bring the most disadvantaged nations the greatest possible benefit' (J. Rawls). This principle is not directly concerned with ensuring the fairest possible distribution of goods. Its object rather is to correct unequal starting positions arising from natural or social distinctions. Thus justice in the sense of fairness is intended to provide the necessary balance. It is a principle which has far-reaching consequences for the equitable development of international relations as well.

As regards the systems of exchange between industrial and developing countries, the one which brings most benefit to the poorest nations should be chosen. Only then, in the sense of this principle, can the structures of international trade and the global economy be considered just.

This undoubtedly establishes an important criterion for the further development of relations between rich and poor countries. Nonetheless, one should not overlook the fact that this is a minimum requirement and, taken by itself, does not fully meet our responsibility to ensure international social justice. For if none of the systems of exchange actually or theoretically available were capable of reducing the disparity between rich and poor, would we then say the choice of the best of those systems would be 'fair'? We therefore emphatically repeat (cf. 1.2. and 1.3) that social justice means satisfying the basic needs of all and providing equal opportunities for development. The economic system, the trading system, must make allowance for this and be judged accordingly.

In connection with the aims of development it is also necessary to remember that generally speaking, only those with the lowest incomes tend to be regarded as the most disadvantaged. This viewpoint is not incorrect, but it is one-sided. If we look solely at differences in income we are apt to consider the structures of the exchange between North and South, too, solely in terms of what prospects they offer for improving incomes in the poor countries.

Thus the many social and cultural aspects of the development process are left out of consideration.

Human Rights.

If justice is to be more specifically defined and effectively applied, human rights must play a major role. As those rights are inherent in the personal dignity of every individual, their recognition suggests a universal consensus on the foundations of human coexistence. Human rights also make possible a consensus on the

conditions and aims of development.

Justice only exists where the rights of man are recognised by a society based on the rule of law and where the exercise of those rights is assured. At the same time, positive law applicable at a given time must always serve the aim of establishing an equitable order of coexistence for all. With this in view, positive law is always open to criticism and further development. How very much law and justice belong together is most clearly and effectively manifest in the concept of human rights.

Of course, one must not overlook or play down the fact that human rights are often blatantly disregarded. Furthermore, some cultures still have great difficulty reconciling those human rights with their own tradition on account of their European origin. Time and again disputes arise over the proper understanding of human rights and the correct interpretation of the instruments for their protection. All the same, human rights are today recognised, at least in principle, as the basis for the coexistence of people and nations in the one world, and their universal application is now hardly challenged. Human rights are therefore irreplaceable as the common basis for development cooperation, which is the joint responsibility of people with different religious or ideological convictions and different political aims. Or is there a better?

CHAPTER SIX

A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE SOCIAL TEACHING OF THE CHURCH, THE UNDERLYING THEOLOGICAL MOTIVATIONS AND POSSIBILITY FOR APPLICATION TO THE CORRESPONDING SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF AFRICA IN THE LIGHT OF THE APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION 'ECCLESIA IN AFRICA'.

1. A Continent Full of Bad News

I would like to begin this reflection with an X-ray of the social context of the African continent. There is an atmosphere of dramatic urgency concerning the continent which presents Africa as a land with a 'wounded face', 'a tragic historical past' and 'a bleak future'. The mass media, whether local or international generally display no good news from Africa on matters of politics, the economy, culture or social life-except perhaps on items such as sports and music. The general picture worldwide is that of a *Continent of Misery whose reality is trumpeted by all forms of statistical data whether 'fake or real', exaggerated or correct.*

Many Africans have actually started to doubt themselves, their ability and their hope for a better future and society. Some have given up. Some tell their own stories in a pessimistic and horrendous language. The intellectuals and the elite whose responsibility it is to build up their nations are fleeing abroad where possible for any available jobs, and when still at home are participating in the downgrading, oppression and marginalisation of their own peoples, either in military uniform, in civilian political offices or even in the private

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sector. One would notice a climate of worry in many quarters! *Gradually the western controlled mass media has succeeded in virtually writing off AFRICA as the continent synonymous with ecological disasters, hunger, drought, warring factions, economic depression, unemployment, dictatorships, civil wars, primitive cultural practices against men, women and children and the plague of AIDS (which is said to affect one out of every forty Africans).*

Malaria still remains the greatest killer and infant mortality is high. Comparatively, Africa has the largest number of refugees (in fact fifty per cent of the world population of refugees) not to speak of millions of displaced persons. In over twenty countries of Africa (out of fifty-five), the guns are still heard in 1996 and in many cases they are carried by underaged children. Machetes, den-guns and automatic rifles are freely used in the barbaric massacre of hundreds of thousands of people; and this is happening in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Sudan, Somalia, Burundi, Rwanda and has happened recently in South Africa, Angola, Mozambique, Chad, Mali, Biafra etc., claiming over twenty million lives in the last quarter of a century since 1960.³

The facts on the ground show that many regions of the continent do not enjoy good governance and the issues of legitimacy, responsibility, accountability and the distribution of national wealth to reach all on a fair and free level are simply non-existent. Africa's history is beset with betrayals, setbacks and stormy waters, and the land described as the 'cradle of civilisation' and 'the origin of mankind', is treated without respect or dignity in international matters. Others 'speak for' Africa and 'stand in for' Africa in their own affairs. The background of the slave trade and its attendant colonial and neo-colonial vestiges still overshadow the continent's 'present tense'.

³ Uzukwu, E.U., *A Listening Church - autonomy and communion in African Churches;* Orbis, NY, 1996, pp.1-2.

The burden of external debt, the arms trade, the violation of human rights and the requirement by western governments to link development aid with policies of demographic control, all these are issues which afflict the African nations.

There is value disorientation and widespread illiteracy leading to mental retardation for some and a spread injustice for many, whichever way one tries to look. Apathy has set in and social imbalances lead to increasing crime. Urbanisation, rural flight, the breakdown of law and order, corruption in high and low places, especially and embarrassingly by agents of law-enforcement, is not uncommon. On the other hand, there is the impact of wicked *structural adjustment policies which has unleashed more misery and suffering over the people, especially the poor through imposed foreign economic reform programmes teleguided by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and such economic wizards as the Clubs of London, Paris, Rome, etc. in the name of the 'free market'. Is man not more important than the economy?* The suffering poor are dying and a country like Nigeria which in 1970 had a per capita income of \$US 173, saw this figure rise in 1981 to \$US 1000, only to decline sharply in 1990 to \$US 230. In 1994 it was down to a mere \$US 100, showing clearly that the standard of living has not only stagnated but has declined, thereby adding to the level of poverty generally.⁴

It is in this setting that the question by Africa's most respected Cardinal Hyacinthe Thiandoum of Dakar at the opening of the Special Assembly of Africa of the Synod of Bishops in the Vatican convoked by the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, holds:⁵

In a continent full of bad news, how is the Christian message 'Good News' for our people? In the midst of an all-pervading despair, where lies the hope and optimism which the Gospel brings?⁶

Is this a pessimistic assessment which leaves no other chances open? It is this concrete socio-historical and realistic acceptance of the facts on ground which led the entire participants at the *African Synod* to agree without any doubt that:

One common situation is that Africa is full of problems in almost all our nations, there is abject poverty, tragic mismanagement of available scarce resources, political instability and social disorientation. The results stare us in the face: misery, wars, despair. In a world controlled by powerful nations, Africa has practically become an irrelevant appendix, often forgotten and neglected by all. The Church is part of this society in distress.⁷

His Holiness Pope John Paul II, agrees with this evaluation of the social context and reality of people in Africa, for in his Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* he observes that:

Africa is a continent where countless human beings ... are lying, as it were, on the edge of the road, sick, injured, disabled, marginalised and abandoned. They are in dire need of the Good Samaritan.⁸

⁴ Igiebor Nosa, *Tell Magazine*, Editorial Report, Lagos, 20th February, 1995, p.3.

⁵ On 6th January, 1989, the Pope during his Angelus message announced this initiative of great importance for the Church in order to promote an organic pastoral solidarity within the entire African Continent and nearby Islands'.

⁶ Cardinal Hyacinthe Cardinal Thiandoum, *Relatio Ante Disceptationem*, Vatican 11/4/94, n.2.

⁷ *Op.cit.* n.4.

⁸ Pope John Paul II; *Ecclesia in Africa*, n.47.

In the context of this reality the biblical picture of the Good Samaritan is consoling, for without him, what could have happened to the man travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho who fell into the hands of robbers?⁹

2. Signs of Hope

The Bishops of Africa described The Synod as a 'providential event of grace' for it took place when the continent of Africa was at a major critical cross-roads in social-political and economic development. We are meeting within the context of a world in desperate search of a *New World Order*, a world order that should not only be new, but also more just and human.¹⁰ There is hope, even in the present African situation. The Pope insists that the continent of Africa, in spite of its problems, contains a wealth of hope and a priceless cultural heritage which cannot be overlooked. Africa is basically a very rich continent endowed by the Creator with both human and natural resources. It has human qualities which it can offer to the churches and to humanity as a whole.

In his balanced assessment, the Pope cautions *Africans* to 'overcome every temptation to discouragement'.¹¹ It is a matter of joy to record the achievements of the Catholic Church in Africa, which are outstanding by any standards.

The African Church has attained some maturity ... There is increase in the number of ecclesiastical circumscriptions- native clergy, seminarians, candidates for institutes of consecrated life, missionary institutes, diocesan priests; increase in catechists ...

⁹ Luke 10:29-37.

¹⁰ *Relatio Ante Disceptationem*, op.cit.1.

¹¹ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, n.7.

high percentage of Bishops. ... There are significant accomplishments in the areas of inculturation and ecumenical dialogue, education, Catholic health facilities which make up 17 per cent of the health care institutions of the continent with a 14 per cent Catholic population.¹²

Pope Paul VI had, in 1964 on African soil, called Africa 'a new homeland for Christ'.¹³

And Pope John Paul II in his desire to give hope, against all apathy, lethargy and hopelessness in the light of the Synodal Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* says:

It seems that the hour of Africa has come, a favourable time which urgently invites Christ's messengers to launch out into the deep and to cast their nets for the catch.¹⁴

In the words of Cardinal Thiandoum,

In these tragic conditions, the Church in Africa must carry out her mission to offer our peoples the Good News of Christ's redemption, and be the Sacrament of God's Kingdom within our continent. In order to be able to carry out this mission effectively, she must be in constant dialogue and loving solidarity with the society in which she finds herself.¹⁵

¹² John Paul II, in op.cit. n.38.

¹³ cf. Paul VI, *Homily*

¹⁴ Luke 5:4; JP II *EIA* n.6, 12, 13.

¹⁵ Cardinal Hyacinthe Thiandoum, *Relatio Ante Disceptationem*, *ibid.*

3. **Evangelisation implies Social Thought and Action**

Any credible evangelisation in Africa in the present times must link faith with real life, the demands of social justice and spiritual life in an organic unit. This can be done if we are able to:

Determine the priorities emerging from the current social context in Africa;

Identify the principles of the Church's social teaching which can best be applied in this context;

Suggest the most appropriate ways to implement more effectively these principles in the African reality.

This is what social thought and action of the Church in English and Portuguese speaking Africa could achieve for its peoples. It would do the same for the entire African continent and indeed the whole world if sought for. It has done so for others in various places in the past. Why not in Africa?

One would actually add that the mission of evangelisation of the Church on the continent is bound up with a solid response to this entire problem of responding adequately to the *Social Question*. This is the scope of Catholic social thought. The Eighth Plenary Assembly of the Bishops of Africa (SECAM), held in Lagos, Nigeria in 1987, considered with remarkable clarity the question of the credibility and relevance of the Church's message in Africa which depended upon Bishops and priests and the lay faithful who followed Christ's example and would give witness of exemplary life and concluded that the cultures, wisdom and civilisations of the continent formed a veritable base upon which Christian social thought could draw its source from the realities of the African condition.

What is certainly called for here is the response of the Synod Fathers to the question: 'What is the Church in Africa, what must it carry out in order to be fully relevant and credible?'¹⁶

The answer certainly is to be found in the great wisdom embedded in Catholic social teaching (doctrine), a great source of light and of faith, capable of changing the evil intentions of man, and of retranslating the 'structural' and 'personal' evil abilities of mankind through the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ into an *'adumbratio'* (a foreshadowing of the 'already' but 'not yet' understanding of the Kingdom of God). Under this light, the human person has a dignity and right; society has order; justice, peace and love are not illusions. Freedom and responsibility have a meaning; life has a goal; salvation is a reality; the Gospel is powerful; faith and justice are linked; prayer and action are related.

The social teaching of the Church is a heritage which must be known, developed and preserved with fidelity by responding gradually to the new and emerging needs of human co-existence. Africa is in dire need of this social teaching.

4. **The Underlying Theological Motivations for the Church's Involvement in the 'Social Question'**

What are the theological reasons for the Church's involvement in the social question? The answer is straightforward.

Christ did not remain indifferent in the face of the vast and demanding imperatives of morality. Nor could the Church. In the spirit of the Church which is the spirit of Christ and relying upon her ample and solid doctrine, the Church intervenes in social

¹⁶ *Relatio Ante Disceptationem* of 11/4/94. 34 cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, 13/4/94. n.5.

matters ...¹⁷

With the above words of the Holy Father, the teaching office right from antiquity justifies its role and action with theological reasons in its involvement in all matters related, besides the spiritual, with the temporal plane.

a) Religious and Moral Mission

The great permanent tasks of mankind include the search for the establishment of peace, justice and development and the promotion and defence of human dignity. In these tasks the Church's intervention is based on her 'Religious and Moral Mission' on earth, a mission concerned with the full salvation of man, of the whole man, of the concrete man who fulfils his eternal vocation through a temporal history, in a complex of communities and societies.¹⁸

Several Magisterial documents buttress this argument which is not new. Pope John Paul insists that for the constant improvement of mankind, the Church has the right and the duty to intervene if she wishes to remain faithful to her mission, which, in Christ, is geared to the salvation of the whole man and of every man.¹⁹

Only thus could the precious dignity of man be respected and protected.

¹⁷ John Paul II, address at the opening of the third General Conference of the Latin-American Episcopate, 28th January, 1979; cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, 5/2/79, n.6, pp.4 and 5.

¹⁸ Pope John Paul II, address to the Sacred College of Cardinals 22/12/79 in Pontifical Commission *Iustitia et Pax*, Basis for Motivations and ways of the Church's intervention on socio-pastoral issues, Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, Heckel SJ, n.8, pp.8 and 16.

¹⁹ John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*; Matthew.28:18-20.

In the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, this salvation is considered as 'Liberation from everything that oppresses man'²⁰, hereby linking 'Evangelisation and human advancement in a profound manner'.²¹ It does not envisage both as identical, but it sees the need for an integral personality and an integral approach to salvation in the light of Christ. The constant tradition of the Church from apostolic times has always forcefully and clearly reaffirmed this mission to proclaim the 'Good News of Salvation' as a mandate from the Lord; the aim of evangelisation is to affect all areas of human existence like Jesus the Lord did during his earthly life.²²

'Go out to the whole world, proclaim the Gospel to all creation'. John XXIII calls the Church *Mater et Magistra* and so she is. Her age, continuity and experience places her in a unique position also to carry out this mission. The evangelical character of this mission is explained by a number of considerations some of which include the fact that²³

By giving attention to people's temporal needs and aspirations, the Church follows the Lord's command, imitating Christ, implementing his concern for the poor, the weak and the sinner; Since Christ has united himself with every man, thus confirming man's ontological reality as image of God and his vocation for God's filiation, and bestowing upon him an unsurpassable dignity which reflects on all aspects of life, the Church in so doing incarnates herself in these human persons. Concrete service to man is therefore a highly 'religious' service inspired by God and reaching God himself;

²⁰ EN 9.

²¹ EN 31.

²² Cf. Documents of Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*; *Gaudium et Spes*; John.21:15-19; Acts 1:8; Mark 16:16.

²³ Cf. Pontifical Council *Iustitia et Pax*; Basis for motivations, op.cit. pp.8-9.

Since Christ is the perfect man who reveals man to an inner conversion, a moral reorientation which even leads to building human communities of love and justice, the Church shares in this spiritual anthropology and 'in persona Christi' becomes an expert in humaneness. John Paul II would buttress this point in his Encyclical letter where he writes that 'Man is the first road of the Church'.²⁴

b) Historical Motivations

Another aspect of the evangelical character of this mandate is the twofold historical motivation, the first which states that

by accomplishing her mission in the history of certain nations, the Church has contributed to the making of that history, of its values, and even of its institutions and unity. This is incarnational theology from the viewpoint of historicity. Since all are on pilgrimage, the Church which is already 'the Kingdom of God' on earth is 'bound to these people' up to the point that her elimination would mean the mutilation of their socio-cultural patrimony.²⁵

I am thinking here particularly, of nations that can be considered Catholic, especially of nations and peoples which at times had a centuries old tradition in this connection.²⁶

Another foundation for this involvement is in the fact

that the Church's spiritual and moral mission finds an expectation ground in man's and people's aspirations, in their wisdom and efforts for advancement. This is recognised and supported by the Church. In his encyclical letter *Redemptor Hominis*, John Paul II points out that today, more than ever before, mankind has a need of the Church's services:²⁷

In this way much of the human family has become, it seems, more aware, in all humanity's various spheres of existence, of how really necessary the Church of Christ, her mission and her service are to humanity.²⁸

This is explained in the international recognition the Holy See enjoys with several nations; in international gatherings; by non-Christian nations that entertain diplomatic relationships with the Holy See, etc. We can call this enlarged ecumenism, for the Church's dynamic openness corresponds to people's expectations and motivates the Church to engage in an ever wider dialogue with and for all humanity.

5. Historical Overview of the Church's Teaching

Three Pillars have over the years formed the foundation upon which contemporary social teachings are based, namely:

the teachings of the Fathers in the early Church; the teachings of the great medieval scholastics and theologians; the teachings of the popes since the last century, particularly since May 1891 with the epoch-making encyclical *Rerum Novarum* of Pope Leo XIII which marked a spectacular era in the history of the Church's social teaching.

²⁴ John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*.

²⁵ Cf. John Paul II *Address to Diplomatic Corps*, 14/1/80 op.cit. p.20; *Address to Civil Authorities of the Polish Government*, 2/6/79, op.cit. p.30.

²⁶ John Paul II, cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition 22/1/79, No.4, pp.6,7. Also *Address to Diplomatic Corps*, 12/1/79, op.cit. p.25.

²⁷ John Paul II, ref. *RH*, n.4, para.1.

²⁸ John Paul II, *RH* n.4, para.1.

It is important therefore right at the outset of this reflection to establish that the social content of the Christian message has been developed from the very first centuries and *that the social teaching of the Catholic Church is the fruit of two thousands years of Christian reflection, action and spirituality in the light of the Gospel*. The contemporary formulation of this message which continues to enrich itself from new experiences cannot be understood if its ancient roots are ignored. One might even add, taking into consideration the rich ideas in the Bible (Old and New Testaments), that social teaching is as old as mankind itself. Already at Creation, God made man 'in His own image and likeness', thereby elevating the dignity of man (Genesis 1:26).

The Creation story states that He made Adam a helpmate, Eve (Genesis 2:20-24): 'It is not good that man shall be alone. I shall make him a helpmate (partner)'. Even when Cain, one of the two sons of Adam, killed his brother Abel, God did not allow that Cain should be killed in revenge; rather the Bible records: 'If anyone kills Cain vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold' (Genesis 4:15). Such action portrays the dignity of human life which the Creator ordered should be preserved not destroyed even in the face of the deeds of Cain. Already in the Old Testament, Abraham pleaded for Sodom and Gomorrah not to be destroyed because of their sins (Genesis 18:19) and on Mount Sinai God Himself gave Moses the tablet of stone upon which was written the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) which guaranteed the basic law for the preservation of life, of property, of freedom of speech and movement, of integrity and above all the foundational belief in one supreme God to whom belongs all respect and reverence.

6. Contemporary Events and the Development of Social Teaching

Society is not static but dynamic. Various historical, philosophical and theological developments of thought served to clarify to the Church herself the role and thinking of the Church in the evolution

of societies. For example, the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century and the French Revolution in the eighteenth century were major struggles of society, which sowed the seeds of the emancipation of many nations of Europe from the spiritual, political and social influences of the Papacy and the Church of the age. While the old societies crumbled out of a world which earlier on had been marked by institutional and cultural links to Christianity, new structures emerged which seemed to shape the responses of the popes to the emerging questions posing a challenge. With the development of modern times, each successive pope marks his tenure by evolving a teaching which coincides with the needs of the people as a Gospel response. John XXIII's *Mater et Magistra* (1961) and *Pacem in Terris* (1963) responded with confidence and clarity to the spirit of the times. This trend has continued to date.

That the Church should have a social teaching is nowadays taken for granted. Christian history in its entirety in some way always did have one. In Romans 13:1-7, St Paul reflected upon the relationship between Christians and the State. St Augustine far back in the fourth century considered the *Just War Theory*. The ownership of property always gained the attention of the early Church Fathers.²⁹ John T. Novaran in his book *The Scholastic Analysis of Usury*, 1975, has discussed in detail the medieval school men and their views on the propriety of charging interest on loans.

Further instances abound. In the sixteenth century, Bartolome de las Casas and Francisco Victoria, both of them Spanish Dominicans, wrote vigorously about the problems of colonisation and the treatment given to indigenous peoples in territories newly conquered by Spain. The entire Old Testament, the New Testament and the early Church till our day has always had reason to reflect on social realities in the light of faith. In 1864, Wilhelm Von Ketteler, Bishop of Mainz, Germany produced a book *The Worker*

²⁹Avila Charles, *Ownership, Early Christian Teaching*, London, Sheed and Ward, NY, Orbis 1983.

Question and Christianity and called for a just solution to the problems of society. All through 2000 years of Christendom the Church had gained experience of society and was constantly developing a social conscience, social teaching and moral criteria. It should have come as no surprise, therefore, when the Catholic Church, in the person of the Bishop of Rome, the Pope, began to speak out on social issues. Yet it did: *Rerum Novarum* produced shock waves throughout Europe and became a landmark in the history of Christian social principles. Not only has it proved to be the first in a long series, but many later documents were composed explicitly to commemorate its publication, as some of their titles bear witness. Catholic 'social doctrine' or 'social teachings' (the two terms are interchangeably used 'doctrine' referring to the theoretical aspect of the problems; 'teaching' to the historical and practical aspects) constitutes a 'rich heritage' which the Church has progressively drawn from biblical insights, the tradition of the early Fathers; scholastic philosophy; theological reflection and the contemporary experience of the people of God struggling to live out faith in justice.³⁰

7. Identity of Social Doctrine

The documents are systematic and contain a reference formula that could only be peculiar to the unity and continuity of the tradition known to be Catholic, universal, apostolic and holy. The popes hardly contradict one another. One truth is extended into another. One would be struck also, going through the various social encyclicals (and there are over ten of these now) to discover the tone, unity and variety of subject matter discussed as an organic whole. The Fathers of the Church maintain a common anthropological, ethical, theological and contextual view of man and

³⁰ Schulteis, M. and Henriot, P., *Our Best Kept Secret: The Rich Heritage of Catholic Social Teaching*, CAFOD English, 1988, p.4.

history. Whether the topic of the social question be on the family, property, economics, politics, culture, ecology, technology, capital, labour, armament, peace, justice, women, international trade, aid, development, Third World, communism, poverty, war and other global issues, the popes always had reason to have recourse to earlier documents and to expand upon them. If there are changes in tone, this applies more or less to the distinctive character and personality of the pope who is writing. Emphasis on topic depends on the contextual historical reality of the place and time. Generally however, an attempt has been made to look at the social question from a global perspective. In the words of Schulties and Henriot:

The body of Catholic social teaching is by no means a fixed set of tightly developed doctrine. Rather, it is a collection of key themes which have evolved in response to the challenges of the day. Rooted in the biblical orientations and reflections on Christian tradition, the social teaching shows a lively evolution marked by shifts both in attitude and methodology. What informs the teaching of John Paul II today differs from what informed the teaching of Leo XIII almost a century ago, even though both ground their message in the same faith, in the God revealed by and in Jesus Christ. This means that the approach taken in the Church's social teaching has been undergoing some significant shifting, to which we should pay attention in order to appreciate its contemporary relevance.³¹

With the Second Vatican Council, a new period in the life of the Church was introduced, emphasising that 'it is the task of the

³¹ Op.cit. p.11

Church to hear, distinguish and interpret the many voices of the age'.³²

8. Social Doctrine promotes Social Progress

While addressing an audience of experts on the social teaching of Christianity, the Holy Father, John Paul II recalls that:

Today social doctrine is called upon with increasingly greater urgency to make its own specific contribution to evangelisation, to dialogue with the world; to the Christian interpretation of reality; and to the guidelines for pastoral action in order to enlighten the various initiatives on the temporal plane with sound principles. Indeed, economic, social, political and cultural structures are experiencing profound and rapid transformations which put the very future of human society at stake and thus they need a sure orientation. It is a matter of promoting real social progress which, in order to effectively ensure the common good of all men, requires a just organisation of these structures. — If this is not done, there will be a return of great multitudes toward that situation of a 'quasi-servile-Yoke' which Leo XIII spoke about in *Rerum Novarum*.³³

Who would question the bold prophecy and clear language of this text? It is thus obvious that the 'grave drama' of the contemporary

³² GS, 44.

³³ John Paul II, Address at audience 9/5/91. *For the Study of Catholic Social Teachings in the Formation of Priests. Guidelines*, Rome 1988, 1:2. cf. *Acts Leonis XIII* (1891).

world caused by the numerous threats that often accompany human progress, cannot leave anyone indifferent. There is urgent and continued need for the irreplaceable evangelising presence of the Church in the complex world of temporal realities which condition the destiny of mankind.

9. Guidelines of Catholic Social Teaching

Very recently, in fact in 1988, the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education produced the *Guidelines for the Study and Teaching of the Church's Social Doctrine in the Formation of Priests*.

This guideline became necessary due to the emerging needs of conciliar renewal since 1965 and the need for the Church to bridge the frightening gap between *Faith and Justice: the Pulpit and Real Life; Prayer and Action*.

The guideline itself, divided into six chapters deals with

The nature of social doctrine;

Historical dimension of social doctrines;

Permanent principles and values;

Criteria for judgement;

Directives for social action, and Formation.

10. The Nature of Social Doctrine

In this section it is important to focus on the nature of social doctrine, outlining its constitutive elements, its autonomy, theological nature, continuity and development. In the guidelines for the study and teaching of the Church's social doctrine in the formation of priests released by the Vatican in 1988, these topics are treated in detail. In this lecture effort is made only at summary presentation to afford the necessary background towards a better understanding and appreciation of the discussion. Detailed study could be undertaken from the original sources.

11. Constitutive Elements

On the constitutive elements and nature of social doctrine, the social teaching of the Church draws its origin from the encounter of the evangelical message and its ethical requirements with the problems that arise in the life of society. The needs that emerge from this encounter become the subject of moral reflection which matures in the Church through scientific research, but also through the experience of the Christian community which must measure itself every day against the various situations of misery and, above all, with the problems created by the appearance and development of the phenomenon of industrialisation and of the socio-economic systems related to it.

This doctrine is formed through the use of theology and philosophy which give it foundation, and through the human and social sciences which complete it. It is projected into the ethical aspects of life, without neglecting the technical aspects of the problems, in order to judge them with more criteria. By basing itself 'on principles which are always valid' it implies 'contingent judgements' since it develops in relation to the changeable circumstances of history, and is directed essentially toward 'Christian action or practice'.³⁴

12. Autonomy of Social Doctrine

The autonomy of social doctrine has taken place since its inception in the nineteenth century. Its sources, its foundation and object, its subject and content, its end and methods have helped to make Catholic social teachings an autonomous subject within Theology, and Social Morality. It is thus in both theory and practice a distinct discipline.³⁵ 'Thus it can be stated that social doctrine has an identity of its own with a well-defined theological profile.'³⁶

³⁴ *Guidelines*, op.cit. pp.9-10.

³⁵ John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens* 4/9/81, n.3, *AAS* 80 (1988), p.571.

³⁶ *Guidelines*, op.cit. p.10.

13. Sources, Foundation and Primary Object of CST

The sources of social doctrine are sacred scripture, the teaching of the Fathers and great theologians of the Church, and the Magisterium itself. Its foundation and primary object are the dignity of the human person with its inalienable rights which form the nucleus of the 'truth about men'.³⁷ This dignity of the human person and the complex problems it poses for man in society we call the *Social Question*.

14. Subject of Social Doctrine

The subject of Catholic social teaching (CST) is the whole Christian community in harmony with, and under the guidance of its legitimate pastors, of whom lay persons, with their Christian experience, are active collaborators. Thus, the subject begins with man in his total societal humanity.

15. Content of Social Doctrine

The whole content of social doctrine, in summarising the view about man, humanity and society, reflects the whole man, Social Man, as the particular subject and fundamental reality of Christian anthropology.³⁸

16. Theological Nature of Social Doctrine

The theological nature of Catholic social teachings was already pronounced by Pope John XXIII where in *Mater et Magistra* he wrote: "this social doctrine is an integral part of the Christian conception of life".³⁹ In other words, social doctrine has a highly developed theological character as it oscillates between the Gospel and real life and unites both, as Paul VI rightly recognises, "in

³⁷ John Paul II. *Allocution Esta Hora* to the Third General Conference of the Latin-American Bishops in Puebla, January 28, 1979, part 1, n.9 - Ref. *AAS* 71, 1979, p.195.

³⁸ *Guidelines*, op.cit., pp.10-11, Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, March 26, 1967, n.13, *AAS* 59 (1963), p.263.

³⁹ John XXIII, *MM* n.222 *AAS*, 53 1961, p.453.

strong bonds of an anthropological, theological and spiritual nature such that charity, justice and peace are inseparable in the Christian promotion of the human person".⁴⁰ This theological nature concurs with the Church's threefold task in every age, situation and society, namely, announcement of the truth about human dignity and rights, denouncement of unjust situations, contribution to positive changes in society and real human progress.⁴¹

17. Threefold dimension of Social Doctrine

Thus, as a science of revelation (theology), of art (philosophy) and of practice (humanities), the social doctrine of the Church envelops a threefold dimension which at the same time make up its structure, namely, *Theoretical, Historical and Practical*. These three dimensions are interrelated and one would also add inseparable.⁴²

18. Continuity of Social Doctrine

The term continuity is used to express the relationship between the documents, even if each one responds in a specific way to the problems of its times. In spite of differences in formulation, methodological procedure and styles, the documents do not compromise the substantial identity and unity of its teachings.⁴³

Owing to its character of mediation between the Gospel and concrete social and human realities, the need for a responsive update to new world situations is accepted.⁴⁴

The initial object of this doctrine was the so-called 'Social Question' or the whole series of socio-economic problems which arose in certain areas of the European and American world

subsequent to the *Industrial Revolution*. Today, the *Social Question* is no longer limited to particular geographic areas. It has a worldwide dimension (Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*) and includes many aspects, including political ones, linked to the relationship between classes and the transformation of society which has already taken place and is still in progress. In any case, *Social Question* and *Social Doctrine* are co-related terms. Thus, its continuity and development from Leo XIII in 1891 to John Paul II in 1996 shows that social doctrine preserves a substantial identity as a doctrinal *Corpus* with great coherency attentive to evolving situations and is not reducible to a closed system.

As an example, the 'poor' whom we refer to frequently are not the 'proletarians' of Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum*, nor the unemployed in Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno*. Today, the poor have emerged as an international, intercultural and inter-religious 'club', very large and found everywhere. They are in those rich Western and American societies which until now were exclusively enjoying the goods of the earth with political freedom, societal liberalism and economic security.

They are also found in unquantifiable numbers in those parts of the southern globe now equated with the Third World. In such areas, poverty has become systematised and almost institutionalised. They are also found in the new emerging ex-communist countries where freedom, dignity and humanity until now were 'foreign' concepts.

Furthermore, the problems of the 'poor' no longer involve only the unjust differences between classes, but today encompass enormous imbalances between the so-called rich and poor nations.

19. Permanent Principles and Fundamental Values

Let me state that these principles have not been formulated by the Church organically in one single document, but are found throughout the entire historical evolution of her social doctrine.

These principles are not complete, but simply indicate the important

⁴⁰ Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (December 8, 1975), n.29, 31 Ref. AAS 68, 1976, pp.25-26.

⁴¹ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n.12ff, ref. also John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, n.1.

⁴² *Guidelines*, op.cit. pp.11 and 12.

⁴³ *Guidelines* p.16.

⁴⁴ Paul VI *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, p.29.

ones, such as the dignity of the human person, human rights, person-society relationship, the common good, solidarity and subsidiarity, human structures and community of persons, the universal purpose of created things, etc. In the context of Africa therefore, the principles of the Church's social teaching which can best be applied are:

a) The Human Person

The human person is a creature of God, made in His image and elevated to a supernatural destiny transcending earthly life. Man, therefore, as an intelligent and free being subject to rights and of duties, 'is the primary principle and, one can say, the heart and soul of the social teaching of the Church'.⁴⁵

Continuing, the Church Fathers hold that 'according to the almost unanimous opinion of believers and unbelievers alike, all things on earth should be related to man as their centre and crown'.⁴⁶

No wonder the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in *Instructio Libertatis Conscientia* (on Christian Freedom and Liberation) of March 22nd, 1986⁴⁷ says:

The Church will never tire but will insist on the dignity of persons, against all slavery, exploitation and manipulation perpetrated to the harm of people, not only in the field of politics and economics, but also in the cultural, ideological and medical fields.

⁴⁵ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n.17.

⁴⁶ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n.12.

⁴⁷ *AAS* 79, 1987, p.586.

b) Human Rights

Christ showed that he was always attentive to the needs of people especially the poorest. Human rights derive by an intrinsic logic from the dignity of the human person. It is thus the challenge and mission of the Church to promote and fight for these rights whenever the evil head of human degradation raises itself.

c) Relationship between person and society

The human person is a social being by its nature - that is by its innate needs and its co-natural inclination to communicate with others. This human sociality is the basis of all forms of society and of the ethical requirements which are inscribed in it. Man is not sufficient in himself to attain his full development: he needs others and society. Igbo culture solved this dilemma in existential wisdom by maintaining, as J.S. Mbiti once formulated it, 'I am because we are, and since we are, I am'.

d) The Common Good

The common good is a fundamental value governing social life. John XXIII defines the common good as 'all those social conditions which favour the full development of human personality'.⁴⁸ Philosophically speaking, the 'common good' is higher than private interests, although it is inseparable from the good of a human person. It commits public authorities to recognise, respect, regulate, protect and promote human rights and facilitate the fulfilment of the respective duties. In fact, public authorities and the state itself exist to fulfil the

⁴⁸ *MM*, *AAS* 53, 1961, p.417; Pius XII Christmas message *Con Sempre Nuova*, December 24, 1942, *AAS* 35, 1943, p.13.

demands of the common good. The Church considers the common good as a value in the service and organisation of social life and of the new order of human existence,⁴⁹ and therefore stresses its human meaning and ability to animate social structures in their globality and in their particular sectors. The Church encourages in-depth transformations according to the criterion of social justice.

e) Solidarity and Subsidiarity

Pope John Paul II in his encyclical letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* has particularly underlined the importance of the principle of solidarity, identifying it as a human and Christian virtue.⁵⁰ According to the principle of solidarity, 'each person, as a member of society is indissolubly linked to the destiny of society itself and, by dint of the Gospel, to the destiny of all men's salvation'.⁵¹

Such teaching applies to Africa now in great need for foundations of unity.

The ethical demands of this principle require all men, groups and local communities, associations and organisations, nations and continents, to participate in the management of all the activities of economic, political and cultural life while overcoming any purely

⁴⁹ *Guidelines*, p.40.

⁵⁰ John Paul II, *SRS* nn.39-40.

⁵¹ *Guidelines*, p.40.

individualistic conception.⁵²

On the other hand, a very important principle governing social life is subsidiarity, which is to be considered as the complement of solidarity.

The principle of subsidiarity maintains that,

the state or any other authority should not prevent or take over responsibility from a person, group, or community or the other former levels of action where these have competence and ability to carry out such activities and achieve expected results on their own level of competence.⁵³

The principal of subsidiarity protects the human person, local communities and intermediary bodies from the danger of losing their legitimate autonomy and competence.

The Church fights for subsidiarity in so far as this principle by reason of man's dignity, promotes respect for what is most human in the organisation of social life and the safeguarding of the rights of peoples in relations between individual societies and universal society.⁵⁴

f) Human Structures and Communities of Person

In modern day societies, there is the danger caused by technical and

⁵² Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, nn.30-32; John Paul II, Discourse *Je desire* to the 68th Session of the International Labour Conference (ILO), United Nations, June 15, 1982; *AAS* 74, 1982, p.992ff.

⁵³ Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, May 15, 1931, *AAS*, 23, p.203.

⁵⁴ *Guidelines*, op.cit. p.41; John XXIII *Pacem in Terris*, April 11, 1963, *AAS*, p.294; John Paul II *Laborem Exercens*, *AAS*, 76, p.616.

mechanistic concepts of life that tend to reduce man as a 'cog in the wheel' of the state. Such structural threats do not leave room for the development of a true humanism. In many nations the state is transformed into a huge administrative machine which invades all areas of life and drags man into a state of fear and anxiety causing his depersonalisation, threatening his dignity as person, reducing his personal and social freedom, among other freedoms.

The Church teaches⁵⁵ that associations, structures, private corporations, public and state apparatus are legitimate in so far as they reserve proper space for the person and encourage the growth of collaboration under the common good. Organisations of state and human structures approach persons and invite them to participate in the common tasks promoting the economy, forming labour or capital unions, and creating intermediate bodies;⁵⁶ good implementation of these principles relating to person and structures enables the overcoming of all tensions between socialisation and personalisation.

g) The Universal Purpose of Created Goods

All through, the life of Christ and the witness of his followers on earth, has shown that there is universal purpose of all created goods, namely that all men and women share in them. There is enough wealth for everybody but the distribution stumbles on unquantifiable greed, ignorance and egotism. The Church's social teachings affirm with these 'characteristic principles of Christian social concern'⁵⁷ that the goods of the earth are for the use of everyone in order to satisfy their right to a life consonant with the dignity of the person and the needs of the family. The Vatican Council Fathers framed it this way:

⁵⁵ John XXIII, *MM*, AAS, p.46.

⁵⁶ John Paul II, *LEN*, 14.

⁵⁷ John Paul II, *SRS*, n.42.

In fact, God intended the earth and all that it contains for the use of every human being and people. Thus, as all men follow justice and unite in charity, created goods should abound for them on a reasonable basis.⁵⁸

It follows that the right to private property, natural, valid and necessary in itself is not absolute and must be restricted within the limits imposed by social function. John Paul II in *Laborem exercens* subordinates the unbridled claims to right of private property where unjust situations exist under the universal right to property by all persons:

Christian tradition has never upheld this right to private property as absolute and untouchable. On the contrary, it has always understood this right within the broader context of the right common to all to use the goods of the whole creation, the right to private property is subordinated to the right to common use, to the fact that the goods are meant for everyone.⁵⁹

Finally, Catholic social teaching shows that the values inherent in the dignity of the person when lived show the sure path not only to personal perfection, but also to putting a true humanism and a new social existence into practice. These values include truth, freedom, justice, solidarity, peace and charity, which we call Christian love, extending to friends and enemies alike and seeing entire humanity as a global unit of brothers and sisters.

⁵⁸ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n.69.

⁵⁹ John Paul II, *LE*, n.14.

20. The Competence and Limitation of the Church

We are very conscious of the competence and limitations of the Church in this field and pretence must not be made to provide a solution to the entire dramatic situation of the modern world. In fact, the Church proposes no alternative ideology, no social, political or economic system. This is not the level of its action nor its competence.

On the other hand, the Church can and must, in 'the light of the Gospel', provide the principles and necessary guidelines for the correct organisation of social life for the dignity of the human person and for the common good.

Its proper role is to interpret the moral value of social activities and to offer social guidelines which are in conformity with the Gospel's view of human dignity.⁶⁰

During the 1960s and 1970s a debate took place in some Catholic circles about the social doctrine of the Church, its meaning, its present relevance and even its existence. This doctrine, for some critics, represented nothing more than an ideological option in front of more operational ideologies such as socialism and communism. Others viewed the social teaching of the Church as a compendium of Papal Encyclicals, whose literal quotation appeared of little help for understanding the role of the Church in modern societies. Pope John Paul II had reason to consider these critics seriously, for he wrote:

⁶⁰ Carrier, H SJ *The Social Doctrine of the Church Revisited*, Vatican City, Pub. by Iustitia et Pax, Rome, p.12; cf. also John Paul II, *SRS* (1987), n.1.

The Church's social doctrine is not a 'third way' between liberal capitalism and Marxist collectivism, nor even a possible alternative to other solutions less radically opposed to one another: rather it constitutes a category of its own. Nor is it an ideology, but rather the accurate formulation of the results of a careful reflection on the complex realities of human existence, in society and in the international order, in the light of faith and of the Church's tradition. Its main aim is to interpret these realities, determining their conformity with or divergence from the lines of the Gospel teaching on man and his vocation, a vocation which is at once earthly and transcendent; its aim is thus to guide Christian behaviour. It therefore belongs to the field, not of ideology, but of theology and in particular of moral theology.⁶¹

21. Pontifical Documents on Social Teaching

a) On the Slave Trade

Pius II (1458-64) - Denunciation of slave trade

Leo X (1513-21) - Denunciation of slave trade

Paul III (1534-49) - Denunciation of slave trade

Urban VIII (1623-44) - Denunciation of slave trade

Benedict XIV (1740-58) - Denunciation of slave trade

Pius VII (1800-23) - Denunciation of slave trade

St Pius X (1903-14) - Denunciation of slave trade

Lacrimabile statu (1912)

b) On Racism

Leo XIII - Denunciation of Racism

Pius XI - Denunciation of Racism, 1922

Pius XII - Denunciation of Racism, 1940

⁶¹ John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 1988, n.41.

John XXII - Denunciation of Racism
Pontifical Commission 'Iustitia et Pax' - The Church and Racism Towards a more fraternal society (1988)

c) Major Papal Documents on Social Teaching

Leo XIII - *Rerum Novarum* (1891) - rights and obligations of workers, employers, State, Church.

Pius XI - *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) - Common Good, Subsidiarity.

Pius XI - *Social Justice, Social Charity*

Pius XII - *La Solemnita* (1941) - Radio Message on Private Property and Social Order.

Pius XII - *Christmas Radio Message on Peace and International Order* of 1939, 1940, 1950, 1955 (nothing is lost by peace, everything is lost by war).

Pius XII - *On Democracy*, 1944.

Pius XII - *Discourse on Dangers of technological conception of social life and on economic order and enterprise* (1950; 1956).

Benedict XV - *War Ad Beatissimi* (1914)

John XXIII - *Mater et Magistra* (1961)

John XXIII - *Pacem in Terris* (1963)

Paul VI - *Gaudium et Spes* (1965)

Paul VI - *Populorum Progressio* (1967)

Paul VI - *Octogesimo Adveniens* (1971)

Paul VI - *Justice in the World* (1971)

Paul VI - *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975)

John Paul II - *Redemptor Hominis* (1979)

John Paul II - *Dives in Misericordia* (1980)

John Paul II - *Laborem Exercens* (1981)

John Paul II - *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987)

John Paul II - *Centesimus Annus* (1991)

d) Some Documents of Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Vatican City

Ways of Peace - Papal messages for the World Days of Peace (1968-1986).

The Holy See at the Service of Peace - Pope John Paul II Addresses to the Diplomatic Corps (1978-1988).

The Church and Human Rights, Working Paper No.1, 1975.

What have you done to your homeless brother? The Church and the housing problem, 1987; Cardinal Roger Etchegaray.

An Ethical Approach to the International Debt Question, 1986; Cardinal Roger Etchegaray.

The International Arms Trade - An Ethical Reflection, 1994; Cardinal Roger Etchegaray.

The Church and Racism - Towards a more Fraternal Society, 1988; Cardinal Roger Etchegaray.

The Decade of Action to combat Racism and Racial Discrimination (1973-1983). Some contributions of the Church, No.4.

The Universal Purpose of Created Things (1978).

International Economics: Interdependence and Dialogue - contributions of the Holy See on the occasion of UNCTAD VI, 1984.

Commitment to Peace - contributions of the Holy See to the Disarmament Debate, 1984.

The Social Teaching of John Paul II, Vols.1-10 (edited and presented by Rev. Roger Heckel, SJ; Mgr. Rossi; Mgr. William Murphy; Dr. Giorgio Filibeck; Rev. Jan P. Schotte, CICM).

e) **Other Documents from/on Africa and the Vatican**

Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education: *Guidelines for the Study and Teaching of the Church's Social Doctrine in the Formation of Priests*, 1988.

SECAM Document: *Promoting Evangelisation in Co-responsibility*, 1974 in Rome (Declaration of the Bishops of Africa and Madagascar present at the Third Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops 20/10/74). In *La Documentation Catholique* (1974), 994-956.

Nuntius - Message of the Africa Synod 6/5/94 in *L'Osservatore Romano* (English Language Edition) 11/5/94, p.6.

Relatio Ante Disceptationem 11/4/94 in *L'Osservatore Romano* 13/4/94. *Relatio Post Disceptationem* 22/4/94 in *L'Osservatore Romano* 22/4/94, p.8.

Lineamenta (Africa Synod), General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, Rome, 1989.

Instrumentum Laboris (Africa Synod), General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, Rome, 1992.

Ecclesia in Africa, John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, September 14, 1994.

SECAM Message of the Eighth Plenary Assembly in Lagos, Nigeria (19 July 1987) - *La Documentation Catholique* 84 (1987) 1024-1026.

Situation of the Church in Africa and Madagascar - Some Factors and Observations, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, 16th April 1994 (6-8).

Office of Church Statistics, *The Church in Africa: Numbers and Statistics* (1978-1992) in *L'Osservatore Romano*, 15th April 1994, p.6.

Message *Africae Terrarium* (29/10/67), 3, *AAS* 59 (1967) 1074-1075.

John Paul II - Homily at Mass Commemorating the 500th Anniversary of Evangelisation in Angola, Luanda 7/6/92 (*AAS* 1993) 511-512.

The Social Teaching of the Catholic Bishops of Kenya 1960-1995: *The Conscience of Society*, edited by Rodrigo Mejia, SJ, Paulines Africa, 1995.

Weltkirche: A Documentation of all the Statements, Communique and Position Papers of the Episcopal Conference and Catholic Institutions and Churches of Africa, Asia and Latin America. (Published by Adveniat, Missio and Misereor, Germany), ISSN 0935-6509.

22. Conclusion and Application to Africa

Actually, in giving a historical overview of the social teaching of the Church as we have done, we both directly and indirectly touched on its relevance and applicability to the corresponding social problems of various African countries. A few events on the continent of Africa seem to draw attention to *the need for a concerted effort of the relevant Church authorities in the gradual development of a continental approach to promote knowledge, spread and practice of the demands of Catholic social teachings.*

Following the 1988 Pan-African Seminar on Justice and Peace organised by SECAM in Roma, Lesotho in 1988; the consultation process of SECAM with the various Bishops' Conferences and regional groups; the meeting of representatives of the French-speaking African Bishops' Conferences in Yaounde, July 1993; the African Synod of 1994 with the post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, and the current meeting in Harare for representatives of the English and Portuguese-speaking countries of Africa on Social Thought and Social Action, it does seem to me that the time is ripe for the formation of a permanent SECAM continental body to define, promote and initiate activities which relate to the social teaching of the Church.

Secondly, practical encouragement should be given to various individual groups, institutional, local, national and regional initiatives which work for the articulation of these teachings. It is not enough merely to formulate a social doctrine. It must be translated into reality. The several areas of application of these teachings in Africa include: democracy, the economy, lay participation in politics, education, agricultural resources, social and development projects, work, industrialisation, Church and culture, liberation, refugees, wars, the burden of international debt which has led to currency devaluation in many countries, to mention but a few.

a) Problems of the knowledge and spread of Catholic Social Teaching in Africa

One must however address the lack of adequate knowledge of these teachings due to the overbearing presence of 'too much of European character and thought in the development of Catholic social teachings'. This problem needs deeper study and evaluation for a proper contextual adaptation of the teachings.

The documents are not available in simplified texts or in local languages for the rural workers in African societies. In fact, many of the documents are written in professional language and jargon, a point which needs some form of consideration.

Perhaps local theologians are challenged to reduce the documents to simple language for the lay faithful.

In many African countries like Nigeria, the documents of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) are not easily available in bookshops or libraries. Where can you easily obtain an Encyclical?

Knowledge of the contents are not clear to the priests who could use them in sermons, let alone the faithful. If the priests do not know or preach on these doctrines, how would the faithful know of these teachings and live them out in daily life? The blind cannot lead the blind.

In the training of future priests, adequate place is not given during formation for a proper knowledge and education in Catholic social teaching. This matter also needs to be addressed.

b) What must the African Church do?

Self-Reliance. African nations must learn gradually to depend on their own capacities in every field. This corresponds to subsidiarity thinking. No outside assistance can take the place of self-help. Social and economic action-

that is, the increase of one's own productive capacities—certainly take on a particular importance in this sense.

Education and Formation. Of primary importance in the responsibility of developing nations is the tasks of formation and education (both have an economic dimension as well) which is one of the most important requisites for the success of the work of development of the whole person. In the words of Pope John Paul II:

The development of peoples cannot consist in the fact that developing nations simply copy the economic, social and political models of industrialised nations. The destruction of the cultural richness of these countries would not only bring with it grave internal disturbances but also weighty consequences for the growing unity of the community of peoples, a unity that cannot form itself on the basis of a levelled and unitary civilisation. Has the Church in Africa sufficiently formed the lay faithful, enabling them to assume competently their civic responsibilities and to consider socio-political problems in the light of the Gospel and of faith in God?⁶²

This is certainly a task belonging to Christians to bring to bear upon the social fabric an influence aimed at changing not only ways of thinking but also the very structures of society, and 'rather on the basis of the rich variety of human cultures'.⁶³

Witness of Action. On this matter of relevance and

⁶² John Paul II *EIA*, n.54.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

credibility the Holy Father, with reference to the Church's evangelising mission in the field of justice and peace, says:

Today more than ever, the Church is aware that her Social Doctrine will gain credibility more immediately from witness of action than as a result of its internal logic and consistency...⁶⁴

Christians must be formed to live the social implications of the Gospel in such a way that their witness will become a prophetic challenge to whatever hinders the true good of the men and women of Africa and of every other continent.⁶⁵

Integral Evangelisation. When understood as human promotion, the defence of human rights, the protection of life guarantee of jobs, etc.

... evangelising means bringing the good news into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new.⁶⁶

Overcoming Divisions. The Church is challenged by this specific responsibility to heal divisions of all sorts: ethnic, tribal, religious, etc.

Tribal opposition at times endanger if not peace, at least the pursuit of the common good of society. They also create difficulties for the life of the Churches and the acceptance of pastor from other

⁶⁴ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, ref. also: *Centesimus Annus* (May 1, 1991), 57. *AAS* 83 (1991), 862.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ John Paul II *EIA*, n.54, cf. also the Document of Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation: Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8/12/75), 18: *AAS* 68 (1976), 17.

ethnic groups.⁶⁷

At this stage in Africa we need more unity not division.

Solidarity expected from Industrialised Nations. The Church in Africa requests in the language of the Vatican Council II that the industrialised nations undertake 'spiritual and material adjustments' (*Gaudium et Spes*, n.86) within their own confines in order to help build a more just and more humane society. We all live in a 'global village' and the danger of collective selfishness must be clearly averted. The present times are no luxury for African peoples. The Church experiences martyrdom daily.

We must hurry! Too many people suffer, and the distance which separates the progress of some from the stagnation, if not the outright regression of others, is growing.⁶⁸

Finally, it is our considered view that resignation and hopelessness lead to futility, not to life. The urgent requirement today consists in overcoming resignation and in finding the courage to take the initiative. Catholic Social Teaching is a sure path to this renewal of faith and of life.

⁶⁷ Pontifical Commission *Iustitia et Pax - The Church and Racism: Towards a more Fraternal Society* (3/11/88), Vatican City, 1988.

⁶⁸ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, n.29.

CHAPTER SEVEN

JESUS CHRIST: THE SOCIAL CHALLENGE

*"If you make my word your home
you will indeed be my disciples
you will come to know the truth
and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31)*

The Context:

This paper has an urgent and practical purpose. It desires to respond to the search by the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria "in view of the pressing needs and challenges which our nation faces to search for credible and alternative solutions" (letter of the President of the CBCN inviting the presenter to the Conference, dated 02.12.1996). It is concerned further about the questions raised by many well-meaning Nigerians, young and old concerning the abandonment, disorientation, exploitation, violence, apathy and manipulation faced by millions of the great people of our country, many of whom are really malnourished, sick, poor, ignorant, uneducated, frustrated and depressed, denied their God-given dignity and worth, living daily in undescribable suffering, fear and anxiety without enough indications that there is a "light at the end of the tunnel;".

What can we do about it individually and collectively? As we draw near the close of the twentieth century, history dictates that we take notes and records to survey where we started, where we stand and where we are going for we owe ourselves a reckoning.

Actually Nigeria's problems cannot be taken in isolation. We live in a global village. As you very rightly know, there is a growing

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universal cry and worry acknowledging certain threats to the entire survival of humankind on this planet. Not only is this cry loud in virtually all countries of Africa, it is louder in the Western, Asian and American countries. It is not only a cry about hunger, we now know that it has to do with the apparent lack of meaning and the spectacularly wrong underlying philosophy of life of peoples of our century. An age wrong about God is almost certain to be wrong about man. There is increasing loss of moral and spiritual values and the mounting loss of faith in God, a loss of faith in life itself; its meaning and the possibility for any change for the better.

Our starting-point, then, is the urgent reality of our present historical situation. This awareness is characterised by problems concerning life and death in a world that has grown too sophisticated and has developed weapons of mass destruction capable of killing each of the almost six billion inhabitants of this world several times over.

The spirit of our age and of his century was aptly described in poetic caricature by the Briton W. B. Yeats who was very much influenced by the 19th century German nihilist philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche in the following lines:

"Turning and turning in the widening gyre;
the falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart,
the Centre cannot hold,
mere anarchy is loosed upon the world" - (W.B. Yeats)

No other age has witnessed so much bloodshed, so many wars, too much inconsistency, deceit, crisis, brutality and death as our own. No other century knew about the A-Bomb, H-Bomb and N-Bomb. The long screech of falling and raining bombs over humans cost more than 70 million lives alone in World War II, not calculating those who died in camps, homes, under the cold, in anxiety and

excruciating situations. Virtually, many people, whether innocent or not have been victims of this vicious circle of violence perpetrated at the service of political, economic socio-cultural and religious idiosyncrasies. We are witnesses to some of these brutal and traumatic wickedness.

Yet, our century has seen so many exciting and encouraging developments worthy of reckoning; such as the invention and development of the aeroplane and of space travel. We have seen the widespread use of electricity, not just for lighting, heating and cooling but also for making possible other revolutionary inventions like the telematics, informatics, computers and television.

Our century has conquered many diseases and through the discovery of the DNA has begun to understand the nature of life itself by contributing to the greater happiness and fulfilment of many ambitions of peoples all over the world. For those living in Africa, ailments such as malaria, typhoid, elephantiasis, tuberculosis, sickle cell anaemia and other diseases once shrouded in superstitious stupors have been brought into medical and curative possibilities.

External colonialism has been gradually dismantled but we have seen the enthronement of neocolonialism and all forms of local and international exploitation. We have witnessed various irrational ideological resentments to the left and to the right, to the extent that the dignity of the human person depended on which tribal, religious, socialist or capitalist colour one professed. Post colonial Africa for example sacrificed millions of her children in Mozambique, Benin, Ethiopia, Angola, South Africa, Sudan, Libya, Egypt, Chad, Guinea, Algeria, Uganda, Nigeria and Biafra (now defunct), Liberia, Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia, Congo, Zaire, to mention but a few for ideological and manipulated reasons. The victims were in the majority children and women.

What is worse, the system is vicious, perpetrating the crisis,

creating new differences, producing wealth and poverty at the same time. The system talks about competition, the free market economy, profit and self actualisation but everyone in fact does not have an equal chance within the system to compete. The poor lose from the onset.

Like Father Albert Nolan has shown:

"the system is a monster which devours people for the sake of profits... worse still, the system is now pressing its demands and defending itself with more and more violence... the system was not even designed to solve problems... what we are up against are not people but the impersonal forces of a system which has its own momentum and its own dynamics... How often one hears the cry of hopeless resignation: "You cannot fight the system". (Jesus before Christianity, London 1992, p. 10).

There would be no point in attempting to exaggerate these problems. They exist. We have new insights which expose the magnitude, complexity and insolubility of some of these problems. Actually, there are many reasonable and serious people who assert the great fear that many of humanity's problems are no longer solvable and the headlong plunge toward the total destruction of the human species appears imminent. This is not the so-called prophecy of doom. Scientific theories and experimental analysis based on facts are used to buttress this disastrous picture.

Environmental pollution happens to be on the increase, in rivers, seas and the very air we breathe, causing large geo-physical changes in the ozone layer and the climates of several countries and leading to over flood, desertification overheat and over cold as was never known before. Many have died under these new situations. The environmentalists say that if drastic changes are not introduced very soon, we shall all be killed by the by-products of our own progress.

These are new threats though, and we must be honest to accept them as threats. The world's population increases at the rate of about 80 to 100 million people annually. In concrete terms, this corresponds to the size of the inhabitants of all the fifteen nations of West Africa (excepting Nigeria) and coinciding with the population of the entire landmass of Europe. The population of Nigeria itself gives room for guesswork and some laughter because our governments cannot tell us in all honesty how many we are. The matter has been politicised beyond repairs. We moved from 78 million in 1974 to anywhere between 120 to 150 million in the later 80's and are now back again to 88.8 million in 1991. The big city centres are highly populated, and what is worse, shanties and slums create such a devastating psychological damage on the children who grow up there that often, all our morality and accepted decency are gone in their vocabulary.

Added to this scenario is the fact that natural resources and food supplies are diminishing. In the context of many countries of the world, it is noticed that the desert is encroaching on us as soil erosion increases and more and more forests are destroyed. Brutality and wars have mounted in a world where the leaders of nations have sworn that there shall be "no more wars" to the extent that this century was history's bloodiest.

The crisis in our changing times especially in the African countries and Nigeria specifically range from basic lack of humanly acceptable and universally acclaimed standards often called "basic needs" such as Water, Food, Shelter, Education, Health-Care, to the need for a more humane and spiritually conducive environment for majority of the citizens. We are told that more than 1.5 billion people, that is, about one out of every four persons in this world as at 1996 experiences excruciating hunger at least on daily basis. Poverty is real. An example with Nigeria's economy shows that "in 1970, the per capita income was 170 USD, it rose in 1981 to 1000 USD, declined sharply in 1990 to 230 USD. In 1994, it was

down to a mere 100 USD" (Nosa Igiebor, Tell Magazine Editorial Report, Lagos, 20 February 1995, p. 3)

Vices and evils persist and there is apparent cultural degradation, the breakdown of morals and traditional lifestyles, materialism of all sorts which rejects God and replaces Him with Gold, institutional violence, bribery and corruption which now are endemic and have become part of the system within the Nigeria social fabric to the extent that sermons against corruption or police touting are taken as a big joke.

We have in our society, the worst forms of dictatorship perpetrated both by the military elite and supported by some civilian politicians who betray the people and their mandate. We are subjects of a society that is unable to control certain oppressive structures, bad leadership, increase in crimes, the growing breakdown of the family and its attendant values, continued dilapidation of almost every essential structure needed for humanity's daily survival in a decent environment.

Currently, new diseases such as the scourge of AIDS, new plagues and uncontrollable and incurable diseases face our outstretched resources which already cannot cope easily with the burden of external trade, the arms trade, the violation of human rights and the general disorientation of values whichever way one may try to look at. Many have given up! Others who had hoped for a better day in their lifetime have had these hopes crashed because of the seeming futility of it all. What is the purpose of it all? Some ask. "You cannot beat them so why not join them or check out"? Others ask!

The basic questions many ask are: How did humanity come so low? Why has it been difficult to achieve social justice, political participation, cultural dignity and national liberation for the people? Why is it that our intellectuals and leaders praise and perfer

ideological models that have failed to produce economic and social welfare for the people? These systems have in fact continued to undermine the developmental process of our countries through the wild fluctuation in the so-called world market of our exports, through the unequal exchange value of our products in comparison with the industrial products of the technologically advanced countries; through the low investment rates of our export-oriented private enterprise and their evasion of internal capital investment, and lately through the unbearable burden of external debt.

How come that a country as rich as Nigeria in every imaginable sense has been reduced to apparent poverty so that its citizens have now to travel and escape to other countries virtually as beggars for every imaginable mean job, discrimination and inhumane treatment?

In a global context, how come that despite the grand progress in humanity's technical and information machinery, with a new wealth of resources both in educational and industrial dimensions, we are not yet able to arrive at the new world order which could guarantee the much desired self respect for all, human dignity, coexistence, self-determination, cultural integrity, political participation and international collaboration and sovereignty which the new globalisation could offer and actually pretends to offer?

These questions and more are being asked by people everywhere. The Bishops of Nigeria have also consistently asked them in their very many public statements and reflections and have actually come up with answers in the past.

"The Conference observes with deep concern the prolonged distress of the Nigerian Nation and is 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". (CBCN Communiqué, 16.09. 1994, DRACC, Enugu)

But have they been heeded and adhered to? Are these answers known? Are they followed up in pastoral guidelines? The Holy Father, pope John Paul II in the document "Ecclesia in Africa" exhorts the Church of Africa to serve as the "watch dog" for justice and Human Rights by establishing Justice and Peace Commissions throughout the continent. He says :

"The Church has the right and the duty to advocate respect for human rights in Africa including denouncing conditions imposed by structural adjustment programmes, arms sales and unjust trading". (Pope John Paul II, EIA, 1995)

In this exposition, we have not tried to exaggerate these problems. There is no need to do this for the facts are real. What is the use of keeping up the facade or trying to save face when everything threatens to collapse around us? The present situation seems to force us willingly or unwillingly to be honest. Many people are concerned both the high and the low. In this moment of truth, we cannot "fiddle while Rome burns".

Hyacinthe Cardinal Thiandoum, Archbishop of dakar Senegal at the opening session of the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on Africa in April 1994 in the Vatican asked the now very famous question.

"In a continent full of bad news, how is the Christian message "GoodNews for our people? In the midst of an all pervading despair, where lies the hope and optimism which the Gospel brings?" (In : Relatio Ante Disceptationem, n.2).

We are challenged to "consider the signs of the times and translate them in the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (GS, n.1). Solutions of course can be found. Solutions actually exist. But they would require such radical and dramatic changes in the values,

concerns, lifestyle, thought patterns and general orientations of our people generally. Such solutions would call people to make sacrifices and accept alternatives which might lower their standard of lives but enhance the quality and in fact improve the meaning of their lives. This is the challenge facing the people of Nigeria. It is the duty of the Conference of Catholic Bishops to remind all of this responsibility and to lead the way.

We might say with some measure of rectitude that in the past," organised religion helped very little in this crisis. In fact, it has sometimes tended to make matters worse. The type of religion that emphasizes a supernatural world in such a way that one does not need to be concerned about the future of this world and all its peoples, offers a form of escape that makes it all the more difficult to solve our problems" (Nolan, A. Ibid., p. 11).

With the emergence of the First Social Encyclical in 1891, Pope Leo XIII courageously took a bold step by championing the cause of the workers in "Rerum Novarum". That initiative and prophetic stand in the confused and disoriented world of the industrial revolution and mercantilistic society of the 19th century enabled the Catholic Church and the Bishop of Rome to credibly assert both the authority and the knowledge to lead people to their own secular and eternal salvation. The Church established her relevance in the secular and spiritual domain.

From our knowledge of history, it so happens that Jesus of Nazareth faced comparatively the same socio-political, economic religious and cultural disarray which so many societies including Nigeria today face. Many people who lived before, during and after the time of Jesus, believed very strongly that with the trend of events, the world was on the brink of an apocalyptic catastrophe. It was the "end of the world" syndrome. The Romans colonised Palestine in 63 B.C.E. In accordance with their policy of appointing native rulers in their colonies, they eventually made

Herod, the most powerful claimant, King of the Jews.

Jesus was born during the reign of this King Herod, whose death brought the political turmoil of a divided Kingdom among his sons (Herod Archelaus, Herod Antipas and Herod Philip). The epoch began with a rebellion inspired by Judas the Galilean who on religious grounds refused that Jews should pay any taxes to the Romans. With direct Roman rule, the last and most turbulent epoch in the history of the Jewish nation entered, leading to the almost total destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and the entire nation in 70 C.E. and their final and complete destruction in 135 C.E., a time during which Jesus lived, worked and died and during which the Christian Communities grew and spread.

All sorts of groups flourished with several theories and conflicting tendencies like we find in today's Nigeria. The Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes, the Zealots, the Scribes, the Priests and Elders, the Qumran community, the simple citizens among the several other groupings developed various strategies to the threat of Roman imperialism and the news concerning the world's close ending. There was search for a way out, a new leader, preferably a King whose reign shall lead to the temporal and perhaps eternal salvation of the people of Israel. This was the background of John the Baptist and of Jesus of Nazareth.

Yes even now the axe is being laid to the root of the trees, so that any tree failing to produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown on the fire" (Luke: 3, 7ff, Mk. 1,4 ff;). "Repent for the Kingdom of God is close at hand" (Matt. 3:1 ff).

John appealed for social morality, not just for a change of ritual purity or petty details of Sabbath observance.

He challenged the people including the mighty Herod for immorality and injustice. He lost his life for daring to speak out

against the mighty. But his message spread.

"If anyone has two tunics, he must share with the man who has none, and the one with something to eat must do the same... To the tax collectors he said: "exact no more than your rate"... To the soldiers he said: " No intimidation! No extortion! Be content with your pay!" (Luke 3:11-14).

Jesus may not have agreed with John in every detail. But he used John as his own point of departure, calling people to repentance and change of lifestyle:

"The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent and believe the Gospel" (Mk. 1:15).

Jesus read the signs of the times and gave his message. He made himself relevant and made sure that in fulfilment of the Will of the Father, he was faithful to the end, even to the excruciating passion and shameful death on the Cross. Those who followed him and his message have seen his power, capable of changing entire human history.

Those who neglect him and his message have done this but not without some repercussions on their world view, general happiness and lifestyle as we have tried to portray in exposing the context of our reflection above. Things would never be the same again. The consequences worldwide are there for all to see.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION: JESUS CHRIST?

THE AMERICAN WEEKLY, NEWSWEEK, published sometime in 1977 the results of a wide investigation under the heading: HAS THE CHURCH LOST ITS SOUL? Twenty years later, this question still seems very relevant and is being asked directly, even though, it could be reformulated in different forms for different

groups - politicians, nations, associations, churches, economists, various professionals, to mention but a few. Put in other words: Has humanity lost its soul? The controversial theologian Hans Kung has reflected on this question in a lecture he delivered at the St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin sometime in 1967, questions which because of their relevance and urgency bear repetition here (refer: Kung, H., What must remain in the Church, Collins, 1977).

Against the background of the Asian continent with a population of 65 percent of the world's population, made up mainly of religious groups such as Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, Muslims, Taoists etc, what is the point of Christianity and why do we still need Christian missionaries? If today we affirm all the religious values of the world-religions in Asia as valid (and there are many of them, namely, peace, love, justice, truth, tolerance, compassion), and make them our own, where does Christianity still have a relevance or a mission?

Such a question can still be asked as we approach year 2000 as well as reflect upon within the context of Africa in general and concretely Nigeria, a multi-cultural and multi-religious society. In other words, what is the essence of mission? And what is our response faced with the challenges posed by the very many competing Pentecostal and commercialised religious groupings, associations some of them charlatans and road side preachers whose messages are essentially dubious and or money making spree?

The central question could also be reflected upon within the reality of today's western nations in Europe and America who have come up with modern humanistic theories, focusing on human dignity, human right, human values, discipline, order and equality of all before the law but without God as the point of departure, religion as its ideal, or the Church as the motivating factor for its modern humanism. If already we affirm all the human values of the

modern secular world, what have we of our own that we could call the specific Christian reality? Has not Christianity made itself superfluous?

One more serious question that cannot simply be dismissed as conservative reactionary or even progressive, raised by both the old and the young, and raised within the Churches and especially in the Catholic Church, in view of widespread upheavals, liturgical adaptations, in novations both in morality, teaching and discipline, namely, the question about what is there that must certainly remain when all is gone?

We have witnessed since the Second Vatican Council the various forms of "aggiornamento" as introduced and how some fasting rules, pious devotions, the use of Latin, the modernisation of the sacraments, the liturgical calendar, the roll call of the saints, the role of women, democratic behaviour even within the Church hierarchy and the very many positions of the Church on issues of ethics, the economy, political developments have changed or rather adapted to insinuations of a dynamic and changing society. In the context of all these changes, has the Church lost its soul?

Even if we say that none of these things belong essentially to the soul of the Church and therefore none of them must necessarily remain, the stage is cleared for the concrete question: What then is the soul of the Church? What is its principle of life, the basic message on which the Church is built, the specifically Christian reality? What is it that must remain in the Church? Since Church history is so full of changes, what really holds together the twenty tangled centuries of the history of the Christian Church? Put otherwise, since the New Testament is so heterogenous, what really holds its twenty seven very diverse books together?

Actually, by knowing the distinctive feature of Christianity, we know also what must necessarily remain as a permanent factor, an

axiom and the Christian reality, put simply and solely in one word, a person: **THIS JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF**. For there can be no Christianity without Christ.

Following the entire tradition of the Church and the teachings of the Fathers even into our own times:

"The Christian reality must remain. The Church must remain Christian, otherwise it is not the Church of Jesus Christ but just another respectable club or association. Christian self-awareness must include modesty, and Christian certainty tolerance. "Christian" does not mean everything that is true, good and beautiful. Truth, goodness and beauty also exist outside Christianity. But everything which has an explicit reference to this Christ can be called Christian (a challenge both for individuals and for parties calling themselves Christian).

"A Christian" is not just any human being with sincere faith and good will. Sincere faith and good will exist also outside Christianity and will find salvation there. But someone for whom in life and death this Christ is decisive ultimately decisive, may be called a Christian.

"Christian Church" is not just any group of people with good intentions who try to lead a decent life in order to gain salvation. A decent life and salvation can be found also in other groups outside the Church, since God is greater than the Church. But any human community for whom this Christ is ultimately decisive may be called a Christian Church. "Christianity" does not exist wherever humanity is realised. Humanity is realised also outside Christianity: among Jews, Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists, among secular humanists and even downright atheists. Christianity exists only where the memory of this Christ is activated. (Kung, H. Ibid., p. 17).

JESUS CHRIST: THE SOCIAL CHALLENGE FOR NIGERIA

"Many millions throughout the ages have venerated the name of Jesus, but few have understood him and fewer still have tried to put into practice what he wanted to see done. His words have been twisted and turned to mean everything, anything and nothing. His name has been used and abused to justify crimes, to frighten children and to inspire men and women to heroic foolishness. Jesus has been more frequently honoured and worshipped for what he did not mean than for what he did mean. The supreme irony is that some of the things he opposed most strongly in the world of his time were resurrected, preached and spread more widely throughout the world in his name"

(Father Albert Nolan, Jesus before Christianity, Chapter 1)

Actually, it is not sufficient like the so-called Jesus-People claim simply to sing and say "Lord, Lord" or "Jesus, Jesus". Nor is it sufficient simply to quote the words of the Old and New Testament or sing pious songs presuming thereby that the great problems of the world and of our society would be solved thereby. The bible records that Jesus "began to do and to teach".

The historical Jesus of Nazareth lived in first century Palestine. He had some very good and strong convictions about himself, his mission and his mandate and he was willing to die for them. His concern and response to the questions of the people of his time on the issues concerning the "end of time" and "end of the world" prophecies which were stumbling blocks for the people and age in which he lived make him of particular interest to our age and time.

Jesus saw a way out of the vicious circle of sin, haplessness and resignation into which humanity had estranged themselves. He had an insight into what could be done and how it could be done and he empowered his followers to do likewise. Having conquered death and fear, he showed that apathy, hopelessness, passivity and

neutrality could not lead humanity forward, He had an agenda which we cannot ignore safely and still remain his faithful followers. In a word, Jesus entry into the human plane by virtue of the incarnation:

"And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14) has become the point of departure for all theology, and for any meaningful discussion or practice about humankind's relationship with God and the right order of things in the universe. We live on the word "through whom all things were made" (Jn. 1.3). In our desire to love God, search for the truth and grow in the knowledge of Theology, the incarnation becomes that critical historical moment where God becomes the subject and object of history.

Thus theology assumes the scientific ordering of the data of revelation. The articulation of what we believe. If the incarnation is nullified, Christian Theology would cease to exist. There might still remain magic and all sorts of religious syncretism. There would be idolatry and horrendous paganism, including spiritual voodooism bordering on the margins of pantheistic polytheism of irrational dimensions. But there would be no knowledge of the "Truth in Full".

The Emmanuel therefore of the Prophets, who in the fullness of time became the Jesus of Nazareth is the basis for our ontological insistence that "No Christ, No Salvation". Of himself Jesus once said: "I am the way, the truth and the life" (Jn. 14,6). Our High Prayer at Holy mass places this Christ Event as the summit of our Eucharistic celebration for:

"Through Him with Him in Him in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all Glory and Honour is yours, almighty Father for ever and ever".

Jesus Christ is the Social Challenge of our times and place. He was not a man of the establishment. He was not simply a political or

social revolutionary. He was not even an ascetic monk who would withdraw himself from the world and cut himself off from secular matters. Was he then finally a man for moral rearmament, a kind of devout moralist? But Jesus did not teach any technique of piety and had no taste for moral or - still less - juridical casuistry; nor was he interested in questions of legal interpretation. Actually, the Pharisees were competent for this more than we have reputed them to be so.

Let it be said loudly and clearly as the entire New Testament bear testimony and the Teachings of the Fathers confirm that this Jesus cannot be fit into any scheme or formula. "He is provocative both to the left and to the right: apparently closer than the priests to God. At the same time freer than the ascetics in regard to the world. More moral than the moralists and more revolutionary than the revolutionaries".

His message was not as complicated as our Catechisms and certainly far less complicated than our theological textbooks. Some are scandalised when told that Jesus was a "lay man", not even a priest in the Jewish calculation of his epoch, and I add, not a professional theologian who produced grand theories. He preached the early advent of the Kingdom of God, in an unscholarly way, in the simplest words comparisons, stories and parables.

He proclaimed that God's cause will prevail, that the future belongs to God. He preached only one supreme norm for man's action. This supreme norm is the will of God. This will would not be identical with any rule, dogma or law, for God's will is actually the well-being of humankind. Completely faithful to the law, the Jesus of the New Testament does not hesitate in particular cases to act contrary to the law for the well-being of humankind.

In his teachings, "not ritual correctitude but purity before God bestows purity of heart. Not the pretence of fasting matters but the

secrecy of the act performed in freedom which elevates". He is not scrupulous about Sabbath observance for God has made mankind the measure of the Sabbath and the Law, yet he goes regularly to the Temple and observes all the rituals of the Sabbath which promote human dignity.

In a scandalous way, Jesus relativises the Jewish traditions and institutions of his time, placing the dignity and worth of human beings at the centre, for "God created man and women to His own image and likeness" (Genesis 1,27). Here is someone who proclaims, instead of unconditional fulfilment of the law, a remarkable freedom for God and mankind. By so doing, he introduces into the social arena, the thinking and belief in a God who is also there for the irreligious, the sinners as well as for the devout.

For the sake of human beings, he radically relativises the temple and the liturgy making reconciliation between man and God and mankind among one another stand higher than the demands of the temple priests. With a new authority, he speaks of God, for God and in God's place, making clear to his listeners his peculiar relationship with the Father, for "I and the Father are one". He makes himself greater than Moses (the law), greater than Solomon (Temple), and greater than Jonah (Prophets).

Jesus initiated the changing of society by radically changing the individual. He calls people to repentance as the point of start for societal renewal, a call which in our times and age is not only relevant but crucially urgent. Therefore, he stands for the love which permits a person to be both devout and reasonable, but which is proved by the fact that it excludes on one, not even opponents. By this teaching and action, ultimate commitment and renunciation points to one sure way of social reconstruction. There should be no discrimination on the basis of language, sex, status, colour, background, language or religion. In his relationship with the Jews

and Samaritans, with the rich and poor, Jesus lived a life of universal charity, a call, which in our Church and our times has very vital relevance, urgency and application.

In his life, Jesus shows how much God loves his creatures in spite of themselves and teaches that conversion and forgiveness is possible even among the worst of broken relationships. To the scandal of the devout, he identifies himself with all the poor, the wretched, the "poor devils", the heretics and schismatics (Samaritans), the immoral (prostitutes and adultery) though firmly giving them a chance and calling them to repentance; Jesus had a place for the politically compromised (tax collectors and collaborators), those outside who are virtually neglected by society because they are lepers, destitute and sick; He gave direct sympathy to the weak many of whom were and are women and children stating that the Kingdom of God is meant for people like this.

In the life of Jesus, the Good News of salvation became real and incarnate. Not only that the preacher lived it convincingly as he proclaimed it, he challenged his followers to be his witness in the world by following in his example, not minding the difficulties and failures. In Jesus the Christ, theory and practice were inextricably confirmed and has remained the mark of true discipleship. He once taught them:

"By their fruits you shall know them". "For not those who say Lord Lord shall enter into the Kingdom of my Father but those who do the will of the Father".

Only now does his person acquire a definitive and unique significance for all who commit themselves to him in faith. Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed of God, the incarnate Word, the Son of God's final and definitive revelation.

"Only now is the Church formed, as the community of believers who profess their faith in him, the Church which bears his name and is sustained by his spirit, the Holy Spirit: the Church set apart through baptism in his name, united at the meal in his memory. Thus the proclaimer of the message has become the proclaimed. He himself is the summary and concrete content of the message of God's Kingdom, he is himself the Christian message, he is himself the soul of the Church: he himself and all that comes with him is that which must remain in the Church".

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS FOR THE CHURCH IN NIGERIA:

What does the knowledge of the person and teachings of Jesus Christ mean for the world today? What social challenges does the Christian message have for society, the individual and even for the Church itself? We shall attempt a brief summary here:

1) Religious and Social dimensions of life are linked:

The "Social" human construction of the world is not "Secular" in the sense of being outside of God's plan, but is intimately involved with the dynamic of the "reign of God". Therefore, faith and justice are closely interlinked. (Gaudium et Spes, 1965, n.3).

2) Dignity of the Human Person:

Made in the image of God, women and men have pre-eminent places in the social order, with inalienable political, social, legal and economic rights. The fundamental question to ask about social policies is: "How beneficial is it to people?" (Populorum Progressio, 1968, n. 8-26).

3) Option for the Poor:

A preferential love should be shown to the poor, whose needs and rights are given special attention in God's eyes. "Poor" is understood to refer to socially and economically disadvantaged people, who as a consequence of their status, suffer oppression and

powerlessness. (Octogesima Adveniens, 1971, n.23).

4) Love and Justice are linked:

Love of neighbour is an absolute demand for justice, because charity manifests itself in actions and structures which respect human dignity, protect human rights and facilitate human development. To promote justice is to transform structures which block love. (Bishops Synod, Justice in the World, 1971, n. 16, n.34).

5) Promotion of the Common Good:

The Common Good is the sum total of all those conditions of social living - economic, social, political, cultural - which make it possible for women and men to readily and fully achieve the perfection of their humanity. Individual rights are always experienced within the context of promotion of the common good. (Mater et Magistra, John XXIII, n.65).

6) Political Participation:

Democratic participation in decision making is the best way to respect the dignity and liberty of people. The government is the instrument by which the people cooperate together in order to achieve the common good. (Christmas Message, 1944).

7) Economic Justice:

The economy is for the people and the resources of the earth are to be equitably shared by all. Human work is the key to contemporary Social Questions. Labour takes precedence over both Capital and Technology in the production process. Just Wages and the Rights of workers to form trade unions are to be guaranteed. The questions we must constantly ask the Economy is whether the poor are helped through its decisions? What is the impact of the budget on peoples existence levels? Does it promote human beings or simply maximise profit? Is man at the centre of the economy or at the periphery? Does the economy and its deterministic rigidity

consider the place of women and disabled people, migrants and the unemployed people who merit solidarity and therefore share fully in the profits of the production process? (John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 1981).

8) Stewardship and Creation preservation:

All property has a "Social Mortgage". The earth and its resources are to be respected. By the work and activity of human beings in continuing the development of our environment, we become co-creators and stewards of God's bountiful gifts of nature. Responsible management of resources and proper accountability become obligatory (*Laborem Exercens*, 1981).

9) Global Solidarity:

We belong to one human family and as such have mutual obligations to promote the development for and of all peoples across the world. Whether in Church, in State or in the family, the rich have particular responsibilities towards the poor and the structures of the international order must reflect justice and bilateral complementarity. (Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 1968).

10) Promotion of Peace:

Peace is the fruit of Justice and is dependent upon the right order among humans and within nations. Is the Church the bringer of Peace? Do we live Peace? Do we discourage disarmament, violence, and promote conditions which make peace possible? Do we further the cause of unity or division? What is the meaning of ecumenism for our divided Christendom and divided humanity? (Paul VI: *Vatican II, Gaudium et Spes*, 1965).

Above issues correspond to the Social Questions which the Vatican Fathers called "the signs of the times to be translated in the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (GS, 1,2). We are clear in our minds that it is the Lord Jesus himself who brings to fruition our endeavours and efforts for "without me, you can do nothing" (John

15.5). May His Holy Spirit accompany us in our search for alternative and credible solutions to the manifold and pressing needs and challenges which our nation faces, we implore Jesus the Christ for he is Lord for ever and ever.

CHAPTER EIGHT

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION AND ACTION AS SERVICE: A CHALLENGE TO THE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

GENERAL REMARKS:

It gives me great honour and privilege to be invited to this international congress on deaconry and to represent many people who inhabit the developing countries of our one world as we focus on the joys and anxieties of people in need in order to re-define the future of deaconry in the service of mankind as we gradually usher in a new millennium.

It is important to note that all over the world, most people in need, whether caused by natural or ecological disasters or by human wickedness occasioning political, social and religious tensions have in one way or another found solace in the service of The Caritas and The Diakonia among other agencies of concern and care. It is therefore in the fundamental nature and corresponds to the essence of Caritas and Diakonia to restore hope and to promote human dignity and values. I congratulate you.

My personal testimony is to assert that but for the services of Caritas and Diakonia during the tragic war of Nigeria and Biafra in 1967 until 1970, I would not be here to deliver this lecture, as I might have been long dead-myself due to the heavy casualties of that war. It is therefore in deep gratitude that I have come to Finland to express the solidarity of the African continent through this congress and to assure you of our collaboration in the

Paper presented at the International Ecumenical Congress in Deaconry on the general theme Spiritus Lux Caritas jointly organised by Lahti Polytechnic Institute of Parish Social Services, Lahti Finland; Albert Ludwigs University, Institute of Caritas Science, Freiburg, Germany; Ruprecht Karls University, Institute of Deaconry Science, Heidelberg, Germany at Fellmanni Institute, Lahti Finland from September 23rd-27th 1998.

articulation of further strengths and resources available for the fulfilment of the Christian challenge and vocation to serve our brothers and sisters in need (Matthew Chapter 25).

Jesus, the Lord made our response to the poor and the needy a condition for the beatific vision and of the judgement at the end of our lives.

"For I was hungry and you gave me to eat;
thirsty and you gave me to drink;
a stranger and you took me in;
naked and you clothed me;
I was sick and you visited me;
I was in prison and you came to visit me" (Matthew: 25:35 - 36).

THE CHALLENGE

My topic for reflection at this respected audience is: "Human Rights Education and Action as Service - A Challenge to the Christian Churches."

This is of course a topic with very wide significance, for, in the ongoing discourse of sorts on an interdisciplinary level, the key words: Human Rights, Education, Action, Service, the Christian Churches and Challenge assume proportions which are wide in scope, yet interrelated. The reflection shall focus attention on the thematic in a brief but cursory manner and expose the realities on ground with an offer of some modest suggestions as solutions. In doing so, we are very conscious of our competence and limitations in the entire dramatic situation of the modern world.

The facts on ground show, (and here I make no pretences about the African situation), that most of us share a common unwillingness or even inability to accept the world as it is because we believe that it was meant to be different and would wish the situation changed for the better when we experience certain unacceptable inadequacies in the world such as the bad news that:

-more than 1 billion people live in absolute poverty and more than half of them go hungry daily;

-more than 2 million children die annually of easily preventable infectious diseases;

-with all its resources in human, natural and material potentials for wealth, a country like Nigeria as is the case in many other African countries lack basic needs which include education for majority of the people; basic health care, clean water and sanitation; basic children's immunization; maternal care for women; adult literacy; proper nourishment; decent housing, jobs and free environment; fundamental rights and the possibility for self determination;

-roughly one quarter of the entire human race of over 5 billion people lack access to safe drinking water;

Meanwhile, global military spending despite a decline since the end of the cold war, still equals the combined income of the poorest half of humanity.

The realities on ground depict an unfair, unjust, inhuman and degrading situation which has to be challenged and changed for the greater good of God's children, especially the poorest and most vulnerable - women and children.

This is the challenge facing Caritas and Diakonia as we approach the third millennium. It is a challenge found in the evergreen poem of Dorothy Right in her book: Ride with the sun -where she write:

"There shall be peace on earth;
but not until each child daily eat his fill;
Go warmly clad against the cold wind;
And learn his lessons with a tranquil mind.

And thus released from hunger, fear and need,
Regardless of his color, race or creed,
Look upwards, smiling to the skies;
His faith in man reflected in his eyes".

This challenge involves the expansion of the concept of human rights to cover adequate training in these areas which service, the Christian Churches owe the men and women of today in a unique manner of uniting theory and practice for the common good. It is a call to individuals and groups to practice what they believe, to teach what they practice and to imitate what they preach.

John Paul II in an Address to the Diplomatic Corps, at Kigali Rwanda in September 1990 posed this challenging question: "...are people sufficiently aware that a decent livelihood with some security is a common right, and that it is a common duty to provide it for all, on all lands of the planet?" (In: The Right to Development, compiled by Giorgio Filibeck... Vatican City, 1991, p. 13).

The challenge is to be found in the granite fact that concrete action must be taken to rectify the anomaly of pauperized citizens all over the world in order to establish a more humane, equitable, fair and happy life for majority of the world's peoples and citizens. In this way, we are able to interpret the Christian message within the context of those who are victims and have been denied adequate opportunity for development; those who are stripped of their humanity, having been denied of the legitimate participation and enjoyment of the fruits of our human, spiritual and material resources.

Jesus the Lord challenged his disciples to a life of love and concern for others:

"By this shall all people know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another" (John 15:17).

The Second Ecumenical Council in the Decree *Gaudium et Spes* 1965 challenged the entire Church to "consider the signs of the times and translate them in the light of the Gospel" (GS, n. II). The document states that Christians engaged actively in modern economic and social progress and in the struggle for justice and charity "must be convinced that they have much to contribute to the prosperity of mankind and to world peace" (n. 72):

The Synod of Bishops on "Justice in the World" held in 1971 at the Vatican highlights this challenge to the Gospel, thus:

"Action for justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the teaching of the Gospel, in other words, of the Church's Mission, for the salvation of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation".

The various Social Encyclicals, Synodal Documents, the Pronouncements of the World Council of Churches, the life of witness of several brave leaders of religious groups, The Communique, Resolutions and Statements of Conferences and the testimony of Christian life and witness express this. The consciences of the affluent, which are lulled in comfort, must be awakened; new light must be cast on the dramatic conditions afflicting a large part of humanity in order to confront this great challenge facing the world of the 20th century at the end of this second millennium.

UNIVERSAL RIGHTS

With the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 and the consequent promulgation of this charter into local, national and international Constitutions and Conventions, we have become witness to the theoretical endorsement by virtually every Government on earth agreeing to the existence of Basic Rights - to food, clean water, a home, an education, health care, a safe environment, protection from violence, equality of opportunity.

freedom of speech, movement and conscience, participation in decision-making and the fundamental Right to Life for all person. Why should these rights be denied or taken away anyhow? The theory and the practice are however at variance from one another, in virtually all the continents of the world even as we approach the "magic millennium" Year 2000.

The Vienna Declaration and Program of Action following the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993 reaffirmed the right to development as established in the Declaration as a universal and inalienable rights and integral part of fundamental human rights. "The existence of widespread extreme poverty inhibits the full and effective enjoyment of human rights; its immediate alleviation and eventual elimination must remain a high priority for the international community" (Vienna Declaration, 25 June 1993, paras 3, 6 and 7a).

The right to development is the right of individuals, groups and peoples to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy continuous economic, social cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized. This includes the right to effective participation in all aspects of development and at all stages of the decision making process; the right to equal opportunity and access to resources; the right to respect for civil, political, social, cultural rights and the right to an international environment in which all these rights can be fully realized "Development is not only a fundamental right but a basic human need, which fulfils the aspirations of all people to achieve the greatest possible freedom and dignity, both as individuals and as members of the societies in which they live... A development strategy that disregards or interferes with human rights is the very negation of development" (Conclusions from: The Realization of the Right to Development, United Nations, New York, 1991, paras 143, 144 and 145).

Recently, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has published its 1998 Human Development Index (HDI) report. The current global report (published in the Nigerian Guardian of Friday, 11th, September 1998 in Lagos. p. 3) identifies dark spots indicating that:

- "some 100 countries - developing or in a state of economic and political transition - have experienced serious economic downturns, with some 70 to 80 having per capita incomes that are lower today than they were 10 to 30 years ago. In developing countries, 1.3 billion people live on less than one dollar a day. In transition economies, 120 million people live below an income poverty line of 4 dollars a day.

Life expectancy is declining in many countries as the HIV/AIDS pandemic worsens. Of an estimated 16,000 new infections worldwide every day, 90 per cent are in developing countries.

Armed conflicts are also undermining progress in many countries, where almost 100 million people are caught up in a cycle of civil strife and hunger and about 50 million people have been forced to flee their homes. In the past 10 years, armed conflicts have killed two million children, orphaned one million others and disabled as many as five million".

Significantly, the global report noted that the poor pay dearly with their health and the destruction of their natural resource base. Women are found to suffer most through exposure to indoor household pollution and toxic chemicals in agriculture and industry. The overwhelming majority of those who die each year from air and water pollution and poor people in developing countries, so are those most affected by desertification and so will those worst affected by floods, storms and harvest failures caused by global warming. All over the world, poor people generally live nearest to dirty factories, busy roads and waste dumps and about 2.1 million

deaths related to air pollution are caused by smoke and fumes in poor households that burn traditional fuel.

In what could trigger debates among environmentalists, the report observed that the burning of fossil fuels globally has almost quintupled since 1950; the consumption of fresh water has almost quintupled since 1960; the marine catch has increased four fold; wood consumption both for industry and for household fuel, is now 40 percent higher than it was 25 years ago. Industrialized countries, because of their high incomes and consumption levels, account for over half the increase in resource use.

Regarding the human consequences of current consumption patterns, which the UNDP report describes as "unacceptable", gross inequalities in consumption opportunities have excluded over one billion people who fail to meet even their basic consumption requirements. "Among the 4.4 billion people who live in developing countries, almost three fifths live in communities without basic sanitation; almost one-third are without safe drinking water; one quarter lack adequate housing; one fifth live beyond reach of modern health services; one fifth of the children do not get as far as grade five in school and an equal percentage are undernourished". For those of us who know the actual situation in our cities, countries and regions, the report is simply a near exact replication of the current state of affairs in many people's lives.

PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND PARTICIPATION IN AFRICA

Africa in the context of this discussion would be both a particular appropriate and promising point of departure. There is a new wave of change and re-awakening blowing all over the continent of Africa.

A realistic assessment must recognize that African countries and their friends cannot and should not be expected to copy and

transplant convictions, approaches, practices and institutions which grew over many decades in some industrialized Western societies. Yet, we must agree that the concepts of human rights, democracy and democratic practices in Africa cannot be based only and solely on African traditions, habits and features if reform towards a democratic and humane society should be sustainable. We live in a globally interdependent world.

This is not the time or the place to be pessimistic, in fact pessimism is neither justified nor borne out by the realities in the African countries as at now. Our task is to intensify the education and conscientization of the people on the matters that touch their won lives. The quest for democracy and respect for Human rights requires a new quality and re-orientation. We are much aware of the fact that Human rights and social as well as economic development are inseparably linked. Democracy, development and the respect for human rights and basic freedoms are interrelated and reinforce one another. Each citizen has not only obligations vis a vis the state, but he or she can also invoke a right to development.

Political reform is necessary for political and socio-economic progress. We are also aware that successes in some countries are accompanied by failures and aborted or interrupted democratization process in others.

The right to development, making people its central focus, is a fundamental human right. It is the responsibility of states to observe them. To ensure that these rights are observed today in African nations, parts of Europe, Asia or among the countries of America, emphasis needs to be given to establish a framework which will ensure a realization of basic human rights and freedoms for all peoples. representing as it does a common feature of all cultures, without exception.

REALIZATION OF OBJECTIVES - THE CONTEXT OF AFRICA

Following an International Round Table organized by the Development Policy Forum of the German Foundation for International development (DSE) in 1993 on the topic of Promotion of Human Rights and Participation in Africa, attended by more than 50 representatives of 15 African governments, political groups, churches, non-governmental organisations, science and media as well as representatives of politics and development cooperation, their findings focused on four principal areas which could enhance the realization of objectives for Human Rights Education and Action in Africa, namely:

1. Creating a framework for improved protection of Human Rights

This is a complex and demanding undertaking, especially under conditions of rampant poverty and structural adjustment. It is therefore necessary to improve and support the economic and social development measures put in place to accelerate the democratic process. Support has to be enhanced for the increasing number of countries which respect and implement universally agreed principles of the United nations.

Pressure must be mounted on those violating such principles to comply with their internal and international obligations. Greater access and a simplification of procedures of the judicial operations and legal process would be useful, particularly where citizens who are normally discouraged from seeking and enforcing their rights are violated, regain confidence in the judicial system. Such judiciary must be independent. Further more, there is need in this framework to have an impartial and corruption - free civil service. Training and re-orientation of such civil servants including protection from victimization and proper emolument are needed in

this framework.

Other elements include empowerment of people to carry out these processes themselves, education towards human rights, leadership training courses at all levels of society, formal and informal education of all sectors of the society, support for non-governmental agencies, the press and media and the ending of state monopolies to ensure competition and control.

For the achievement of the proposed framework, by way of summary, the steps to be taken include:

-Improve inter alia the legal and political prerequisites for safeguarding human rights and participation in African countries.

-The empowerment of local institutions

-The development of a pluralistic civil society as a counterbalance to a centralized state

-A principal element is ensuring democracy through the scrupulous adherence to the rule of law and this must be considered as an essential precondition for democratic life and practice

-The existence of a politically and financially independent judicial system

-The entrenchment of a civil service dedicated to the common weal

-The training of a police and other security agencies in the respect of human rights and dignity

-Enabling non-governmental organisations to operate and act freely

-Allowing the media the fundamental freedom to work independently

--Corruption which continues to play an insidious role in the lives of many peoples and nations must finally be dealt with via sanity, legal and enforceable discipline and complete transparent behaviour

-The basic tenets of democracy which need to be upheld comprise legitimacy, responsibility and accountability, observance of human rights, meeting justified demands and interests of the population, the freedom to challenge and question Governments action.

All this is possible only on the pre-condition of Human Rights Education and Action as Service. The Churches have a lot of opportunity to witness to a new Africa if they utilized their high profile, credibility and mobilization ability in this regard.

2 PROMOTION OF LEGAL CERTAINTY AND THE RULE OF LAW

The rule of law and a predictable, secure legal environment presuppose the existence of a number of essential ingredients. Fundamental human rights should be enshrined in the constitution of each country in such a manner that they cannot be amended. Laws contravening such as constitution and its fundamental human rights provisions as well as oppressive laws need to be identified, repealed and removed from the books.

To enhance awareness and impart knowledge on democracy and human rights, the curricula of schools and universities should be revised to include civic and legal education. The nationwide distribution of information booklets depicting or describing - in various local languages - "Your Rights!" of citizens is recommended. The outreach to rural and predominantly illiterate population is particularly important and constitutes a challenge for all involved in the process of change.

Since the rights of the vast majority of people exist only on paper due to poverty and the lack of money which impedes access to the judicial and court system for a major part of the population, it is vital to improve access to the judicial system, with or without lawyers, especially in the rural areas. Such institutions as the free legal aid services, legal resources centers, Justice and Peace organisations and other mechanisms for better access to the judicial system could be established.

Given the central role of the judicial system for good governance and civil society, sufficient and secure funds must be allocated to it since good governance is based on the rule of law.

The African cultural heritage is rich in wisdom and alternative approaches to justice - outside the modern judicial system - which calls for a vigorous research as this might help alleviate the burgeoning workload of the modern court system. Research on customary law in African societies and its compatibility with national legislation and human rights law might assist in refining their role and activities where necessary.

It is already part of the grassroots and village judicial system to utilize very effectively the "local palaver" system and the "age grade" practice or the system of the "consensus" building by the elders to enhance the administration of justice for the common good. The Native Authorities and the Administrative Courts are useful to help individuals seek redress against state action. Practice and procedures in the higher courts of a country should be altered to lessen the present intimidating environment

Needless to say, there is paramount need to ensure the independence of the judiciary such as the free appointment of judges and their replacement, promotion or dismissal which should be transparent and procedural. Where Government harasses or coerces judges, this negates due process. The use of ad-hoc courts must

cease and adequate remuneration must replace a system which encourages bribery and corruption which is not only a matter of money, but is closely related to the general political and social system. This is why ongoing training, access to legal materials and law books, international and intercultural exposure play a vital role.

In this regard, it is important to mention other security agencies such as the military and intelligence officers and Police Force which is an extremely important institution of the state. In principle, the primary function of the police is to assist the state in maintaining people's rights. Appropriate education of human rights and proper use of police powers will help the police to act responsibly and be respected by the citizenry. Lack of adequate education towards human rights and lack of equipment and funding for the police have remained some of the major reasons for police brutality and oppression of the very populace they are sent to protect. Their training therefore should be a scrupulous detail of using force as the only and last resort.

In this day and age, military governments have lost image and grace. Military regimes are an aberration and a complete negation of the very essence and principles of a democracy based on the rule of law. In a democratic setting, the military must be subject to effective political and judicial control. It is the worst violation of fundamental rights for young people (soldiers and intelligence officers) to pledge their allegiance to the State and understand thereby, a "person" who happens to be military leader. The state is bigger and larger than any single individual or even the government - it is the entire citizenry and their history, culture and very essence that is the state. Therefore, the intelligence services and the officers who are abused to coerce the population instead of protecting their rights need an education that redirects their invisible powers under democratic control supervision and accountability.

3 PROMOTING PARTICIPATORY AND DECENTRALISED STRUCTURES IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR - THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARILY

According to the views of the much quoted international Round Table Conference held in Bonn, Germany in 1993, which decisions has been amply mentioned in this subsection, the principle of subsidiarity remains a most viable option for moving a nation forward to optimise individual initiative, talent, ingenuity and productivity. "A democratization of the society and the protection of human rights can only take roots with economic liberalization, a judicious decentralization of certain functions of the state and the creation of participatory structures." Decentralization seems to be a necessary condition for the successful observance of human rights, good governance and democratic development. Its opposite is the abiding and pervasive influence of the central government which stalls the devolution of power on other levels such as family, community, clan, village local, state and federal/national levels. The next step is to guarantee the separation and division of powers and take steps to reduce the distance between the people and the state authority.

The right to own land and to pass titles to land is one of the most critical issues in many African societies. Governments which tried to encroach upon these rights caused internal conflicts. Land belongs to the people, and not to an anonymous government. Therefore, this right should be fully observed and not violated, all the more since for many people, land is both a life investment and a means of ethnic protection.

It is necessary to mention that in the proposed education towards human rights action, decentralization offers many advantages: the needs of the local population are articulated and prioritized by the various local groups participating; it promotes participation of people in governing their own affairs; it enhances the stability of

central governments and its efficiency in executing its core functions; it re-establishes self-initiative and people's pride; it stimulates economic activity and fosters compliance with human rights and democracy; and it strengthens capacity-building at the local level.

Actually, this is the "bottom-up", method which focuses on the genuine needs of the people. Participation is enlarged. It has Grassroots effect. People are involved in such areas as their health services, infrastructure such as community projects, marketing, small scale production, to mention but a few. It is the opposite of the "top-down" method which is often counter-productive, over-bureaucratized, limiting initiative and "peoples power".

It is necessary to perceive potential or even actual difficulties in this decentralized system such as the apparent costs involved, the dependence syndrome which many uneducated rural and urban populations might like to exhibit so that all their problems might be centrally solved, an increase in disparities of social and economic inequalities, among other structural weaknesses such as the domination by un-represented groups at the local level and finally the risk that devolution of power to traditional rulers could result to secession movements.

The implication of this subsidiary method of "small is beautiful" is to continue the recommendation that at the national level, legal frameworks be made more transparent and conducive to development from below; that associations of users of services be strengthened; and that self-help NGOs accepted as an instrument towards ensuring a broad based democracy.

4. THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE CHURCHES AND OTHER NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

The Church's concern for human rights education and action and of integral development is motivated, not simply by considerations of

justice alone, but above all, because it has its source directly in the commandment of love announced by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, especially with regard to the poor. And this is a very exacting commandment, because we will be judged on how we have responded to the commandment of love.

The Church uses fundamental principles, whether theological in nature or practical in nature to preach the Word of God and to serve the people of God. To illustrate the wealth of the Church's position concerning human rights education and action as service, it seemed best to situate the discourse in the context of those great principles which inspire the Church's vision by referring to certain texts which present the most pertinent references such as rights and duties.

The Principles of a Theological Order which are indispensable for the successful pursuit of human rights and development refer to:

- a) the unity of origin and common destiny of the human family
- b) equality in dignity among all human persons and communities
- c) the universal destination of the goods of this earth
- d) integrality of the concept of development
- e) the human person at the heart of development
- f) solidarity - the new name for peace

These Principles are based on a further level of principles of a Methodological Order, namely:

- a) The responsibility of the national authorities, in particular to promote the family and to foster participation
- b) The need for international cooperation
- c) Justice in the commercial, monetary and financial sectors of the international system
- d) The importance of ecology

Good governance and the requisite structure of a political system should facilitate and promote the role and involvement of national

and local civic organizations, commonly known as NGOs, the Churches and thus induce their contributions. To this end, a legal framework should be created under which these organizations could be certified and operate freely and responsibly without any obstacles. These roles should be further strengthened and expanded, particularly as regards their advocacy and sensitization roles.

This requires transparent laws, rules and regulations; participatory elements; observance of the rights of minority groups; and adjustments to reflect geographical peculiarities of a country. The ultimate aim is to work towards the emergence of a stable civil and pluralistic society.

The Churches have a prophetic function which is their proper competence to monitor the activities and power exercised by Government authorities in their impact upon the dignity and lives of the people. Areas abound where the Churches and other NGOs can involve themselves directly or indirectly on the political and economic, social and cultural, religious and developmental levels of the society, accelerating as it were, the march towards the observance of human rights action and service. This could be achieved through:

- a) promoting issues of peace and security of the individual and communities
- b) safeguarding and ensuring the transparency of regulations as well as electoral arrangements and processes.
- c) respect for ethnic diversity and coverage
- d) activation and mobilization of local and grassroots levels.
- e) identification, formulation and implementation of projects which touch people's lives through empowerment of the developmental process.
- f) monitoring government compliance of human rights issues with regard to existing laws and a prevention of arbitrary

actions and interventions of government authorities and other state organs

- g) To strengthen human rights lobbying and advocacy, Churches and NGOs should form small competent teams to carry out lobbying of parliament and its organs concerned with human rights issues. This work needs to be sustained through analysis, monitoring, research, publications and the dissemination of findings and advice through the media and audiovisual means, especially in local languages.
- h) To that end, private radio and television stations must be allowed to operate, which may necessitate the change of existing radio licensing laws so as to enable all qualifying national applicants to obtain licenses.

SECTION: III

BEYNOD OUR CULTURES:

CHAPTER NINE

THE PLIGHT OF WIDOWS

(Cultural Practices vis-a-vis the Christian Worldview)

Introduction

Let me begin by making the usual acknowledgements and extending my gratitude to the organisers of this workshop. By this action the Medical Women's Association of Nigeria (MWAN) and its present Executive have shown that there are issues where *neutrality* cannot be an option. In fact, where keeping quiet and 'fiddling while Rome burns' turns into a betrayal of gross dimensions. The actual situation on the ground as it affects the plight of widows in some parts of our culturally diverse regions in Africa calls for serious research, considered investigation in the light of human dignity and human rights, and articulate action on the side of justice and peace: It cannot be said or heard that in the year 1994, just a few years short of the third millennium and the twenty-first century, some people in certain cultural societies still live in abject ignorance, culturally stagnant stupidity, gender oppressive traditional patterns and in complete abnegation of the post-modern era and its achievements for human dignity for the new peoples of our world.

History is not static, neither is culture. In fact both are on the move. Change is the *modus operandi* for all culture and all history - which is the other side of human endeavours. If we do not participate in the process of bringing about change we fail in our duties and may have no way of influencing the final outcome of history.

The simple fact of life is that we either influence change or are influenced by it. I consider the topic therefore to be one of very

Abstracts of a paper presented at a One-Day National Workshop on the Plight of Widows organised by the Medical Women's Association of Nigeria at Modotels Enugu on 10th December, 1994.

practical significance meriting on its own urgent discussion and action and state that this basically influenced my acceptance of your kind invitation.

The Topic and Scope of this Discourse

My task in this paper is to consider the plight of widows from the point of view of certain cultural practices *vis-a-vis* enlightened Christian response. I do this gladly, both from a social-ethical point of view, and from the biblical sources which we call *GOOD NEWS* in the New Testament. The focus leads from the Judaeo-Greco-Roman traditions in the Old Testament and continues into the Gentile missions of St Paul and his contemporaries into the New Testament and up to our times. The pattern, as is widely known, is geographical and cultural but it turns into a universal-historical challenge for any society not ready to bend to the will of the God of History who calls us 'out of darkness into His wonderful light'.

An insight at this stage would make the point. If we read the Bible, it narrates the history of the Hebrews which we may call the history of a struggling people suffering at the hands of the various powers of their time. Hebrew history in the Old Testament is punctuated by conflict: man against God; mankind against fellow humans; the rich against the poor; land possession and acquisition; property distribution; gender oppression; the marginalisation of the weak and the constant tension posed to life by death - either by starvation, or famine, or war, or outright power - brokered intervention. In the midst of the Hebrews' hopelessness and weakness, a man named Moses was called by God to provide the much desired leadership and liberation of the people from bondage into freedom. This action of God, directly intervening in human affairs to put a stop to man's inhumanity to fellow man and the wickedness, neglect of others and degradation of the weak as practised under the Pharaoh of Egypt is significant, for God is seen in a conflict on the side of the oppressed.

It is also significant that God used frail human beings to fulfil his purposes.

I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their task master, I know their suffering, I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey. (Exodus 3:7-8).

This well-known passage prompted Moses to action as he boldly faced Pharaoh: 'Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: let my people go.' When Pharaoh insisted on the continued oppression of the Hebrews, the Bible records the ten plagues were visited on both Pharaoh and his subjects, a clear indication that God acts in favour of all oppressed people, even with the use of moral and physical force.

It also reassures people who are oppressed and have faith in the goodness of God that liberation into full dignity and freedom is an option which God himself supports. Human life is sacred. The human being has intrinsic dignity and worth since these are a part of being human, created in the *Imago Dei* (Image of God). Because human life is sacred, this sacredness must be jealously guarded and promoted. Any oppressor whether cultural, human, structural or abstract, must be made to accept human beings as created with rights, dignity, equality and spirituality. Not to allow the degradation of the human being is to act according to God's will.

Widowhood (the Facts on the Ground)

Because of certain cultural attitudes in several African societies which make the patriarchal system of the family and of society in

practice seem to be inherently and culturally right (it is not and should not be, neither should the matriarchal system be superimposed) the mixture has led to certain gross misapplications of justice and creation of tensions and inequalities.

Let me pose a thesis here: what is culture and is accepted and practised as culture is not necessarily right. I emphasise that what is right must be distinguished in theory and practice from what is simply accepted as a practice in culture. Not all cultural practices are right, although they are in practice. Culture is defined as a 'way of life'. Does its being a way of life make it a right? What is right must be for the service of mankind rationally acceptable and universally seen to be so, and transcending time and space. If what is right today in a culture becomes wrong tomorrow in the same cultural milieu then it was never right in the first place. Accepted modes of behaviour practised over a long time do not make that behavioural pattern right. It means that the behaviour is culturally permitted. But when culture changes, that earlier accepted manner of behaviour also changes. If it was right in itself, would it have changed in essence because of a culture shift?

Values of societies are socially endorsed for the sake of societies' value systems. As society shifts or changes, values also shift or change. Can we say the same of right and wrong from an ethical rational ontological reflection?

Some societies culturally approved of the killing of twins. Although it was accepted and culturally applied, was it right? Today, the killing of twins is criminal and abhorred. In those other days it was the norm.

Some societies, even in recent times, constitutionally and legally endorsed the practice of racism and apartheid and lived on those premises for centuries. With the events of the 1990s and the decay of apartheid in South Africa, apartheid today is considered

'intrinsically evil'. Could we say apartheid was ever right?

The odious practice of killing people when an Oba dies might be culturally practised, but do we call it right?

Promiscuity and sexual freedom may exist in a locality for a people over centuries. And they are not influenced by practices elsewhere. After some 'civilising' influences in these societies in modern times, promiscuity is outlawed and AIDS catches up with the rest buried in lust and sexual licentiousness. Could we ever say that it was right to be promiscuous?

Pilfering and stealing may be rampant in a certain ancient cultures to the extent that this society adopts the strategy of 'steal what you get and go scot-free'. Even if a culture accepted this practice, would such norm not be odious to right reason and common sense?

There is need to restate a principle here: Right and wrong exist, and although societally endorsed or rejected, what is right or wrong transcends societal approval or rejection. An action is either right or wrong when considered ethically and rationally. Consciences may differ and may even adopt a right action as wrong action and vice versa. Nonetheless, ethics, which is 'the practical normative science of the rightness and wrongness of human conduct as known by natural reason' insists that culture and cultural practices are not the point of departure in the 'oughtness', rightness or wrongness of human action. That would be too limited and historically naïve.

More enduring is reason, a universal good, unlimited in scope, rational in logical reflection, and transcending time and space to reach out universally to the 'oughtness' of the good life, to the practice of what is right and the rejection of what is wrong (even in the face of human frailty and weakness) and thus forming the foundation of our United Nations Charter on Human Rights of 1948.

Widowhood

The cultural practices in some paternalistic societies in Nigeria with regard to widowhood and widows are:

To hold the widow/s responsible for the death of the husband (no matter how old he was) until proved innocent. This dirty practice has many variations, including the ordeal of drinking water used to wash the dead upon demise.

To consider the widow not qualified to possess the property movable/immovable accumulated by herself and her husband after he is dead she is dispossessed.

Where there is no male issue to the widow and the deceased husband, movable and immovable belongings are shared by brothers and sisters of the deceased.

Keeping the widow forcefully in confinement for a number of months, sometimes up to three to five years, but in many cases recently up to one year. She may not work, sell, produce, communicate and is socially in an open prison.

Forceful shaving of the hairs seen on the armpits, private parts and head of the widow in some very primitive areas of Nigeria.

Ordeals of torture and injustices by subtle means (recently) but in the past in a public manner, such as being led naked through the village market and on dusty roads accompanied by barbaric and irrational chanting of songs and incredible charlatanism.

The widow is subject to forced sexual harassment and action both by the well-known relations of the deceased and also unknown 'pimps' and hungry, sexually moribund and clandestine hypocrites in the village. Such men turn up as 'sympathisers' or 'helpers', but are in essence exploiters in the most inhuman fashion as they

extort sex from the widow in the darkness of the night. A refusal by the widow for such sexual donations might mean direct aggressive and calumniating incrimination of pent-up lies to castigate the bereaved.

Fellow women participate in this charade of concomitant warfare against a widow by punishing her, imposing levies on her, exploiting her weakness and spreading all sorts of gossip and calumny against someone in suffering, whose sin is that her husband is dead. They even compose and chant songs against the 'widow' - of course with abundant insults, as is common among uncivilised people.

In some cases the widow is forced to be remarried by the next of kin of the deceased or any member of the family. The emphasis is on *forced*.

In some other cases, children of the widow are removed from the mother and sent to 'foreigners' who will take care of them. In the past, they were sold into slavery.

The widow is exploited financially by all sorts of groups demanding all sorts of dues for purification and readmission into their society, as if death, which is a most natural phenomenon, should be a curse for a surviving widow.

Finally, death seems a financially costly event for the bereaved. To have a corpse in your compound is to be forced to go borrowing from the banks and willing donors to feed a crowd of people who never ate in your compound while the deceased was alive. Imported and local drinks, food, cakes, snacks, all sorts of local and continental delicacies are prepared for seeming sympathisers on condolence visits. The cola and feeding services may last up to one month. This scandalous practice is encouraged by the elite and supported by so-called 'traditionalists'.

When impoverishing the living because of the demise of a family member becomes part of a culture, it becomes both in the short and long run a wasteful act, irresponsible spending and a disgrace to the dead. The souls of the dead rest in peace because of their good lives. The dead are not pacified by the living who eat like the utilitarian Epicurean Romans of old. When things were difficult Okonkwo is reported to have told a village medicine man who demanded that Unoka, Okonkwo's dead father, be purified with the killing of a goat: 'go and ask my dead father if he ever owned a fowl while he was alive'; and now in death, he is demanding through the ritual medicine man a goat. Chinua Achebe's message is clear: The living should not be punished or impoverished because someone answered the natural call of death.

Unfortunately, in the name of culture, cultural revival etc, vulgar, unjust and economically devastating practices are irrationally and atrociously held as dogma and doled out on widows. Why is it that a man whose wife has died does not have to go through all the ordeals mentioned above? In fact, from the day his wife died he is as free as he wants. No ritual! No fines, no confinement, no unjust laws, no payments of dues, no force and, of course, no denial of the property of his wife and himself or removal of the children. No trial by ordeal. Why?

What is the position of the Christian churches, of Christianity with regard to this clearly condemnable unjust treatment meted out to widows?

The Christian Response to the Injustices arising out of Widowhood

One amazing and exciting ability of Christianity and therefore of the Church is to *dissent* wherever and whenever human dignity is abused. Jesus of Nazareth represented such a phenomenon in his life time. Through his resurrected life, Jesus said 'No' to death and 'Yes' to life. He said 'No' to Injustice and the false judgement of Pilate

and said 'Yes' to fairness, justice and peace.

Above all, he said 'No' to sin and hopelessness, and confirmed liberation from all shackles (spiritual, physical, legal, cultural, social, etc.) and hope as the option for mankind on earth. In fact, God who is our hope becomes our redeemer in Jesus Christ. Jesus spoke of the narrow path which many would not like to follow. But he said this road leads to life. It is the Spirit that can give courage and light for many to choose this narrow path. The prophets followed this narrow path, even if it led to their own death.

On the issue of widowhood and its cultural dimensions as practised in some parts of Nigeria, the basic question is: Does the practice contradict human dignity and human rights? Once it does, the practice is wrong and ethically unacceptable. There is unfortunately in the area of justice or injustice no middle way. It is *either/or* and not *both/and*.

The ideology of power in the world has developed a dichotomy between the 'sacred' and the 'secular'. People would even quote Jesus where he says: 'Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's'. With such misapplication of the Word, justification even from the Bible is sought after to cover the aberrations of wicked cultural practices. By the way, who owns Caesar? Is it not God? What does Caesar have that is not out of God's grace? Is justice God's and injustice Caesar's?

The attempt therefore to relegate religion outside culture is a blatant lack of understanding of the complex nature of the cultural dynamism of which religion is the apex. The simple fact of life is that religion either authenticates culture or purifies it, showing it direction, giving it purpose and orientation. The lives of people are conditioned by the harsh realities of everyday political, social, economic and other superstructures which the 'rulers' of this world have designed. There is an ongoing struggle in the world. The Church also is a site of struggle. Not to prophetically give a

religious-christian response to the ongoing socio-cultural practices is to fail woefully to obey the demands of the gospel which asks us to be 'the salt of the earth' and 'the light of the world'. In the language of logic 'A thing cannot be (exist) and not be (not exist) at the same time. It is or it is not'.

In the first place, neutrality with regard to the cultural practice meted out to widows in the name of 'prudence' or 'cultural revival', etc. is an illusion. The gospel is not and can never be neutral, as Albert Nolan has said: 'The gospel we preach will not be the gospel of Jesus Christ unless it takes sides with those who are being sinned against-the poor and the oppressed'.

The practice, nay injustices, meted out to widows, as shown earlier, need to be considered against "the signs of the times and translated in the light of the Gospel" (Gaudium et Spes,1:1).

A few incidents from the Bible will show how God cared for widows-sympathy, appreciation, loving care, respect for dignity, and support were the *key words*:

The widow and Elijah;

Jesus Christ and the widow of Naim;

Jesus and the widow's mite;

The Prophets and widows;

The universal declaration of Human Rights;

The African Charter on people and Human Rights;

The Nigerian Constitution.

Conclusion

Let me end with a conclusion. Social systems do not come into existence by themselves. They do not drop out of the sky. Nor are they simply a result of some kind of blind fate or social determinism.

As we have seen, there were indeed certain material conditions and social forces that gave rise to the system of apartheid: colonial conquest, the colonisers' discovery of gold, the need for cheap labour and so forth. But they were not the only factors in the creation of this system. The process was not wholly determined and fated from the start. Even if it is difficult to see how it could have gone in any other direction, we cannot exclude the responsibility of human beings for the monster that has been created.

The system was created by numerous human beings in numerous ways. There were those who made the policy decisions along the way; there were those who supported and worked for the system; there were those whose greed, arrogance and hypocrisy made them fanatical architects of the system; and there were those who committed the great sins of omission by remaining silent and doing nothing to change the course of events. We can even point to those among the oppressed who did not join in the resistance but became passive accomplices in their own oppression. We can look back and see generations of sinners behind this system stretching back beyond South Africa and beyond colonialism into the distant past.

It is impossible for us today to assess the sinfulness and the guilt that created this intrinsically evil system. Some were obviously much more directly responsible for it than others. Some would have been more guilty because they knew very well what they were doing, while others would have been quite blind to the consequences of their actions or their apathy. Some may even have acted in what we call 'good faith'. Whatever the case may be, there is no way of denying that this monument to racism and greed was constructed by the sinfulness of human beings faced with certain material conditions and social forces. The same applies to the plight of widows. Our task is to change it for a better world.

CHAPTER TEN

THE RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF IMPROVING THE STATUS OF WOMEN AND WIDOWS

Introduction

It is with respect and gratitude to the organisers of this workshop that I have agreed to participate and to deliver a paper on the topic: 'The Religious Aspects of Improving the Status of Women and Widows'.

I congratulate your energetic leaders and motivators who have continued to place the issue of *Widows* and *Women* on the agenda for Justice, Peace and Development and Human Rights discussions in our society. Nobody who has ever seen the plight of women in its depth in various societies of the world and considered their marginalisation, much of which is based on cultural, social, economic, religious, political, legal and gender manipulations, could feel unconcerned and pretend it is a non-issue. What baffles many is the fact that such marginalisations are carried on by the elite, the intellectuals of our society, the elders and sometimes the cultural and religious leaders. This is why the exercise carried out in this forum has to be considered as Empowerment, Conscientisation, Enlightenment and the realignment of critical Justice. For your members, it is daring to swim against the current of thought by raising this topic for a full reappraisal. It is a sort of martyrdom to demand equal rights and a fair share of the 'goods and rights' given by the Author and Giver of all good things. The discussion is therefore relevant, appropriate and urgent in our context.

Another dimension in this area is to consider worldwide developments from our local standpoint. Only recently the United Nations held a major session in Beijing, focusing on Gender and Human Rights in the context of women and their consequent

Paper presented at Enugu on 24th April, 1996.

structural, physical, and spiritual dignity. The vibrations of the UNO session in China have reverberated strongly through our huts and hovels, villages and cities to an extent that the world cannot be the same again. Women are standing up, not just to be seen now, but to be heard and respected. Issues that were never discussed in previous years affecting women, such as widowhood and inheritance laws are getting much attention these days. Women are fighting to regain lost positions in societal, political and cultural functions. Economically, women are very far away from the door to power.

One sad chapter in all these deliberations is the fact that women sometimes are their own worst enemies. Some women accept their man made predetermined denigration via cultural practices, e.g. widowhood, sexuality, family roles, status in society, and positions. Women fight and challenge fellow women who try to liberate them and carry all sorts of rumours against them. Some women fulfil men's unjust agenda by playing saboteur and mercenary to women's issues, thereby blocking many valid efforts and initiatives. Normally, the concept of freedom operates on the level of self-freedom as the basis for other freedoms. No one purchases freedom for another, except in so far as one could assist another in their self effort. Freedom is not a gift except in the context of grace. The motto actually is if you want freedom, work to obtain freedom.

I now come to the topic which you have assigned to me for discussion, namely religious views on widowhood. As you very well know, religion is a world of its own, transcendental and sometimes unquantifiably contradictory. The key terms in my paper are religion, widowhood and justice. For a short summary I shall dwell a while on the classical and phenomenological understanding and development of the term 'religion'. By so doing, we shall differentiate religion from what it is not, i.e. from the abuse of it; and show that *True Religion* promotes every man and woman in their dignity and worth; and that false religion, which I

liken to magic, hocus-pocus and abracadabra, belittles this dignity and worth.

In true religion, God is adored and glorified and mankind's worth is elevated. In false religion, man is adored and worshipped, not God, and mankind's dignity is reduced. This is what you find in the treatment of widows and women.

Religion

The Latin for religion is *religio* whose etymology is very doubtful. Cicero connected *religio* with the verb *relegere* - to read over again. Later authors trace it to *religere* - to bind. Modern writers in explaining the force of the word by its supposed etymological meaning favour the latter. However, there is no consensus on the etymological definition of religion.

Our working definition of religion is theological. From the subjective point of view, religion is a virtue that leads man to render to God the homage that is due to Him. As an objective manner of behaviour and concrete manifestation of virtue, it comprises belief in one God, personal and infinite in his attributes; an attitude of absolute respect and submission; exterior acts that express this belief and attitudes in worship; and, as required by all exterior human activity, institutions to regulate that activity.⁶⁹

Religion from the phenomenological point of view can be defined as a 'Response' to the 'wholly Other'. Basic to all religions is a unique experience of confrontation with a power not of this world. Rudolf Otto⁷⁰ called this confrontation 'Numinous'⁷¹ and analysed

⁶⁹ Cf. Goetz, J. 'Religion' in *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, Catholic University of America, Washington DC, 1981; Vol.12, pp.2402-41.

⁷⁰ Otto, R. *The Idea of the Holy*, London 1943.

⁷¹ Numinous is derived from the Latin *numen* which means the divinity or power implicit in a sacred place or object.

it as the experience of a *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, a confrontation with the 'wholly Other' outside normal experience and indescribable in its terms; terrifying and at the same time fascinating, with irresistible attraction, demanding unconditional allegiance. It is the positive human response to this experience in thought (myth and theology) and action (cult and worship) that constitutes religion.⁷²

Religion and Magic

Quite often the phenomenon of magic is confused with that of religion. But in fact they are diametrically opposed as there is an essential difference between them, which is shown clearly in their respective conceptions of the order in the world and of man's attitude in the world. Magic believes in an ensemble of automatic forces that gives the man who knows its techniques an unconditional efficacy or power independent of every other will except his own. Religion, on the other hand, acknowledges a universe that remains dependent on a good will that is effective absolutely in itself and is beyond the use of techniques. Magic sees the attraction of the sacred and tries to make itself master of it in order to use its power, while religion sees in the attraction of the sacred a reason for acknowledgement and surrender.

The Topic and Scope of this Discourse

My task in this paper is to consider the plight of widows from the point of view of certain cultural practices *vis-a-vis* enlightened Christian response. I do this gladly, both from a social-ethical point of view, and from the biblical sources which we call *Good News* in the New Testament. The focus leads to the Judaeo-Greco-

⁷² Cf. Jacobson, T. *The Treasures of Darkness; A History of Mesopotamian Religion*. Yale University Press, New Haven and London, p.3. Cf. also Smart, T., *Philosophers and Religious Truth*. SCM Press, Ltd., 1978, p.110.

Roman traditions in the Old Testament and continues into the gentile missions of St Paul and Co. into the New Testament until our times. The pattern, as is widely known, is geographical and cultural, but it turns into a universal-historical challenge for any society not ready to bend to the will of the God of History who calls us 'out of darkness into His wonderful light'.

An insight at this stage would do to make the point. If we read the Bible, it narrates the history of the Hebrews, which we may call the history of a struggling people suffering at the hands of the various powers of their time. Hebrew history in the Old Testament is punctuated by conflict: man against God; mankind against fellow humans; the rich against the poor; land possession and acquisition; property distribution; gender oppression; the marginalisation of the weak and the constant tension posed to life by death either via starvation, or famine, or war, or outright power - brokered intervention. -n the midst of the Hebrews' hopelessness and weakness, a man named Moses was called by God to provide the much desired leadership and liberation of the people from bondage into freedom. This action of God, directly intervening in human affairs to put a stop to man's inhumanity to fellow man and the wickedness, neglect of others and degradation of the weak as practised under the pharaoh of Egypt, is significant; for God is seen in a conflict on the side of the oppressed.

It is also significant that God used frail human beings to fulfil his purposes.

I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their task master, I know their suffering, I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey. (Exodus 3:7-8).

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Widowhood(The Facts on the Ground)

Because of certain cultural attitudes in several African societies which make the patriarchal system of the family and of society in practice seem to be inherently and culturally right, (it is not and should not be, neither should the matriarchal system be superimposed) the mixture has led to certain gross misapplications of justice and the creation of tensions, inequalities and unjust systems. Let me pose a thesis here: what is culture and is accepted and practised as culture is not necessarily right. I emphasise that what is right must be distinguished in theory and practice from what is simply accepted as a practice in culture. Not all cultural practices are right, although they are in practice. Culture is defined as a 'way of life'. Does its being a way of life make it right? What is right must be serving humanity, rationally acceptable and universally seen to be so, and must transcend time

and space. If what is right today in a culture becomes wrong tomorrow in the same cultural milieu, then it was never right in the first place. Accepted modes of behaviour practised over a long time do not make that behavioural pattern right. It makes the behaviour culturally permitted. But when culture changes, that earlier accepted manner of behaviour also changes. If it was right *in se*, would it have changed in essence because of culture shift?

The values of societies are socially endorsed for the sake of societies' value systems. As society shifts or changes, values also shift or change. Can we say the same of right and wrong from an ethical rational ontological reflection?

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Widowhood and some Local Cultures

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Ordeals of torture and injustice, recently by subtle means, but in the past in a public manner, such as being led naked through the village market and on dusty roads accompanied by barbaric and irrational chanting of songs and incredible charlatanry.

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Finally, death seems a financially costly event for the bereaved. To have a corpse in your compound is to have to go borrowing from the banks and willing donors, to feed a crowd of people who never ate from your compound while the deceased was alive. Imported and local drinks, food, cakes, snacks, all sorts of local and continental delicacies are prepared for seeming sympathisers on condolence visits. The feeding services may last up to one month. This scandalous practice is encouraged by the elite and supported by so called 'traditionalists'.

When impoverishing the living because of the demise of a family member is part of a culture it becomes, both in the short and long run, a wasteful act and causes irresponsible spending and is a disgrace to the dead. The souls of the dead rest in peace because of their good lives. The dead are not pacified by the living who eat like the utilitarian epicurean Romans of old. Okonkwo is noted to have told a village medicine man who demanded that Unoka, Okonkwo's dead father, be pacified with the killing of a goat: 'Go and ask my dead father if he ever owned a fowl while he was alive'; and now at death he is demanding through the ritual medicine man a goat. Chinua Achebe's message is clear: The living should not be punished or impoverished because someone answered the natural call of death. Unfortunately, in the name of

culture, cultural revival, etc., vulgar, unjust and economically devastating practices are irrationally and atrociously held as dogma and are inflicted on widows. Why is it that a man whose wife has died does not go through all the ordeals mentioned above? In fact, from the day his wife died, he is as free as he wants. No ritual, no fines, no confinement, no unjust laws, no payments of dues, no force and, of course, no denial of properties of his wife and himself or removal of children. No trial by ordeal why?

What is the position of the Christian churches, of Christianity to this clearly condemnable unjust treatment meted out to widows?

The Christian Response to the Injustices arising out of Widowhood

When one considers the Christian faith, one amazing and exciting ability of Christianity and therefore of the Church is to *dissent* wherever and whenever human dignity is abused. Jesus of Nazareth represented such an attitude in his life time. Through his resurrected life, Jesus said 'No' to death and 'YES' to life. He said 'NO' to injustice and the false judgement of Pilate, and said 'YES' to fairness, justice and peace.

Above all, he said 'NO' to sin and hopelessness and taught liberation from all shackles (spiritual, physical, legal, cultural, social, etc.) and put forward hope as the option for mankind on earth. In fact, God who is our *hope* becomes our *redeemer* in Jesus Christ. Jesus spoke of the narrow path which many would not like to follow. But he said this road leads to life. It is the Spirit that can give courage and light for many to choose this narrow path. The prophets followed this narrow path, even if it led to their own death.

On the issue of widowhood and its cultural dimensions as practised in some parts of Nigeria, the basic question is: Does the practice contradict human dignity and human rights? Once it does, the

practice is wrong and ethically unacceptable. There is unfortunately in the area of justice or injustice no middle way. It is *either/or* and not *both/and*.

The ideology of power in the world has developed a dichotomy between the 'Sacred' and the 'Secular'. People will even quote Jesus where he says: "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's". With such misapplication of the word, justification is sought after even from the Bible to cover the aberrations of wicked cultural practices. By the way, who owns Caesar? Is it not God? What does Caesar have that is not out of God's grace? Is justice God's and injustice Caesar's?

The attempt therefore to relegate religion from culture shows a blatant lack of understanding of the complex nature of cultural dynamism of which religion is the apex.

The simple fact of life is that religion either authenticates culture or purifies it, showing it direction, giving it purpose and orientation. The lives of people are conditioned by the harsh realities of everyday political, social, economic and other superstructures which the 'rulers' of this world have designed. There is an ongoing struggle in the world. The Church also is a site for struggle. Not to prophetically give a religious-christian response to the ongoing socio-cultural practices is to fail woefully to respond to the demands of the gospel, which asks us to be 'the salt of the earth' and 'the light of the world'. In the language of logic, 'A thing cannot be (exist) and not be (not exist) at the same time. It is or it is not'.

In the first place, neutrality with regard to the cultural practice meted out to widows in the name of 'prudence' or 'cultural revival', etc., is an illusion. The gospel is not and can never be neutral; as Albert Nolan has said: 'The gospel we preach will not be the gospel of Jesus Christ unless it takes sides with those who are being sinned against, with the poor and the oppressed.'

The injustices meted out to widows as shown earlier need to be considered against 'the signs of the times and translated in the light of the Gospel' (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1:1).

A few incidents from the Bible will show how God cared for widows: sympathy, appreciation, loving care, respect for dignity, and support were the *key words*:

The widow and Elijah;

Jesus Christ and the widow of Naim;

Jesus and the widow's mite;

The Prophets and widows.

Today, these ideals are shown in:

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

The African Charter on people and Human Rights;

The Nigerian Constitution.

Conclusion:

Let me end with a conclusion: social systems do not come into existence by themselves. They do not drop out of the sky. Nor are they simply a result of some kind of blind fate or social determinism. Apartheid is an example. There were indeed certain material conditions and social forces that gave rise to the system of apartheid: colonial conquest, the colonisers' discovery of gold, the need for cheap labour and so forth. But they were not the only factors in the creation of this system. The process was not wholly determined and fated from the start. Even if it is difficult to see how it could have gone in any other direction, we cannot exclude the responsibility of human beings for the monster that has been created.

The same can be said of the system of oppression of widows in some cultures. True religion liberates and improves the dignity and status of all created beings, both male and female, widows and orphans.

The challenge facing the Christian churches in our country is to cast away fear and be part of the liberating influence which the Good News of Jesus Christ brings to all. This is also our call to which I commit myself, my life and my talents. I call upon you to join in this true discipleship of Jesus, as we face the plight of widows in our society.

SECTION IV:

MERCY IN A MERCILESS SOCIETY:

CHAPTER ELEVEN

PRISONERS STANDING IN NEED OF RECONCILIATION (Biblical and Theological Perspectives)

Appreciation

I wish to express my profound gratitude and personal appreciation to the steering committee and core organisers of this significant International Prisons Chaplains' Association (IPCA) Worldwide Conference III here in Aylmer, Quebec. For me, as someone from far away tropical West Africa where the thick Mangrove forests, wild nature, the extreme weather conditions, the talking drums and jungle life are a daily routine, this convocation in Aylmer offers an opportunity for the mutual sharing of faith and of experiences in an atmosphere of solidarity, a privilege which I candidly appreciate and would convey upon my home return to the millions of people of Nigeria whom I represent at this conference.

Introduction:

The broad and general theme of this Conference is: 'Reconciliation - the Challenge of Prison Chaplains'. I have been asked to discuss one aspect, namely 'Prisoners Standing in the Need of Reconciliation (Biblical and Theological Perspectives)'. This is obviously a topic of vast significance. Whether we look into the mysterious world of theology, faith and life, or in the secular world of politics, culture, society and economics, the theme of reconciliation is integrally linked with relationships, be they human, technical, national, international, or supernatural and transcendental.

Paper presented at the International Conference of the International Prison Chaplains's Association (IPCA) World-Wide Conference III Aylmer, Quebec (Ottawa) Canada on the general theme Reconciliation: the challenge of Prison Chaplains from 18th-23rd August, 1995.

There is no gainsaying the fact that in many human societies and communities worldwide, people are bedevilled by the hydra headed consequences of evils caused by intolerance, wickedness, inhumanity, insubordination, greed, pride, meanness, oppression, poverty, immorality, contemptuousness, incompatibility of opinions on various levels leading to physical and spiritual problems which of course impoverish mankind and reduce our God-given dignity and worth. Scandalously, but this is obvious, there is unquantifiable physical and spiritual wretchedness in the midst of plenty to the extent that the poor too feel wretched and unwanted, thereby widening the gap in interhuman, international and interpersonal relationships. In many countries of the world a stage has been reached where the 'haves' consider the 'have-nots' a burden and a threat to their imagined equilibrium of comfort and licentious living, thus creating an unparalleled falsehood in the way many human beings and state institutions reach out in discontinuity, protectionism, individuality and blanket bias towards one another.

Over the years we have sung to ourselves and to the world the monotonous refrain of unity, peace, harmony, progress, pragmatism, etc. to no avail. And because we hardly attached any deep meaning to these noble concepts, many human communities and/or societies have arrived at or even gone beyond the crossroads of rancour, disharmony, suspicion and an unprecedented level of meaninglessness in their lives. It is this phenomenon of 'meaninglessness' which now stares many in the face as we wonder how we ever reached the present situation. Gradually we are internalising the hard granite fact of life that there can be no harmony and thus no peace in our communities, if human relationships are discordant.

This actual realisation therefore has aroused many men and women of goodwill to call for an urgent inward inspection at and a constructive and evaluative reappraisal of the very systems which we have so far practised, accepted and adopted but to no pragmatic and successful avail. Reconciliation happens to be that moment of

linkage, bridge-building, fence-mending, reaching out, meaning-giving, harmony, and therefore, of balance and of hope, renovation and reactivation, without which our world, our human communities would be in disarray, disorientation, dissatisfaction and disharmony.

Whether viewed from the points of view of sound reason, common sense or the assembled wisdom of the ancients, reconciliation poses itself as the '*Conditio sine qua non*' for any fulfilling enterprise in inter-human and inter-spiritual communality of human beings while on earth. In the theological language of St Paul:

You were once estranged and of hostile intent through your evil behaviour. Now he has reconciled you by this death and in that mortal body to bring you before himself holy, faultless and irreproachable as long as you persevere and stand firm ... (Col.1:21-22).

What is reconciliation?

The theme of reconciliation is very broad indeed. What is reconciliation? How do we reconcile? What is the end of reconciliation?

The logic of reconciliation, in my opinion, transcends time and space. The theme of reconciliation also does not seem to remain only in the domain of religion, philosophy or theology. After several years in a history of catastrophic and tragedy-laden wars and brutality, hatred, rejection and prejudices for whatever reasons, mankind has grudgingly discovered that there can be no lasting peace if there is no willingness for reconciliation. Where reconciliation is absent, trust, security, relationships, unity, love, happiness, fulfilment and satisfaction also appear elusive and are in fact also absent. The current international efforts led by the United Nations and supported by the USA and Canada (to mention but a

few countries) seek to create linkages and co-operation among erstwhile grand enemies, whether we focus on Europe, which after the Second World War discovered the futility of it all and now works hard to create the European Union; or in the ongoing farewell messages to the cold war era based on ideological differences between the Eastern Communist-oriented countries and the Western liberal capitalist oriented economies, especially following the demise of the Soviet Union. Are we not surprised at the unexpected yet tremendous efforts and success already put in place to create an atmosphere of mutual tolerance, cooperation and coexistence among the Palestinians and other Arab nations with their Israeli neighbours? Does not the ongoing peace process in Northern Ireland present itself as another positive step in the right direction of reconciliation in the face of several years of hatred and misunderstanding? After three centuries of inflexibility, apartheid South Africa has gradually given way to a democratic, more human and more tolerant society to which we are witnesses, and this arose because the leadership accepted the logic of reconciliation. The experiences of several married couples has shown that only in the ability to reconcile is there a possibility to succeed in enduring any marriage. Everywhere, the options seem the same: 'If you do not want to live in pieces, then live in peace', but on the preconditions of a desire for a gradual and eventual reconciliation which nurtures peace. This Christian understanding of the term was elucidated by Regis A. Duffy, OFM in the *New Dictionary of Theology* where he defines reconciliation as:

a complex biblical term which includes God's invitation and our response to ongoing conversion within a community of faith ... Through invitation, the Christian receives forgiveness of sin and is incorporated into the Church and its mission ... Reconciliation to God and the Church is worked out in the human situation which

includes both pastoral practice and the particular social context in which Christians find themselves. (*The New Dictionary of Theology*, eds. Komonchak, J. Collins, M. Lane, AD; Gill & MacMillan, publ. Dublin, 1987, pp.830-831).

It is this Christian understanding of the term which has its basis in the Judaeo Christian faith that puts reconciliation at the heart of every relationship in a three dimensional optiontranscendental, horizontal and vertical, referring to man's relationship with God, the human community and within himself. Reconciliation involves therefore an attitude of the mind in our way of life which desires a change for the better and concrete action to redress that which is not straight in this relationship. The crux of the matter is the belief that in God 'any sin is forgivable, given the preconditions of repentance and a desire to change for the better'. Theologically, sin is understood as an 'offence against God which damages communion with the Christian community' (*Lumen Gentium II*). There is need therefore on the part of the sinner to change, repent and be open both to God's forgiveness and reconciliation with the human believing community - the Church. It may not be easily credible or even conceivable to talk of peace and reconciliation with God without talking of its inseparable link within the human community, whether it is with our neighbour or the larger society. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*; Geoffrey Chapman, 1994, n.553).

During his public life Jesus not only forgave sins, but made plain the effect of this forgiveness: he reintegrated forgiven sinners into the community of the people of God from which sin had alienated or even excluded them. A remarkable sign of this is the fact that Jesus receives sinners at his table, a gesture that expresses in an astonishing way both God's forgiveness and their return to the bosom of the people of God (*ibid.* n.1443; Lk.15; Lk.19:9).

This is precisely what reconciliation is offering to broken human societies everywhere, because reconciliation is based on the logic of a right understanding of the human person who is in need of a proper and balanced relationship. It accepts the plea for forgiveness as a necessary tool, given the logic that there would be no 'act of forgiveness' if there was 'no act of offence, of hurt or of injury'.

In practical terms, reconciliation works on the principle of associated living. It has no other good than the good of persons who are living happily and are at peace. It involves an ethical regard for the feelings of others and is predicated on principles of betterment of relationships both on an individual and a societal level, a situation that is spiritually healthy for the '*bonum commune*'.

Professor Duncan Forrester criticised as misguided that tradition of thought by which artificial modern man is constructed into a monstrous isolated, atomic individual actor, loosed beyond 'good and evil', and freed from society, responsible only to himself, both in his/her moral attitude and action; and where society is thought of rather like a hotel, in which each person is free to operate independently from all other guests. (Ref. *Relationships in Prison*; transcript of a conference held 15th-18th April, 1993, at Bishop Grosseteste College, Lincoln, p.3a).

In relation to a prison, if you take this kind of individualistic thought very seriously, it is easier to think of a prison as a warehouse for individual offenders, rather than as being in any real sense a community which relates in a complex and important way to the broader community in which it is set. This kind of thought encourages people to think of offenders as isolated beings who are one hundred percent responsible for their behaviour, so that upbringing, social circumstances, and so forth are no longer

relevant. Society, in other words, is not seen as in any way implicated in the offence. The individual bears his guilt alone. Offence is understood as obstructing other people in the pursuit of their legitimate goals. It has little to do with disrupting community and nothing to do with a common good. (ibid.)

This attitude and line of thought is what needs to be challenged when we talk of reconciliation in general.

A powerful statement in the Bible by Jesus saved the woman caught in the act of adultery from imminent death under an unfair, unjust and unkind legal societal framework:

Let he who is without sin cast the first stone at her (John 8). And he turned to the woman and said: "Go and sin no more".

This is a clear example of sin, pardon, reconciliation (ibid.) and reintegration into the human community. Each of us needs it. The depth of the Christian message is that 'all people have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God' (St Paul). *In essence, we are all offenders*; we have in one way or another broken some relationships be it love, trust, expectation or even by omission and/or commission. We are all sinners and are all in need of reconciliation. For the believing Christian, the economy of salvation rests its case on the reality and existence of sin, the universality of the Fall of Man, the need for salvation and the actual salvific action of the life, death and resurrection of Christ which reconciled fallen mankind to God and restored his/her status to grace. One would even say: 'There go I but for the grace of God'. No wonder St Paul aptly describes this grace of the gift of reconciliation in his letter to the Ephesians thus:

But now in Christ Jesus, you that used to be far off have been brought close, by the blood of Christ. For he is the peace between us, and has made the two into one entity and broken down the barrier which used to keep them apart by destroying in his own person the hostility, that is, the law of commandments with its decrees. His purpose in this was, by restoring peace, to create a single new man out of the two of them, and through the cross to reconcile them both to God in one body; in his own person he killed the hostility ... He came to bring the good news of peace to you who were far off. So you are no longer aliens or foreign visitors; you are fellow citizens with the holy people of God and part of God's household. (Eph.2:13-20).

St Paul emphasises that sin is at the root of the human predicament. The human person is thereby placed in the need for reconciliation. The sinner must show a certain willingness to repent and be contrite. The neighbour or the human community and the Church are involved for they are challenged to accept the apology/repentance of the sinner, now penitent and receive him/her into the community. Finally, the action of God in the Holy Spirit, through the redemption of the Son, forgives the sinner and completes the moment of reconciliation. The point is that reconciliation is necessary. Reconciliation is possible. Reconciliation is a sure and useful measure to attain to a modicum of spiritual and physical balance in a world that has lost equilibrium. We all stand in need of reconciliation.

Prisoners Standing in the Need of Reconciliation

In this section of our reflection I intend to survey the relevance of

the theme of reconciliation to the actual life situation of prisoners in Nigeria and to seek for a new role for the prison chaplain. From what has been said so far, no doubt, there is need for reconciliation as a social, pastoral and ethical option for prisoners.

But does the prison situation in itself allow this and does the larger society encourage any reconciliation with an ex-criminal? Are not all criminals bad people? Does the criminal justice system not see a prisoner as unworthy of citizenship in the open society even after incarceration? Do our immigration laws not forbid a visa for an ex-convict into a country? What of the stigma caused by cultural and social taints of being an ex-prisoner? Does not our legal system disqualify an ex-convict from taking up serious positions of responsibility in society and in the state? Is there no discrimination in our labour laws, party political systems, etc. as far as the full acceptance of ex-convicts is concerned? Could an ex-prisoner apply to be accepted as a seminarian or a novice in a religious congregation in the Church and so be admitted into Holy Orders? Would he not be rejected outright by the Church as a misfit for a vocation reserved only for the 'good'? While we give lip service to reconciliation, how is it in practice, actually? How many people even here amongst us would accept to live together or work together without bias or prejudice with a convicted ex-rapist, ex-murderer or a known ex-criminal? Could we accept a convicted ex-killer of our brother, sister, friend, parent or schoolmate to be reconciled with us, against the painful background of such a loss and criminal action? What is our attitude to a notorious thief in our environment who has served several years in prison and now claims to be 'born again'? Which ex-prisoner would love a society that threw him into jail for a crime of which he was innocent? Which ex-prisoner would accept reconciliation with a criminal justice system that incarcerated him and denied him his worth, value and dignity for more years than the offender actually merited?

An actual look into the concrete inhumane and wicked situation of prisons in Nigeria challenges (as elsewhere) our uncommitted praise

of the virtue of reconciliation as a 'sell down grace' left only for the saints (that is, if one is actually confronted with a 'criminal correctional system' which turns erstwhile 'innocent minors' into 'hardened criminals' by the time they finish a term in prison).

The Concrete Situation in Nigerian Prisons

At the inception of CIDJAP in 1986, the Institute aimed among other things to work as a Human Rights Educational Centre within the concrete milieu of a country that was gradually deteriorating into unquantifiable expressions of human rights abuses, violations, degradation, lawlessness, and near anarchy. What is said of Nigeria could apply equally (plus-or-minus) to any other African nation, if not even in worse circumstances.

The various aims of the Institute were articulated in a programme paper which opted for human rights education, public awareness, conscientisation and animation work in local contexts; speaking out and fighting injustice, poverty, disease and oppression in whatever way possible; conducting research work and organising practical action aimed at creating an environment that would enable human beings to live a life that has a minimal measure of dignity and worth; and entering into dialogue with the organisations of the state and the civil society on necessary issues, etc.

The CIDJAP mounted pressure through its network on both the government, the judiciary and agents of the legal and penal system, to place the value of the human person at the centre of every penal and correctional system. After several years of concerted efforts, one is sad to note that we are back to square one. Whereas a few positive developments came to pass which include an enlarged CIDJAP and other non-governmental organisation (NGO) activity in the areas of health care for inmates; rehabilitation of ex-prisoners; pastoral and religious care; career and skill development acquisition and training for serving inmates; legal aid; cases of bail and litigations (with minimal or no costs to inmates via

lawyers), voluntary contributions; public enlightenment; and programmes which lead to an attitude change of the larger public so that adequate focus is given to the dignity of incarcerated prison inmates- there has been on the other hand, a deteriorating situation generally on the issue of the human rights of persons in a polity. Confronted with a situation where military dictatorship and the barrel of the gun has silenced many Nigerians including politicians, there is a general relapse into anarchy, lawlessness and arbitrary behaviour; there is an apparent corruption of the judicial, economic and civil service system to incomparable depths; there is a growing apathy and hopelessness in the minds and lives of many. Capital punishment makes human life cheap, not only for cases of murder but also for cases of drug pushing, sedition, coup planning, armed robbery, cable robbery, etc. Anybody at any time could become a prisoner or detainee charged with any imaginary or real offence, and locked up under military promulgated decrees without any chances of a fair hearing, fair trial or fair judgement. Many have long since died under mysterious circumstances under police, secret service agents and in the prisons. An editorial in *The Light*, a national Catholic newspaper of June 1995, comments on the situation in Nigeria in detention cells and prisons with the following words:

A most frightening prospect for the citizen in today's Nigeria is to become a guest of the *State* in a *Police Cell* or in *Prison Detention*. For it is the beginning of a journey that is at once as harrowing as it is uncharted. Detainees come under treatment that does not befit the animal in a pen. For one thing, the animal is recognised as the property of the owner and treated as such. But for hapless Nigerians, unlucky enough to be poor and unconnected, and to commit a malfeasance, many are simply forgotten,

left to pine away for months and years, and to rot and die in detention without any formal process or trial. (*The Light*, vol.6, No.6, June 1995, p.1).

In a seminar recently organised by the CIDJAP in Nigeria in early June 1995 on the theme: '*Decongestion of Prisons and Police Cells in Nigeria - the tasks before us*', I had the privilege of addressing that august audience with the following words which bear repetition in this context:

It is obvious for all who care that force, violence, brutality, squalor, depression, marginalisation, hunger, darkness, humidity, sickness, maltreatment, neglect, abandonment, incarceration and spiritual dilapidation characterise the situation in virtually all of the prisons in Nigeria. The same situation exists in shabbily kept mosquito-infested police cells where primitive arbitrary behaviour is the name of the game. Often the innocent are victims. Charges are proffered against citizens to which they could hardly place a defence for lack of funds and the criminal justice system denies human beings their value and dignity.

Conditions for bail, albeit unofficial, are such that only those with access to the means can get it. Many are forced to call up the most ingenious resource from deep inside their human initiative just to stay alive in detention. And in the process, aided by a most unfeeling band of operators of a decaying security and legal system, they begin to perfect survival strategies that violate the rights of other citizens in the society. Thus a detainee who would otherwise benefit from the corrective influence of organised dispensation of justice degenerates over time into a frightening product of structural

violence.

For an 'awaiting-trial' inmate expecting only a few days in prison, such days roll into months and the unfortunate police cell or prison inmate, spends not the legally stipulated twenty-four hours (maximum of forty-eight hours) but perhaps upwards of sixteen years without charge or trial; in fact, without a case file, a lawyer or even relatives to intervene. This atrocious and absurd injustice has led to over congestion in virtually all the prisons in the country. It has led to near anarchy in terms of the inability of the shabbily kept and underpaid prison staff to cope with the reform, let alone the rehabilitation of prisoners. It has led to the death of many victims. Some are not fed at all because the system hijacks the food in transit. Where they are themselves succumbing easily and tragically to the unhealthy conditions. These unfortunate victims of our society quickly become human skeletons of skin and bone reminiscent of the products of the torture chambers of Auschwitz. And this is happening in many countries of the world in 1995, just as we enter the third millenium! Who thinks of reconciliation in such a situation? It has made Nigeria assume a bad name in international circles as a country which flagrantly tramples down upon fundamental human rights, rights which the United Nations has worked so hard in the last fifty years to promote and to ensure that standards work. The general apathy of the larger society merely adds 'salt to injury' for a truncated and emaciated citizenry who are, helpless and hapless, and traumatised by what is happening to them in their own country. That was part of my speech. The reality cannot even be described in detail with words. It is atrocious.

What can the Prison Chaplain do?

In November 1994, several prison chaplains from various Nigerian dioceses (there are forty dioceses) gathered for the first-ever 'All Nigerian Congress of Catholic Prison Chaplains' at Enugu. The tasks were clear:

to discuss the very urgent and rapidly deteriorating situation in Nigerian prisons and its bearing upon the prisoners' rights and dignity as human persons and to give a response as prison chaplains... We believed that knowledge should precede action.

A communique was issued at the end of the one-week brainstorming sessions, some of which included taking note of the actual situation on the ground, namely:

The prison as a world of its own with its own unique language and culture, its problems and prospects which will not be readily obvious to the outsider.

The overcrowded nature of the Nigerian prisons and the lumping together of first time offenders and mere suspects (some of them minor offenders) with hardened criminals all living together under conditions of horrid squalor.

The actual linkage between the socio-economic situation of the people and the crime rate in the society. For instance, offences against property for which most people are sent to prison increase proportionately with the increase in inflation and corresponding decrease in per capita real incomes. The lack of social welfare schemes and adequate provision of public utilities affects the living standards of people in a deteriorating manner.

The fact that prison officials either divert foods and various supplies meant for prison inmates to their own use, or exploit the prisoners and their families by asking for financial inducements to perform for the prisoners even the most routine of their duties.

The shock that over sixty per cent of prisoners are suspects awaiting trial makes the overcrowding of the prisons quite an artificial creation.

The near collapse of formal education by incessant strikes, and a high rate of youth unemployment which provides a great impetus for the involvement of youth in serious crimes.

The inadequacy of the present penal system to fulfil any correctional roles. There is no provision for separate treatment of various categories of offenders; juveniles and adults, males and females; first offenders and habitual criminals. There is thus added need for alternative sentences to fulfil correctional roles.

The recognition of the fact that the prisons as they now exist and function constitute a devastating drain on the nation's dwindling resources, since prisoners do not contribute to their own sustenance or the growth of the wider society but are rather fed and sustained by them.

The demand that the prison apostolate be seen as the vocation of all the faithful as an obligation, and not as a matter of option as such. It is an integral gospel challenge: *Vide Matthew 25:37.*

The prison chaplains of Nigeria at that meeting resolved to work harder, individually and collectively, nationally and internationally, physically and spiritually to move Nigeria forward, even if in a modest manner, to accept the minimum standards set out by the international community on the treatment of convicts, detainees and incarcerated persons generally. We are discussing not gifts of the state but the God-given rights of individual men and women.

Civilised society has a set rule, a humane, democratic rule about law and justice, freedom and detention of persons. Knowing full well that many innocent citizens suffer unjustly, no one should be considered guilty of an accusation until such is proven fairly and freely by mechanisms set up by society to balance equity, promote law and order and guarantee the freedom and protection of all citizens generally. Every legitimate means at our disposal needs now to be co-opted, for what is at stake is the dignity, the worth and the value of human beings created in God's holy image and likeness.

Conclusion

As I come to the end of this reflection, a few questions remain unanswered. I cannot answer all of them and I do not even wish to try. But I do know that the issue of reconciliation happens to be a matter which ultimately will remain at the centre of our entire correctional system.

The time has come when consciences must be stirred and touched at the plight of persons who for whatever reasons, remote, immediate and unclear, have had to commit heinous crimes against

society. Something has to be done, and urgently too. They still, in spite of their crimes, remain human beings with a certain modicum of value and spiritual worth. They remain still God's children whose salvation is in the hands of God. Why can we not therefore be reconciled to them? Why does society not see the need to promote reconciliation as perhaps the only lasting solution to their dilemma? And why do some of these prisoners not see in reconciliation a way out of their own spiritual poverty and mental crisis as they suffer for their crimes? Why are some prison inmates not ready, even when given another chance, to see society in a more positive and kindly light? Here, the prison chaplain has a task indeed, the task to touch hearts and to heal wounds. In the penal system, various wounds have been inflicted and various persons have been hurt. But there is need to give up the hurt, to repent, to change strategy both by the structures of society, its operators, its victims and its protectors. The prison chaplain is called to build bridges and to mend fences. He is the liaison between the inmate and the spiritual realities of the inmate. And he is the liaison between the inmate and the larger society to a great extent. Three letters written to me by serving prison inmates in Enugu, Nigeria testify to this role.

Permit me to read them to you in their original versions:

The Elders of Catholics in Condemned Convicts,

c/o The Deputy Controller of Prisons,

Nigerian Prison Services,

PMB 1062,

Enugu.

1st June, 1995

Dear Reverend Father,

We, the elders of Catholic in the *Death Row* have decided to write and to thank you very much for all your corporal works of mercy towards prisoners in Enugu Prison, and mostly to us, the *Condemned Convicts* (cc) inside the dungeon... We have faith that the almighty God and you have not rejected us, even though the world has rejected us. All your activities in the prison show us that the almighty God is using you very much to save lives and to help the poor and the weak.

We learnt of the way you fought for the Condemned Convicts (cc) Inmates in 1992 - yet the Government of the day in 1994 went ahead with the mass killing of our thirty-eight brothers in one day. We are praying for freedom and for liberation from the dungeon ...

We wish to remind you of one of our beloved brothers in the dungeon here known as brother Joseph Anaba. This man is our leader and overseer. He is from Abia State. This is his fourteen years in the prison; and twelve years in the condemned convicts' block. He was accused of murder. He is a grade two headmaster. His case has lasted for nearly nine years in the Board of the Prerogative of Mercy. We plead that you kindly do something on his behalf. The Board gave him ten years to serve in 1990 but the Governor failed to sign the document before the case file was transferred to a new state. He has got many chances to be released, yet he is still in the dungeon with us. We have used this family man as an example, many of us here have identical or like cases.

So we beg you to kindly extend your corporal works of mercy to other states in Nigeria ... Many of us have stayed for many years inside the condemned convicts block. *We still inform you that many of us have regretted and repented of our wicked life*, and have submitted ourselves to the almighty God.

'From now onwards, then we will not consider anyone by human standards even if we were once familiar with Christ according to human standards, we do not know him in that way any longer. So for anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation: the older one is gone and a new being is there to see. It is all God's work; he reconciled us to himself through Christ and he gave us the ministry of reconciliation. I mean, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself not holding anyone's fault against them but entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.' But the world does not know of this. In fact, *if we are again given another chance in life, we shall do better.* We write and beg for your kind aid to rescue our lives.

Signed: (eight inmates)

c/o The Assistant Controller of Prisons,

Nigerian Prisons Services,

PMB 13,

Abakaliki.

8th May, 1995.

Dear Sir,

I humbly beg to seek for an assistance through your humanitarian organisation. My name is Christian Ude, a Christian, male prisoner at the above mentioned correctional centre in Abakaliki. I need your help. By profession I am an automobile mechanic before I got myself into this bondage. But now I am a fully repentant soul and a born again. I have withdrawn from all filthy and malign activities or immorality.

Confinement since 4 years had in fact made a great change of me to stand upright before God. I now vow to worship him and I am reconciled with myself and with my neighbour before *God*.

Notwithstanding confinement, my being a prisoner has turned me into a relevant and crucial subject because of my profession, even in the eyes of the prison authorities. They would release me soon, if you recommend me. I was convicted to serve four years imprisonment in a bid of stealing act, but subsequently will be expiring on 18th November 1995.

What do I do thereafter? My personal desire is to operate a Motor Mechanic Workshop which will help keep me away from crime and become a vital image and self-reliant member of the community. I am also good at welding and construction works; automobile electrical repairs of trucks and vans and general mechanics.

With due respect, Sir, I need your fatherly care to uphold my future career and keep the path of hard work and repentant sinner. Help me by purchasing workshop equipment for me such as electric welding machine, four steps tools box, electric filing machine, electric drilling machine and size 4 vice, etc.

I promise to sign an undertaking to ensure sincerity and I want your office to monitor my life in the Lord when I am in the world. I have reconciled with God through Christ and my old ways are gone. Please help me to stay in the path of life when I am out, give me tools to work with my hands and earn bread. I shall also assist other prison inmates when they come out of dungeon.

Yours faithfully,

Christian Ude

Nigerian Prisons Services,

c/o DCP,

Enugu Prisons.

3rd June, 1995.

Dear Reverend Gentleman,

Pentecost greetings to you in Jesus's name.

I am a repentant sinner who in 1994 came here for a case of stealing for which the court gave me the option of a fine to pay N4,000 (about USD 50) or to serve a term of five years in prison.

I am appealing to you to come to my aid and send your men across to Ezeagu- Aguobu Owa Magistrate court to pay the fine on my behalf. I will be grateful if you helped me purchase my freedom from bondage, just like Jesus Christ purchased freedom for all mankind from sin. In fact, I have since repented and come to know the Lord Jesus better.

May I inform you that I am a carpenter-furniture maker by profession. I know wood work just as I know the back of my hand. Please help me by paying this fine so that my spiritual freedom will be helped by physical freedom. I shall live to discourage stealing by young people around me. My destiny is in God's hands through you.

Yours,

Sergius Mogbo

CHAPTER TWELVE

'THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS - a theological investigation into the reality of the Cross in the Prison Environment'

Introduction

I am very much aware that I have been assigned to discuss a topic that is 'out of tune' and 'out of date' with the 'spirit of the world' and the modern desires of contemporary society. Is it not rather gloomy and morbid to dwell on the phenomenon of suffering and the cross in a world that talks of 'enjoyment', 'relaxation', 'life', 'fantasy', 'pleasure' and 'happiness'?

Who likes suffering anyway, except those whom psychologists have labelled both sick and therefore sadists? Are we as Christians not called to jubilate in the Easter joy and generate more of it, instead of calling to mind the cross and suffering of Good Friday?

Why do we enlarge on the 'Theology of the Cross' and carry out an investigation into the reality of the cross in the prison environment under the broad theme: The prisoner, the chaplaincy and the cross? Wouldn't it have been more suitable, modern and corresponding to the spirit of the times to deliberate on 'less pain and less suffering' for the prison inmate, to discuss the abrogation of all penal laws and to opt for a 'more civilised prison pastoral' where the cross has no place and all pain banished? Where Human Rights, but not Human Duties, are emphasised?

The Ninth Worldwide Congress of the International Catholic Prison Chaplaincies has very wisely chosen a topic of vast significance and

Paper presented at the International Commission of Catholic Prison Chaplaincies (ICCPC) IXth ICCPC World Congress Warsaw, Poland (Metropolitan Seminary) on the general theme 'The Prisoner the Chaplaincy and the Cross: carry one another's burden and so fulfil the law of christ' (Gal.6:2)

relevant for our times, for all times.

An old transport vehicle on the rugged roads of Enugu in Eastern Nigeria bears this inscription on it: no cross, no crown. Another fast moving public township bus in the middle of Lagos bears the biblical statement boldly written on it: in the cross is life (*In Cruce Salus*).

Who would doubt the veracity of those two bold statements?

While accepting the invitation to this paper and to the Congress, I shared the topic with a group of friends and immediately discovered the wealth and multidimensional perspectives which could emerge if one delved headlong into the topic, considering the possibilities but not the limitations. We discovered that a discussion on the cross could have a mystical, mythical, intellectual, spiritual, psychological, physical, social, cultural and theological dimension.

The discussions led to the discovery that most often people desert and discard the cross. Given the opportunity to choose, many humans would abhor the cross and even reject it. A few may accept, but the readiness to willingly embrace the cross is not always there. Yet the granite reality and hard fact of life remains that whichever way and wherever we turn in life, the cross happens to stand out boldly, already there, even before we enter into the arena. What do we do? Accept it? Reject it? Rationalise it? Evade it? Curse it and grudgingly accept its imposition? These, and many other questions may be handled as we reflect on the 'Theology of the Cross' in this paper.

We discovered further during the sharing that a more practical and systematic approach could be developed to consider the topic by focusing on: the mystery of the cross, the reality of the cross, the meaning of the cross in the daily lives of people, the theology of the cross, the cross and faith, suffering as a consequence of sin and evil, the redemptive cross of Christ for entire humanity, the reality

of the cross in the prison environment, the role of the prison chaplain in witnessing to the cross in the prisoner, the cross and resurrection, the cross as teacher on the path of life, the cross and human solidarity, etc.

Whichever way, there is ample material for this type of discussion. Unfortunately there is not ample time for the sharing. In the long run, the cross remains a *mystery*. A mystery is a 'revealed truth of God beyond human comprehension'. How then do we go about the handling of this 'mystery'?

The Reality of the Cross

Permit me to quote from the book of Genesis in the Old Testament:

To the woman he said: I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing - with pain you will give birth to children ... To Adam he said: 'Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, "You must not eat of it", cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.' (Genesis 3:16-19)

The above biblical quotation corresponds to the Hebrew interpretation of suffering as God's punishment upon the sin which has wounded humankind since its beginning. Sin in the above description is a consequence of temptation and the disobedience (fall) of man and woman to God's command. Death and suffering (cross) are the consequences.

In 1995, various countries, nations, peoples and continents of the world celebrated fifty years of the end of the Second World War,

a most brutal and fatal event that caused the early death and sufferings of millions of people world-wide. Whether in Hiroshima or Nagasaki, whether in Auschwitz or Mauthausen, whether in Dachau or unknowable concentration camps, on battlefields, abandoned homes, dying children and their families, people living in fear, insecurity and harassment, arbitrary arrests and entire breakdown of law and order, the reign of the survival of the fittest, the regime of terror and the complete feeling of abandonment, alienation and sure death - all these formed part of the fifty years' anniversary of the end of the Second World War. Nations resolved: '*No more war*'. Unfortunately for humanity, while the said celebrations were going on and preachers, politicians, statesmen and women, writers and people of good will everywhere were shouting '*No more war, no more terror, no more inhumanity, suffering and brutality*', exactly the opposite was happening in Rwanda, Burundi, Chechnya, Bosnia, some desert areas of North Africa like Somalia and Sudan, some regions of South America faced with drug lords and legitimate but corrupt governments - to mention but a few.

The evil arms industries continue to produce weapons of repression, death and suffering in the United States of America, Europe, Asia and elsewhere, and are purchased by the poorest nations who buy weapons instead of bread.

As we reflect and share our thoughts here, injustices abound worldwide and in unquantifiable dimensions. The 'good' is contrasted with 'evil' and 'suffering' to the extent that no sane person would doubt *the reality of the cross* in the daily lives of people and nations. What one might question is the *why* of the cross! The signs are abundantly evident: intolerance, misjudgement, wickedness, inhumanity, greed, pride, poverty, immorality, tyranny, misrule, hunger, disease, wars, repression and death, especially of the innocent.

The death of Jesus Christ on the cross is the Christian axiom of the

existence of the cross in the human domain. The reality of the cross starts from the moment of conception for humans and at birth, the newborn child, gasping for air, cries to announce its arrival to the world and to fight for daily survival in what the prayer books call 'this valley of tears' - humanity's pilgrim journey of struggle through life. What suffering or cross does the human person not experience on this pilgrimage? Want, lack, sometimes a superfluity of material possessions. The prison environment is just one example of this reality of the cross in the world.

The question naturally arises why this suffering should occur. Why did God, a good God, the God of love, let this happen? It is an age-old question to which the massive horrors of our own century seem to give an added edge. It is a question as old as the human family itself, as the writings of the Old Testament, especially those like the Psalms, Wisdom and Job, which have much to say on the mystery of evil and suffering.

The Cross - A General Definition

How do we define, explain or describe the reality of the cross? Is there a theology behind the cross?

The *Dictionary of Catholic Theology* attempts an answer to this question. The word cross is interchangeably used with a synonym, *suffering*.

Suffering (cross) is the disruption of inner human harmony caused by physical, mental, spiritual and emotional forces experienced as isolating and threatening our very existence.

As the deprivation of human good, suffering is inseparable from the mystery of evil. However, suffering and evil are not caused by God, the author of all good (Genesis, chapter 1), but are inherent in the universe's natural processes and in the uniqueness of human freedom, in the misuse of free will that is the moral evil of sin. The reasons for and

meaning of the suffering apparently inseparable from human life have been the subject of questioning throughout history. (Mary Ann Fatula, OP, article on *SUFFERING* in the *Dictionary of Theology*, pp.991-992).

Towards a Theology of the Cross : the Mystery!

The question of suffering and evil is a profound mystery, not something we can wish away or answer in an easy or glib manner. (Ref. John Paul II 'Apostolic Letter on the Christian Significance of Human Suffering'; cf. also James Walsh, SJ and P.G. Walsh (Eds), *Divine Providence and Human Suffering*, Wilmington, Del., Michael Glazier, 1985).

The new *Catholic Universal Catechism* poses the question about the cross, pain and suffering and agrees that it is something which reaches beyond the capacity of man to answer on his own.

To this question, as pressing as it is unavoidable and as painful as it is mysterious, no quick answer will suffice. Only Christian faith as a whole constitutes the answer to this question. (*Catholic Catechism*, No.309).

In a sense, the Catechism's treatment of the mystery of evil and suffering is not an issue completely exhausted in any one section. Since the Catechism is a statement of the whole of our faith, and it is that faith as a whole which is God's answer to the mystery, there is a sense in which there is no part of the Catechism which is irrelevant. However, some sections deal more deeply with the issues of evil and suffering in the world and search for answers from Divine Revelation.

The theme of providence and the scandal of evil in creation is treated in sections 209-314. The doctrine of original sin and suffering in the world is dealt with in sections 407-409. The mystery of the suffering and death of Jesus as God's response to the

problem of evil is treated in sections 608-619. The manifold ways in which believers and the whole of humanity are called to share in this divine solution by entering into the mystery of Christ's sacrifice in the Mass and by taking up and accepting our daily crosses are discussed in sections 618, 1430-1438.

Some Philosophical, Critical and Theological Standpoints.

In the tradition of thought patterned by St Thomas Aquinas, among others, this world is one which is essentially in process. Since the world is only a creation, it is less than the infinite perfection of God. This is what theologians refer to when they speak of physical evil. In the strict sense, physical evil is not really evil at all (Andrew Beards, *God and Suffering in the Light of the Catechism*, CTS, London, DO 640, 1996, p.5).

Modern science has helped us to appreciate the wonder and wisdom of God's creation, and the truly staggering ways in which the parts or elements in the universe work together as a whole. It is in the light of that general order, in which planetary systems, plant and animal species emerge, that we can grasp something of the meaning of the interplay of life and death. So the destruction of some ecosystems provides the conditions for the emergence of others; and the food chain demonstrates the way that the dissolution of some form of life provides for the continuation and emergence of new life. Such death and destruction need not, then, be seen as an evil in itself - it is part of the good of world order. Unlike a man equipped with reason who, in considering murdering his enemy, is aware in some fashion that he is contemplating the destruction of another person's right to life, a lion stalking his prey is not involved in any such moral considerations - and the animal does no evil, but simply follows its natural instincts in killing for food. (ibid.)

Reflections on the natural world, and our place in it, also help us to understand that really the sensation of physical pain is not itself

evil. Pain is, in fact, a physiological warning system which alerts the organism to the threat of damage or destruction. As I move my finger toward the flame the sensation of pain 'warns' me not to proceed. If I could feel no pain, I might place my finger right in the flame with the result that the skin tissue, and eventually the whole finger, would be destroyed.

Having said that of physical evil, what about psychological or spiritual pain? Are they evil in themselves?

The answer is not necessarily 'Yes'. In a universe in tension, in movement toward fulfilment, the psychological and spiritual experience of that lack of fulfilment is in some way 'painful'. Sometimes the pain of frustration is due to desires which are inhibited and which we should not exercise anyway. But we can experience the 'lack' of something as painful when our desires are good : we desire God and many saints experience the lack of final union with God as painful in some way.

However, such pain is not an 'evil'. It is rather part of the drive within us to completion and fulfilment, and that is a good thing created by the good God: without that tension, dynamism, drive, we would be dead, or not be the creatures He made us to be.

One might at this juncture ask the question whether all this abstract philosophising reduces the mystery of suffering, heals the broken-hearted, covers up the horror of pain, death and wickedness, especially against the innocent.

Is it not a fact that some 'suffering for some people is described as pointless', whereas for some, it is said to be merited and appropriate? Is God totally powerful and all good as faith proclaims? Why then does he allow evil and of course does not prevent the suffering of the innocent? These questions recur whenever humans discuss the 'problem of evil' and 'the problem of good' in the world of suffering, death and pain.

The Christian response has always shown that

there is a depth and a darkness of evil and suffering in this world that God has not wished for his creation. Faith assures the believer that this darkness has been overcome by the life, death and resurrection of the Son of God Himself, Jesus Christ the Lord. (to Andrew Beards, op.cit. p.8).

Post-Reformation theology had stressed the need to endure patiently the personal sufferings of mind and body viewed as crosses sent by God to test and purify us spiritually. But modern atheism has argued forcefully against the existence of a God who could permit or even cause the magnitude of worldwide social suffering which modern news media makes impossible to ignore.

In the light of these developments, the theology of Vatican II focuses on the meaninglessness of human suffering viewed apart from Jesus's healing death and resurrection (Vatican II, *GAUDIUM ET SPES*, 21, 22). Christians are called to alleviate suffering actively, especially when it results from unjust social and political structures, and thereby possibly to eradicate its causes (AA 8,13; AG 5;12).

Suffering as the Consequence of Sin

A sense of national solidarity influenced some writers in ancient times to see in suffering, the divine retribution for personal and communal sin; the evil deeds of one member of the community could draw down suffering upon the family members including the nation and even future generations (Numbers 12:1-15; Deuteronomy 8:28; 2 Samuel 24:10-17). In many African cultures, this attitude to communal suffering as the consequence of the evil of one member of the community still persists as among the Igbos of Nigeria. '*Ofu mkpisi aka metu mmanu o zuo ora nine*' (if a finger touches oil it spreads to the whole hand).

In Hebrew thought and development especially in the post-exilic prophet Ezekiel's view, a corrective attitude was developed, namely that sin was the cause of punishment for which the specific individual who caused it was personally punished with suffering (Ezekiel 31:29-30). But how can we explain the suffering of innocent people? All through the psalms and in the recorded or even oral history of peoples and nations, the suffering of the innocent had no rationality, no logic and no justification. The author of the Wisdom Book of Job could only counsel silence before the inscrutable wisdom of God (Job 42:1-6).

Other post-exilic scriptures found the answer to human suffering in a conception of God's eschatological justice which would mete out eternal reward for the good and punishment for the wicked (Daniel 12:1-3; 2 Maccabees 7:9,11,23).

The exile experience also led several of the prophets to see suffering as a means of individual and national conversion (Isaiah 25:8; 35:4-10; Jeremiah 31:15-20). Isaiah's 'Servant Songs' (Isaiah 42:1-4; 49:1-7; 50:4-11; 52:13-53; 12) further interpreted Israel's suffering during the exile as a vicarious atonement for the sins of the nations.

The Christian proclamation of the risen Lord thus centres on the power of his Spirit enabling us to live a wholly new kind of existence, a life of communion and compassion, not isolation and oppression. The long tragic history of humankind, a history marred by never-ending violence against the natural goodness of God's creation in individuals, communities and the whole cosmos is what should not be and what God does not will to be for His creation.

The suffering caused by the evil choices of God's free creatures is truly evil. It is in a real way, pointless. Evil choices create ecologies of evil in which the horizons of new generations become ever more distorted and the image of what it is to be a human being becomes corrupted.

We see this tragedy when we observe how children from deprived and abusive backgrounds face life with a terribly diminished sense of the value of themselves and of the world. The doctrine of original sin explains to us how we are all in a situation something like this. Centuries of sin and the pointless, evil suffering caused by this have conspired to warp our consciousness, so that the fear of death, and the flight from an inner emptiness drive us to a destructive escapism. We flee to material things for comfort; our relationships with others are infected by the selfish desire to 'look after number one'. It is as if we had all been reared in some global concentration camp, where our image of what it could mean to be human is confined by the limits of a corrupted experience.

The darkness of evil and suffering in the world is, then, in some way explained as something which should not be as it is by the teaching of our faith in original sin. But that perspective on the darkness is only given to us because our faith enables us to see the darkness for what it really is: a shadow fading before the splendour of the rising of the *Son of God*.

It is only in the Christian faith that the mystery of evil and sin, which reaches beyond the human capacity to understand, is surpassed by a mystery far greater: God's incarnation and his redemption through the loving acceptance of the suffering caused by human evil.

Jesus's Cross as Redemption/Atonement for all Humanity.

This last insight aided New Testament authors to understand the significance of Jesus's death as a vicarious atonement for the sins of the entire human race (1 Peter 2:24; Romans 3:25).

God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished. (St Paul).

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. (St Peter).

St Paul, in Col. 1:20-21, maintains that his suffering and death are the means of reconciling the whole universe to God; and unity with his passion is the indispensable way of sharing in his glorious victory over sin and death itself (Romans 6:5; 7:4; 8:17). A Christian outlook may thus find the meaning of suffering in Jesus's own redemptive death and resurrection.

The destructive impact of sin leaves its inevitable wounds of suffering not only on the sinner but also on the innocent victims of sin. But Jesus, God's living word of mercy, has plunged himself into the depths of human suffering. From within this chasm which evokes primarily bitterness and rage from the human race, he has uttered with his life a human *Yes* of unconditional love and absolute self-giving. The infinite force of this love has broken through even into his body, transforming him into the risen, life-giving Lord of the Universe (2 Corinthians 3:17-18).

A Christian response to the tragedy of sin and suffering thus arises from personal experience of the power of Jesus's resurrection to heal the alienating, self-centred forces in every human heart.

Our Lord expression of his love for the Father and for us through suffering and death and the redemption this brought about, shows us the most profound meaning that suffering has in God's creation. This Divine example deepens an insight that we can have from our own experience: 'Greater love than this no man has, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' (John.15:13).

We know in our lives that love is tested, refined, perfected and expressed in a unique way in human suffering. Suffering is unpleasant; otherwise it would not be a cross. It is basically natural to reject it. Yet, the call to take up the cross daily and follow Jesus is at the heart of the Gospel.

The Reality of the Cross in the Prison Environment

A saint whose life is one of the most dramatic examples of witness to the meaning of the cross in a prison environment is Maximilian Kolbe. Father Kolbe's offering of his own life to save a married man and father of children from the hands of the death sentence imposed on him by agents of the Nazi Regime in Auschwitz is well known. Fellow prisoners in the concentration camp considered his way of life 'beyond reason', even before the episode of his accepting to die in place of another.

In a world where the SS wished to degrade human beings so that in the struggle to preserve the self, no one would think of another, Maximilian Kolbe practised a life of daily self-sacrifice. Even the meagre, insufficient rations of food for which inmates would kill, were given up by him to help those whom he thought needed them. While others doubted the existence and goodness of God under these prison circumstances, Father Kolbe, by his lifestyle, the words he spoke to other prisoners, his life of faith in Jesus and devotion to Mary, practically confounded the campaigns of nihilism existent in his time. Even in the prison environment we can rediscover God and win salvation. The prison conditions of Father Kolbe's time have not changed much when compared to prisons worldwide in virtually all the continents of the world.

The absence of freedom for the inmate remains a trademark of all prisons, at all times and in all places. The phenomena of hunger, disease, dirty and overcrowded environment, darkness and dungeon, maltreatment, abuse, denial of basic rights- including use of the death penalty-all these are marks of the cross and of suffering. For many inmates the punishment might be well deserved under the law because of their abuse of 'others' freedom'; but alas, for some inmates who suffer innocently, this cross may be unbearable and to all extents, unjustifiable.

In many countries of Africa, Asia, North and South America and even Europe, some prisoners are incarcerated, debased and maltreated. The reality of the cross is the prison environment itself. Jesus Christ himself was made a prisoner, tried, convicted, condemned and executed on the cross, even though he was not guilty of the charges made against him.

This situation of the cross and of suffering was aptly captured during the December 1995 All Nigerian Congress of Catholic Prison Chaplains in Enugu. The congress participants were shocked to observe the following situations in prisons:

The alarming and general debasing of rights of human beings in our prisons, police detention cells, lock-ups, isolation bunkers and such allied centres, and maximum security cells which contradict our God-given dignity and humanity.

That over 60% of Nigerian prisoners are merely suspects awaiting trial, many for as long as ten years. The overcrowded nature of prisons has its background in this situation.

Pregnant women inmates or convicts deliver babies in prison walls and live with them in a situation that is disgraceful, forcing a new born citizen to grow up in an environment of crime, squalor and misery. This continues in some cases for several years after birth.

The inability of the relevant offices of state to feed prison inmates properly, thereby reducing many of them to mere skeletons is abhorred by the congress of prison chaplains.

That able-bodied men and women are sentenced to a slow death, experiencing excruciating pain caused by hunger which is inflicted by a government on her citizens contradicts all sound reason, logic and good conscience.

It is shocking to note that besides malnutrition, unfathomable forms of skin diseases, chest infections, psychiatric patients, tuberculosis and HIV carriers, not to mention other forms of minor ailments caused by the complete absence of drugs, confront the prisoner squarely in the face.

The lumping together of asylum cases within the prison walls and the obvious lack of sympathy for such patients, who normally should belong in psychiatric hospitals, is highlighted. Instead, some of them are chained like animals, whipped and reduced in their human dignity and worth by the same government institutions whose responsibility it is to promote the common good.

Juvenile offenders are lumped together with hardened criminals in an environment where they graduate faster from juvenile first offenders into adult hardened criminals.

Charges are preferred against citizens to which they could hardly plead a defence for lack of funds. The criminal justice system denies them the right to enforce the protection of their rights under the law.

The inadequacy of the present penal system to fulfil any correctional roles. There is no provision for separate treatment of various categories of offenders.

The continuation of capital punishment as a means of effecting equity in the dispensation of criminal justice. God is the final judge to whom life belongs. The State cannot create life. It should therefore not destroy it. Capital punishment in our day and age is a barbaric way of dealing with human beings and we therefore call for its abolition... If we remain silent, we may be seen to share in this guilt.

The prison chaplains at that Enugu Congress resolved to follow the words of Jesus in Matthew 25:37. 'I was in prison and you visited

me', which words do not leave us with any alternatives on this matter; and they called for 'continued solidarity and direction in this social-pastoral ministry which we carry out under the guidance and leadership of our revered pastors - the Bishops'.

Conclusion

'Carry one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ.'
(Gal.6:2)

The ninth plenary assembly of the International Congress of Catholic Prison Chaplains has aptly and adequately chosen to reflect on a reality whose daily impact and challenge faces billions of people worldwide, namely, the phenomenon of the cross.

As we come to a conclusion of our reflections and its relevance to the broad theme of our congress, namely, 'The prisoner, the chaplaincy and the cross', a few closing observations need to be made as theological and spiritual orientation motifs in dealing with the inscrutable mystery of the cross we find daily in our lives:

- a) Suffering will take place as we grow beyond the present selves that we are, towards the selves that Jesus Christ would have us be in him. That this suffering is really Christian suffering may be seen if it is marked by that deep hope and joy that are a gift from God. At the centre of our faith, however, is the belief that through the suffering borne in love by Jesus, the Son of God, mankind is redeemed. This means that our suffering is not only experienced as part of our own growth, but can be united to that of Jesus in order to become *redemptive suffering*. If we offer up our daily crosses, and the larger ones in life, in love for others, then we will grow in helping them. The crucial point here is that all our prayer and self-denial must be done in love, and done in a spirit that knows that these gifts of ours only come about as gifts of God to us. Our attitude needs to be

like that of a child who wants to draw a beautiful picture for a parent, but who must rely on that parent to provide the materials and constant help on how to draw this or that on the paper.

- b) A Christian understanding of human suffering is aided also by increased awareness of the inseparable interplay between spirit and body, between spiritual, mental and emotional deprivation and bodily illness. Contemporary advances in the medical, social and theological sciences have helped to direct Christian attention to the need for healing the wounds caused by suffering in the human soul and psyche. The modern rediscovery of the healing power of spirituality, the restorative power of the sacraments and prayer and the help offered by psychological counselling and medical and economic aid, can do much to lessen the weight of suffering. A holistic lifestyle that encourages inner peace, emotional autonomy, creative activity and loving supportive relationships also fosters human well-being. Yet suffering (cross), co-existent in all its forms with life itself, invites the Christian to a lifelong process not only of personal healing, but also of commitment to the healing of others (cf. Fatula, MA: *Suffering*: op.cit. p.992).
- c) Finally, when all available help has been exhausted and we are powerless before a specific suffering, cross or pain, this is the moment we confront a mystery which pushes us to the very brink of the entire mystery of human existence. Suicide cannot be an answer at this time. For the believing Christian, chaplain, prisoner and every person of good will, the only recourse that may remain open is the prayer of the powerless one begging God for relief and for the heart to surrender ourselves in union with the passion of Jesus (Luke 22:42-43). In yielding ourselves to this path, we may hope to experience God's own closeness to the broken-hearted (Psalm.34:18, - Psalm.147:3) and, in the midst of suffering

that cannot be alleviated, to grow more compassionate, wiser and stronger.

The lives of those who suffer in this way unveil to the world the inherent beauty and dignity of the human person. They reveal as well to the eyes of faith a God who has responded to our human suffering by plunging into its depths with us; a God who now invites us to labour together for the healing of the world.

They disclose to us a God whose love has robbed even the most unspeakable tragedy of its power to destroy us; a God, finally whose love is strong enough to transform even our deaths into an unimaginable future where He himself will wipe away every tear from our eyes (Romans.8:28-39; Revelations 21:14).

SECTION V:

ONE RACE, ONE NATION, ONE BROTHER:

CHAPTER THIRTEEN:

ISLAM AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN AFRICA

(APPROACHES TO AND PERSPECTIVES OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION PROCESSES IN NIGERIA)

I am going to limit the scope of my reflection on the above topic to Nigeria, a country into which I was born and on which I can claim competence to speak.

By religion I am a Catholic Christian, by profession I am a Catholic Priest; yet at birth I was born into the caliphate Islamic Headquarters of Sokoto State in a little Muslim City called Gusau in Northern Nigeria. Until my twelfth year, I lived in this Muslim North of Nigeria, moving with my parents as they moved around on occupational grounds to Kano, Gombe, Nguru, Bauchi, Jos - all cities located in the Islamic *Hochburg* of Nigeria.

Permit me, therefore, to share my reflections with you as one who is concerned about the Islamic presence in Nigeria and its consequences on the scene of society.

The Problem

It is virtually impossible to discuss exhaustively within these few pages the theme of Islam in Africa and the problems it poses in recent times to various countries and various programmes of development. Islam is a world religion with history, culture, mission and authority behind it.

First of all, Africa is a vast continent of fifty-three independent

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states. On the geographical surface alone, Africa is larger than the entire United States of America plus the whole of Western Europe and the subcontinent of India and Japan.

Secondly, the historical, cultural and political development of Islam in Africa has lasted for over 1300 years in some parts, while it is not yet a century in other parts, so generalisations about Islam in Africa must be avoided.

For example, a once flourishing Christianity in North Africa (Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Morocco) gave way in the seventh century to an expanding Islamic and Arabic conquest to the extent that today over 90% of the entire North African Region is Islamised.

This is not the case in regions around South Africa where the populations are mostly Christian and have traditional religions which are gradually waning. In countries like Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, South Africa itself, etc., Islamic incursions have been minimal in contrast to North Africa.

The situation in East Africa is completely different. There is a sizeable number of both Muslims and Christians among other religions in Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Malawi, etc. Yet Islamic-Christian tension was not seen to be a decisive polarising factor in their historical-political development-at least not until recently.

Thus, the teacher (Mwalimu), the former President of Tanzania Julius Nyerere, himself a strong, believing and practising Catholic, came voluntarily to resign from power and chose as his successor President Mwinyi, a Muslim believer.

In West Africa, the story is partly tension-free in such countries as Gambia, Sierra Leone and Ghana, and tension-packed in countries like Nigeria and perhaps Senegal.

Nigeria: A Case Study

The most populous black nation in the world is Nigeria, with about 100 million people. Divided into so many thirty states, Nigeria is a pluralistic society with over 400 ethnic tribes, languages and several religious groups. Besides a British Colonial history, Nigeria has had several economic, ethnic and party political problems including constant military governments to cope with.

In recent years, however, religious tension is rising and has caused violence and bloodshed on many occasions between the Muslims on the one hand, and the rest on the other.

No doubt it has been proved that where Islam is only a tiny minority, peaceful coexistence with Christians and others is possible. Troubles begin when both religions meet in a missionary situation and have sizeable numbers.

With 38% Muslims, 45% Christians and 17% traditional African religionists (general statistics of the National Population Bureau and the CBCN of Nigeria), Nigeria was in 1986 smuggled into the Organisation of Islamic Conference single-handedly and without public consultation, apologies or qualms by President Ibrahim B. Babangida, himself a Muslim, who took over power in 1985 by a Military Coup. Of course, the majority of the country would not hear of this and war on religious lines was threatened. The quarrel is still going on.

The Nigerian Federal Government Constitution, which is the supreme law of the country, decrees that a country like Nigeria with its multiplicity of religions cannot have one state religion: 'The Government of the Federation or of a State shall not adopt any religion as the State religion. Nigeria is a secular State', so says the Constitution.

In recent times, however, the impression is being created that Islam is the religion of the Government of Nigeria. Mosques are built in State Government Headquarters. Appointments and promotions, not only in the Civil Service but also within the military, provide the psychological impression that we are an Islamic State, as these favour mainly Muslims. The army for example, it is said, does not observe any more the rule of seniority, and religious bias is used for promotions.

Thus today policy-making positions are reserved for Muslims. The following posts show the manipulated power structure in Nigeria. It might be an accident, but this accident represents the factual situation, as it was in the period 1989-1992:

1. Head of State	Muslim
Chief of Army Staff	Muslim
Chief of Defence	Muslim
Chief of Air Force	Muslim
State Security Service	Muslim
Military Intelligence	Muslim
Inspector General of Police	Muslim
National Intelligence Agency	Muslim
Governor of the Central Bank	Muslim
Chief of Immigration	Muslim
Internal Affairs Minister	Muslim
Director of Customs	Muslim

2. The right to plots of land to build places of worship is denied to Christians in some states.

3. The right to religious education of Christian children is denied in States such as Kano, Sokoto, Borno, etc. There is a preferred status and government support for Islamic pilgrimages to Mecca.

4. The right to freedom of ownership of schools by religious and voluntary institutions is denied, while Islamic schools are opened. In fact Government took over the missionary schools and expelled expatriate missionaries in the 1970s. However, Muslim institutions or missionaries were not affected directly.

5. The law does not seem to ensure protection for Christians in many northern states of Nigeria. Reports have been submitted about this to Federal Government Panels and Tribunals of Judicial Enquiry over the years. Several documents and publications refer to this situation.

6. Extreme statements of religious fanaticism have been made by Muslims. The Secretary-General of the Jamatu Nasril Islam in Zaria has said: 'There shall be no peace in Nigeria until Sharia is fully established'. (*Kaduna Religious Riot '87: a catalogue of events*. Publ. by CANp.46).

7. There have been several religious crises in cities populated by Muslims: 1980, 1982, 1987, 1990, 1991 (Oct.), 1992 (Apr.), 154 churches burnt, lives lost, property worth endless billions of naira destroyed. In most of them, such as Kano, Bauchi, Katsina, Kaduna, Kafanchan, Sokoto, Lafia and Gongola, among others, there have been troubles spanning over ten years. The Government

did nothing more than appoint an administrative panel of enquiry into the religious disturbances, one of which was headed by Mrs. H. Donli, the Attorney-General of Kaduna State. Not much has happened since then, not even the compensation for those whose entire life earnings were destroyed.

8. There is tension now in Nigeria, just as there is actual war and/or tension in Iraq, Algeria and elsewhere in the world. At present there is a push towards the return to the origins of Islam and towards a purification of the law. Today, Islam has many prophets preaching fundamentalist themes. Now that hard core Islamic teachers preach a return to the Sharia, there are those who brand as infidel any fellow Muslim who seeks compromise. Listen to a Nigerian Shiite, Zakzaky in the weekend *Concord* of 20th April, 1991:

Question: Are you saying the Islamic religion as it is being practised today in Nigeria is not right?

Zakzaky: Yes, that is what we are fighting against. People are not practising the Islamic religion according to the Holy Quran. Our sect stands for calling people to practise Islam according to the Holy Quran and the injunctions of prophet Mohammed. We want people to understand that the practice of Islam does not only involve praying five times daily, fasting and Zakhat. Islam is not confined only to these things.

... We are Muslim brothers who try to practise the Islamic religion according to the injunctions of the Holy Quran, we try to look at society through the Islamic focus, yet people are calling us fanatics, extremists and so on. We don't know why.

Question: Why are you condemning other Muslims?

Zakzaky: We are calling on people to practise Islam fully. People are only practising Islam in part. This is contrary to the injunctions of prophet Mohammed. Muslims today are far apart from the actual message of Holy Quran. In this kind of mentality, of course, there is no room for other laws, for other religions, or for civic leaders who are not Muslims. Muslims, according to this view, form an Umma, a Community, that comes before anything else, and uniformity in everything including dress is essential.

Listen to Zakzaky again in the said interview:

Question: Why did you insist that you do not recognise Government?

Zakzaky: We do not recognise Government; the Holy Quran is our only constitution as Muslims. We have the injunctions of the holy prophet Mohammed which is the jurisprudence of the Ulama ... I say it again that all my followers do not recognise the Government, whether Federal, State or Local.

Question: What exactly is the goal of your sect?

Zakzaky: It is simple. We want Nigeria to become an Islamic country.

Question: Do you think this is possible in view of the secular nature of this country?

Zakzaky: *Inshah Allah.* If you are alive you will see. Nigerians must worship Allah. Our own task is to rebel against the system and Allah will complete the rest... Our own duty is to call people to rebel and struggle to the last drop of our blood. Anybody who dies in the course of pursuing Allah's cause has not lost anything. We as Muslims realise this and that is why we give ourselves to Allah. Whether we survive it or not, ours is to carry out the will of Allah.

A library of books would not do justice to the topic, showing the century-old love/hate relationship between Christians and Muslims

which has its origins already in the right or wrong interpretation of the Holy Book Koran. Islam stands for peace! But many of her preachers and adherents have vetoed peace; in fact the Nigerian and Sudanese situations stand out clearly as points of factual reference. The Crusades form a case in point, a war of almost 200 years in the Middle Ages. Today's internal war in Lebanon is another example, amidst a world of religious fanatical turmoil such as we see in Iran, Pakistan, India, Sudan, Burundi, Chad, Egypt and Algeria, among others. *Time Magazine*, the widespread American weekly on 15th June, 1992 devoted its lead article to Islam: 'Who is afraid of Islam?'

We read opposing statements in one chapter in the Koran attributed to Mohammed himself saying:

You will find out that the worst enemies of the believers are the Jews and the pagans, while the most cordial neighbours of the believers are the Christians. This is also because among them there are priests and monks and these are not proud.

How can we reconcile this statement with another saying:

Believers, do not ally yourselves with Jews and Christians. They work together and those among you who will become their allies will become like them. Truly Allah does not guide unjust people. The christian is termed infidel.

The imposition of the Muslim law in many countries has seriously affected the lives of Christian communities.

The fact remains that while Islam professes to aim at the conversion of the world, it does not concede such rights to any other religion.

Do we call this intolerance?

On a visit to Rwanda, Colonel Ghaddafi of Libya accused the Christian churches of being 'false, infidel and irreligious'. "Africa must be Muslim", he declared, 'Christians are intruders in Africa and agents of colonialism. We must wage a holy war so that Islam will spread in Africa'. (Published in *Sunday Punch*, 26th January, 1986).

Islam Worldwide:

Islam has been in turmoil in many countries of the world. There is a growing religious fundamentalism and political extremism within this world religion which tries to reshape the Muslim faith. The phenomenon is the same in most cases: spread the Islamic faith to non-believers, purify syncretism within Islam itself, use political legal (sharia) and economic tools including violence to achieve Islamic power on a world plane, identify Arabism with Islam on a cultural symbiosis and confront Christianity and Modernism.

Today there are nearly 908 million Muslims-more than 17% of the world's population-versus 1.7 billion Christians. It is projected that by the year 2000 there will be 1.2 billion Muslims worldwide versus 2.1 billion Christians, or 1.1 billion Catholics. (David Barrett in the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 1989).

The position of the Christian Churches

During his third trip to Africa in August 1985, Pope John Paul II stopped in Morocco and met with King Hassan II, who is considered by many Muslims to be a direct descendant of the prophet Mohammed. The two men embraced, publicly proclaiming their belief in the many similarities between these two great religions. Before 80,000 Muslim Youth gathered in a football field in Casablanca, the Pope said:

Christians and Muslims, in general we have badly misunderstood each other, and sometimes, in the past, we have opposed each other in polemics and in wars. I believe that today God invites us to change our old ways. We must respect each other, and we must encourage each other in good works on the path of God. (Pope John Paul II: address to Young Muslims in: *the Pope Teaches*, CTS, London, 1985/89, p.270).

The position of AECAWA Bishops on Christian-Muslim dialogue in Africa:

We accept

We respect Muslims and their religion. We appreciate the good aspects of Islam. We admire the prayerfulness of Muslims. We are edified by their ascetic fasting. We are inspired by their almsgiving and pilgrimage to Mecca. We want to be friends with Muslims. We Christians should have no enemies, so the Lord commanded us (Matt.5:43). (In *Christianity and Islam in Dialogue Communique*, AECAWA meeting, 4th Plenary Assembly 20th-27th oct., 1986).

We Reject

However, in faithfulness to our own traditions we must reject many tendencies in Islam: the treatment of non-Muslims as second-rate citizens, the identification of religion with culture and politics, the classification of non-Muslims as infidels, the discriminatory nature of Islamic laws, the heavy penalties meted out to Christian converts from Islam or Muslim women who marry Christians. We cannot accept any situation where our rights as citizens of our nations are denied us because we are not Muslims. We believe in the unity and solidarity of mankind but this does not make us forget our duty to preach the gospel, welcome or unwelcome, in obedience to the Lord's own injunction (Matt.28:19-20). 1.8 op.cit.

In our African tradition a cherished value is that of religious tolerance. The gospel and the Koran have spread in our midst due to this openness and tolerance. God made us free. Our freedom, however, obliges us to accept the Good News when we hear it. We can and should invite others to hear the Good News but we may not oblige them to accept it. (WAKO).

Islam and Social Change

The debate facing Islam today is to ascertain how a law written 1400 years ago can be understood and applied in a complex, modern and ever-changing society. In other words, how can the prescriptions written for desert nomads rule the life of people who profess Islam in America, Russia, Nigeria, oil-rich Kuwait, etc.? Can there be coexistence and adoption?

How can one translate the disparity between Muslim men and women which decrees that only adult males enjoy full religious and social rights?

How can a multi-religious and multi-ethnic society inhabited by Muslims, Christians, non-believers, traditional worshippers, atheists, etc. manage to live in religious harmony, where Muslims believe the law that insists on their living only under an Islamic State? These questions among others summarise the struggle of Islam in this century in Africa. There are many answers to the problem. Whereas some new Muslim-inhabited nations accept constitutions that would respect the demand of the Koran for Muslim citizens on the one hand and of the modern age on the other, others insist on a more radical idea which sees Islam as a total political-religious entity.

In fact the policy states:

Open an ever-growing number of centres so as to offer an alternative to the false promises handed out by Christian missionaries, aiming especially at the children who are often seduced by Christian missionaries with gifts. (1990, Jan. *New People* No.4, p.16).

Another policy statement reads:

Official and popular organisations should be encouraged to subsidise Muslim associations in Africa; helping them to buy such things as vehicles and duplicating and printing machinery ... (*New People*, Jan-Feb. 1990, p.16, Pub. in *Kenya [Dossier: Islam-Christianity in Africa]*).

Sharia

According to Muslims, the Islamic Law (*Sharia*) guarantees their religious rights and promotes their welfare as well as creating law and order in an Islamic ambient. This means that pluralistic societies must bend to the introduction of sharia laws into the nation. A clash/conflict ensues and the constitution is undermined. This is the situation right now in Sudan and is still boiling in Nigeria, etc. Sharia law is being gradually introduced and forced through to the extent that non-Muslims are tried by it.

Approaches to Social Transformation Processes in Africa: The Tripod stand

Upon an original traditional African set-up and world-view, there has developed over the past centuries a tripod spectrum of Islam, Christianity and nationalism. These three major 'belief systems' with their related 'new identities' have spread from small elites, literate in Arabic or European languages, to the rural masses of

Nigeria as well as other Sub-Saharan African countries at an accelerated rate during this century. These three inputs have not only altered traditional world-views in rural as well as urban areas, but have interacted extensively among themselves in the process. The complexity of this interaction and its relationship with underlying socio-economic changes, urbanisation and industrialisation are sufficiently complex to defy generalisation. In place of analysis and understanding, too often, the term modernisation with many inappropriate positivistic intrusions has been used. (Linden, L. and Clarke, B., *Islam in Modern Nigeria*; Kaiser-Grunewald, 1986, p.7).

In analysing the three elements competing for the African soul in today's Africa, Clarke and Linden have this to say:

Christians note the triumphal progress of Islam; Muslims oppose the growth of Christian, western ways of life and states. Secular nationalists see in Islam and Christianity the seeds of a nation divided. But it is clear that Islam has used Christian Institutions as a model in recent approaches to education and evangelisation. And despite their claims to universalistic mission both Christianity and Islam have been obliged to come to terms with the new nation-state in Africa. (op.cit. p.7).

To a great extent the nature of Nigerian nationalism has been adequately studied, since it has proved a major problem in nation building. Similarly the history of Nigerian Christianity is amply attested to in a number of scholarly monographs. The same is not true of Islam in Nigeria, least of all Islam since Nigerian Independence. (Linden and Clark, p.8).

There is unfortunately a focus on Islam in the Middle East with West Africa strangely neglected as something of a sideshow in Islamic history. This of course is remarkably short-sighted.

In Nigeria, for example, Islam has provided a language of political discourse in many areas, a language in which issues of social justice have been articulated. Much fundamental discussion about the future of Nigerian society has been a religious discourse drawing on Islamic thought patterns, even before other languages took it up.

The major civil upheavals, insurrections and riots in the north of Nigeria in the last ten years have drawn sustenance from Islam. Islam has come to occupy a central part in Nigerian belief and thought; unfortunately Islam has yet to learn to coexist with others in a pluralistic society.

Similarly the one major national debate which draws the attention of many educated Nigerians about the federal legal system was sponsored by Muslims. The major popular and elite demands in the last years have to a large extent been articulated in the language and belief-system of Islam. Islam is willing to debate what kind of Nigeria will emerge in the 1990s. That these debates have criss-crossed political party boundaries shows that even in the future, deplorable as it may seem, any future discourse of class, law, political sharing of power, among others, is likely to occur in the guise of religious ideology, and be expressed organisationally in Christian and Islamic groups. Once politics calls upon religious factionalism, party membership becomes subordinate.

Here, the Nigerian Muslim power-broker does not see any compromise with nationalists of the secular-Christian schools, as Islam occupies an important and growing part of their spectrum of beliefs. It is important at this stage to state that Islam is used here as an abstract concept. 'Muslim' on the other hand is the 'bearer' of Islamic world view while the term 'Islamisation' is the process and the external expression of the Islamic practising Muslim.

Perspectives of the Social Transformation Process in Africa

1. The Demographic Challenge

Economic realities are controlling the size of families in Africa today. Whereas pre-colonial African families were large in size, there is a noticeable departure from this practice in recent times.

In Islam, polygamy is allowed, marking a difference from Christian religions. Africans generally have a love for children and Muslim polygamous families definitely are large sized. This does not mean that the quality of education or life is higher than in small families.

With the present trend of 'economic belt-tightening', some Muslims might have to rethink their policy of polygamy, including a forced reduction of the size of their families. In fact, the whole of Africa is distinguished by an extraordinary demographic growth. In 1992 the United Nations population projection for Africa was 600 million people. By the year 2010, eighteen years from now, Africa's population is projected to about 1.2 billion people. Africa is the only world region which has not decreased its growth speed. If this continues, the continent might face consequences which are disastrous from a multi-dimensional perspective:

The desert-living nomads who are mainly Muslims might be forced by unfavourable living conditions to rethink their population growth and reduce the size of their families. In fact they are being forced to do so now. What do you do when you cannot feed all? You reduce, or you stay on and face the severe consequences, including death! The reality is there today for all to see and world opinion is aware of it.

The polygamous practice of one man-many wives in Islamic societies in Nigeria is already being affected; and will continue to be affected, does this indicate a trend to monogamy?

Seen from the ecological point of view, characterised by a progressive degradation of the soil, desert advancement and decline in food production, migrations might occur. Examples abound of Sahel inhabitants *en route* to greener pastures. Chad, Niger, Mali, Northern Cameroun, Northern Nigeria, have cattle herds, etc., moving to the southern parts. Violent clashes cannot be avoided.

My submission is that this situation will emerge as a great problem in the near future. How can we get population growth, environment and development in harmony in an Islamic changing society?

2. The Political Climate

The wind of change (*perestroika*) blowing through Eastern Europe and in the defunct Soviet Bloc is not an exercise in isolation. The entire world is growing into a global political village. Events move fast in such continuity and discontinuity that the Islamic world cannot be left out and Africa is in the middle of the turmoil.

Islamic societies which by virtue of religion in many parts of Africa accepted 'theocracy', 'sharia', and a world order according to Islam, and its laws, may have to face modernising influences, including multi-party democracy, pluralistic societal organisation, international legal systems, and adaptation to a 'new world order'.

In the past most African States gave themselves a structure which today, thirty years after independence, has become a problem especially for the younger generation.

Many Muslim-populated states in Africa accepted or had imposed upon them the one-party state model. Comparable to Leninism and Stalinism, these models are today in crisis and severely challenged by the younger generation who are looking for more freedom and democracy. Earlier accepted patterns of political behaviour are under critical challenge. Already products of Nigeria's Northern University at Zaria, the Ahmadu Bello University, have emerged as

Islamic radicals in a positive sense, challenging the status quo with the support of such teachers like Professor Bala Usman and others who are demanding freedom and democracy on international western-style models. Such a democratisation process turns already accepted systems upside down:

The role of the Emirs is reduced to merely representative and purely religious functions. Their political and economic hegemony is curtailed. The masses are involved in decisions that concern their lives by means of a political sharing process, be it in a federal system or in a parliamentary system, or in whatever other forms. Established traditional teachings and powers are being threatened and questioned, e.g., Madaki versus Emir of Muri. People start taking their own destiny into their hands. Freedom brings with it liberal tendencies, including the ability to free oneself from religious bigotry. Anti-religious sceptics and outright atheists are therefore going to emerge and increase as a new group even in an Islamic dominated society, if they are not already existing.

3. The Gap Between the Rich and the Poor

Although the founder of Islam wished for an egalitarian society where class and status were equally shared, there is a general tendency in many Islamic societies, though this is not only limited to Islamic societies, of a marginalisation based on an antinomy of social inequalities.

To the untutored, Islam appears to favour by a fiat of God's will the few who are scandalously wealthy, with a consolation prize of Heaven for the majority who are degradingly poor. This situation is gradually gaining the attention of researchers. Let me state here what I personally feel: 'Wealth and poverty are man-made! They are not God-determined.'

For a practical evaluation, many Islamic states of Nigeria contain the largest numbers of marginalised people. Whether it is in Kano,

in Sokoto, in Borno, in Bauchi, etc., the beehive of beggars, paupers, delinquents and dependants leaves much to be desired. They have a scanty rich few and a mammoth crowd of paupers.

Compared to Christian populated areas like Enugu, Owerri, Onitsha, Lagos, Benin, Calabar, where begging is culturally and religiously abhorred, a sociologist could correctly describe an Islamic populated city in Nigeria as outwardly democratic but containing poverty and beggary as a necessary part of their faith. On the other hand a Christian/traditional city would be self-helping and self-reliant, hard-working and earning, with a wealthier situation overall.

Of course this analysis could be contested, as it is not an absolute. Nonetheless, the casual social scientist and observer discovers this anomaly in the briefest unbiased study.

A one-day drive from Port Harcourt in the Christian-traditional Africa South to Kano in the Northern Islamic trading centre of old reveals a stark, clear difference. Why is this so? Does Islam encourage poverty? Why are Islamic cities predominantly populated by many poor people? Why is begging the order of the day in Islamic centres as against Christian centres in the same neighbourhood belonging to one country? There is a sharp contrast between Bauchi City and Jos City, between Kano and Kaduna. And when you find a few beggars on the streets of Enugu, they have often Islamic background! Why? The Islamic societies in Nigeria tend to become unequal and unjust, and the trend towards marginalisation and exclusion is well under way within such societies. There is an unwritten thesis that Islam and poverty are nearly identical! I do not agree with this thesis, however, even though I am alone in my view.

In public and in the religious places of worship, one hears the slogan of national unity, equality and such 'sweet nonsense' that is

deceptive, as it is not practised when the real social situation of the populace is considered.

These newly created inequalities, no matter for whatever reason in Islamic Africa make it evident that 'underdevelopment' is not a uniform phenomenon, but it hits with special cruelty certain social categories. In Africa, rich people live next to others who are in total misery.

The social change I observe today is that the normally passive Muslim by virtue of Western education and exposure is beginning to question the status quo. Things cannot continue this way any longer. Either we have a solution or we shed off the religion that encourages such massive poverty, if it really does.

The belief in Allah and in destiny which such people took for granted as their lot with the hope of repayment in heaven is giving way for the fight for more justice today in Islamic societies. Champions of such social justice include people like Bashorun M.K.O. Abiola of Western Nigeria. He himself is a Muslim, but with his wealth he is helping many out of poverty and empowering them to fight and change their seemingly accepted destiny.

The consequence is: if we want to face the challenges of the day we have to work for the betterment of these powerless have-nots who are excluded from any possibility for betterment and development. These masses will prove to be a great problem for the state and for society. No wonder then that within the last five years, over twenty-five riots have taken place in these Muslim regions in the guise of religion. After all, the poor have nothing else to lose.

4. The Religious Factor of Intolerance

As has been said elsewhere in this lecture, Africans are notoriously religious people, a religiosity which permeates every facet of life,

including eating, sleeping and celebration rituals, from birth till death.

At the present time, Islamic as well as Christian Africa is experiencing a 'religious supermarket'. There are so many schools of thought, all giving ready-made answers to the problems of human existence that one is confused at their proliferation. There is even an invasion of movements of mysticism. From Asia, Europe and America a new wave of teaching is wading through, challenging established teachings, calling for revolution, liberating the minds of people or outrightly questioning the *raison d'être* of all established religions. Behind these mysticisms there is not only the religious but also the social and political elements.

The consequence is that these movements favour fanaticism, intolerance and ignore an intellectual critical approach. They impose a mentality which is hostile to the requirements of true development, which must be also intellectual and cultural. Because of the potential power of religion as a tool for social mobilisation, there is a remote possibility that this religious boom could, if well controlled by tolerance, lead to a total redefinition of the spiritual and religious heritage of the continent. At the moment, however, politics have hijacked religion and we are really in for trouble in Islamic societies. Look at what is happening right now in Algeria and the Sudan!

5. The Youth

It is on record that Africa's youth in the range of below fifteen years of age represents about 80% of the continent's population. This is a figure with a drastic consequence for youngsters. The problems of the continent fall on them squarely and it is their future which is at stake. Earlier on, the Islamic structures in the north of Nigeria disallowed British or Colonial or Missionary incursion into their domain. Thus, there is no education and no mixture on a social or religious framework. Today, the youth of the north, as

well as the government, have discovered that time was held back and the future of youth in a modern state is at stake.

As young people experience the decline in jobs, the deterioration in and lack of basic education, they are at the same time growing restive. They no longer accept passively a situation which condemns them, like their fathers in the past, to manipulated slavery. The new generation is ready to question any form of totalitarian power. Demonstrations and mass rallies calling for radical changes have been held in the past and are constant features of our socio-political scene. Through these re-indications, young Muslims of today are trying to take charge of the socio-political transformations which their fathers denied them for religious reasons. Sometimes the drastic expression of the frustration is unpredictable and irrational. A nation would be held on the brink of social upheaval for such trifles as citing a 'market' in the town for killing pigs and such trifling distractions, due to a roadside preacher of the other faith as in Kafanchan in 1987. But what do you expect an idle youth to do? Of course, cause trouble!

The young people are wooed by all the movements we have mentioned above. They are threatened from all sides by modern possibilities. Their restlessness does not only stem from the fact that they no longer know where they can look for what is right and good, but from the fact that they have lost their roots.

Prostitution is on the increase in Islamic societies; alcoholism is there, sex crime has arrived and the general malaise of unbridled western youth has crept in gradually among Islamic youth in Nigeria. Western music and modes of dressing, plus recreational attractions, etc., have taken their toll here.

Divided between two worlds, many of our youth today, including normally conservative Islamic youth, stand the risk of being ensnared by the manipulation of those mystical movements from abroad (India, Asia, America, Europe) which try to neutralise all

the energy which they could invest in building their own future.

There are of course on the other side some positive developments: attendance in schools today is normal. Girls go out now in public, attend schools and universities, experience modern lifestyles influenced by the West, including its liberties and are in search of their own identity. Muslim married women go out to vote today. It would have been unthinkable ten years ago. The MAMSER brought social changes into Islam and its world view. This is a potential social change in Africa's Nigeria.

Conclusion

This paper has not dealt with the topic assigned properly because of the time limit for the lecture and the large amount of material which must necessarily be condensed. The few points raised however show that Islam has a great potential to contribute positively to the development of society in Africa. Seen logically, this positive contribution can only obtain in a situation of peace. Peace as we know is not possible without justice. And true peace can only be achieved upon the true foundation of justice. Development which is the fruit of peace makes the building of society possible.

We might therefore conclude that Islam, as a powerful religion in Nigeria and Africa, needs to undergo, in the spirit of the Koran and of religious purification, a reform of justice, peace and development elements which will guarantee stability for a united and dynamic nation. I wish Nigerian Muslims this Koranic peace!

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

REGIONALISM, ETHNIC CONFLICTS AND DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA

It is with profound joy and the spirit of African communality and solidarity that I welcome all of you to this peaceful and vibrant part of our continent, Enugu, the evergreen coal city.

As you very well know, Enugu was the centre of one of the most heinous, most brutal and most violent ethnic-tribal conflicts on the continent of Africa (1967-1970) in what has been known as the Biafran War. It has remained a classical case study which justifies the *raison d'être* and the urgency of this International Colloquium on 'Regionalism, Ethnic Conflict and Democracy in Africa'. This topic is apt as the continent remains very tensed up on issues affecting this topic. How many million lives have been lost? What untold sufferings have been unleashed on people, many of whom are innocent children and women? How many are now refugees, with Africa's 15 million refugees taking the first place on the global statistics of migrants and displaced persons?

As co-organiser of this very important Colloquium which has been strongly initiated and solidly supported by the German Foundation of the Konrad Adenauer Regional Representative Office in Cotonou, Benin Republic, and also in my capacity as the Director of the Catholic Institute for Development, Justice and Peace, it is pertinent to note that this Conference has been a long time in realisation and planning. Far back in 1990, the CIDJAP organised an Inter-continental Symposium on 'Catholic Social Teaching en route in Africa' with the participation and attendance of the continent's renowned academics, ecclesiastical dignitaries and Human Rights

Opening Speech delivered at the International Colloquium jointly organised by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Germany (West Africa Regional Representative) and the CIDJAP at DRACC, Enugu (Emene) from 16th-19th June, 1993.

activists to assess and re-direct the continent's 'permanent crisis', elevate her joys and resolve her sorrows. Dr Volker Monikes, Director of the KAF, then in Kinshasa, Zaire, was present at the Conference. It was at this time that proposals for a regional West Africa KAF activity were mentioned and concrete activities in this direction started. The good understanding of the KAF central office in Germany made it possible for Dr. Monikes to be posted to Benin Republic for the West Africa region after the unfortunate and ongoing deterioration and anarchy in Zaire under Mr. Mobutu.

It is my delight, therefore, to say *Welcome* to Dr. Monikes to our country, Nigeria, again and we look forward to years of better, fruitful and patient cooperation for mutual benefit in the areas of economic, political, social and cultural growth.

The KAF will notice, and all of you participants at this International Conference will agree, that our countries are devastated by problems of all sorts: natural catastrophes and disasters, man-made political and economic destruction of the right order of things, foreign intervention and continued debasement of the African personality.

Right now, virtually every African country from Algeria to South Africa, from Kenya to Liberia, from Cameroun to Sudan and Somali, seems all faced with unquantifiable mess, and the consequences are here with us. Africa appears to be the last in the line as we move towards global development. This explains why the CIDJAP has decided to become positively involved with the ongoing attempt to provide solutions to the problems of Africa, even if in a very modest manner. The German way of speech expresses this mode: *'Es gibt viel zu tun, packen wir es an'*.

We cannot with a human and Christian conscience keep quiet in the face of such challenges facing Africa as if business will continue as usual. We are encouraged by the Gospel to take a Gospel option and to support the positive elements in mankind's history.

Permit me, therefore, to introduce to you, even if in a glance, the aims and activities of the Catholic Institute for Development, Justice and Peace in Enugu. The work of the CIDJAP is rooted in the Pastoral and Social Teachings of the Church as this has been articulated in the Social Encyclicals and relevant documents of Vatican II and developed in the tradition of the Church, based on biblical foundations and contextual realities of the times. It is hoped that the Institute can adequately assess and identify the needs of the local church, scientifically research into the problems and prospects of Christianity in our land and make its findings relevant for the daily lives of the people of God. The CIDJAP intends to achieve these aims through various means:

To awaken God's people to the full understanding of their part and duty in the fields of Development, Justice, Charity, Peace, Human Advancement, Human Rights and to promote projects related to these aforementioned areas in Nigeria and Africa as a whole.

To provide information and formation through education of persons, publication of books, booklets, pamphlets, distribution of same through the CIDJAP-CARITAS bookshop and library aimed at enlightenment of the people, animation and conscientisation of the people on the issues that touch their own lives as well as training and involvement on local, national and international matters which enhance the dignity of man.

To sponsor the technical, practical and academic education as well as further training of talented young people of suitable character within Nigeria and abroad.

To foster international cooperation by promoting African studies, culture, economic justice, democratic culture and enhancement of contacts and development projects between various interest groups, international Catholic agencies, non-governmental organisations, world bodies and government bodies.

To arrange meetings, workshops, colloquia, symposia, group discussions, lectures, and community development ventures on various levels of local and international participation and on different topics.

To participate actively in projects related to health, social housing, promotion of women, academic research, youth employment and vocational training.

To promote art by organising events and giving support to artists.

To champion the cause of the oppressed and the marginalised as well as speak out against injustice and oppression, maintain and fight for human rights, prisoners' welfare and civil liberties of persons generally.

To recruit and train volunteer workers who are prepared to work in remote areas, in the villages and in rural development programmes with relevant technical skills.

To develop and deepen pastoral reflection and action, theological ideas and Christian ideals in the context of a developing theology in Nigeria.

Spread the social teachings of the Catholic Church as has been urged by the various Papal Encyclicals such as '*Mater et Magistra*', '*Pacem in Terris*', '*Populorum Progressio*', '*Laborem Exercens*' and other relevant encyclicals, as well as seek for avenues to participate and accentuate integral human development policies in the milieu of a developing nation as well as promote development and related issues by means of concrete projects.

To promote dialogue between the Catholic Church and different Christian confessions, Muslims, non-Christians, non-believers, African traditional religions and the State, with an aim towards promoting peace, tolerance and coexistence in the light of Christian social principles.

To promote agricultural training and increased food production.

After all that has been said and done, we shall be judged finally by what we tried to *do* in the face of crisis and not just by the good will we manifested in acknowledging the existence of crisis in an uninvolved manner. We must take sides. To be neutral in the face of injustice is a betrayal! CIDJAP should continue as a non-governmental organisation in her work for the *Humanisation*, the *Civilisation* and the rejuvenation of the children of God who live on this continent. Together with the KAF and all positive organisations of human progress, the peace, development and freedom of Africa remains our goal.

Finally, it is my hope that the deliberations in this international Colloquium in the quiet coal city of Enugu, a city that was once a war front victim on ethnic and tribal levels will be fruitful and beneficial, not only to the participants but to the larger subregion and the world in general.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The Mission of Social Work

Introduction

I have accepted your kind invitation extended to me by Dr C.P. Ekpe and colleagues to deliver a keynote address at this occasion with joy and respect for three simple reasons:

Firstly, the subject and discipline fall into the world of social sciences where I am academically at home myself. I am therefore naturally interested and motivated.

Secondly, many of your teachers are my friends and some of them (like Monsignor Dr Akukwe and Reverend Dr Fr. Osmund Anigbo) were my teachers while I was as young as you are. Their discipline, interest, hard work and relationship with me over the years made me what I am today. I consider my presence therefore to be one of solidarity with you and of gratitude for all that I have received.

Thirdly, I desire by my presence to encourage you both in your study, your research and your ambitions to solidify your knowledge in this study as I am deeply convinced of its utility, efficiency and contextual relevance in a dynamic but contradictory developing society like Nigeria. As you very well know, we live in a pluralistic society, imbued with cultural diversities, aspirations, potentials and actual needs. It is my belief that knowledge of 'Social Thought' must necessarily lead to 'Social Action' which has the power to change our world.

Keynote Address delivered to the Social Work Unit in the Department of Sociology/Anthropology of the University of Nigeria Nsukka, at the Launching of a N10M Bus/Library Appeal Fund and other activities to mark the 'Social Work Day' celebrations at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka on 13th March, 1996.

Permit me to postulate three statements which I consider to be the three reasons for the deepening of study in social thought and action. These postulations in the context of this paper are the assumptions for our point of departure, namely:

I want to assume that most of us here present share a common unwillingness or even inability to accept the world as it is, because we believe that it was meant to be different.

I want secondly to presume that most of you would wish that the world into which you were born could be changed for the better.

I want finally, to assume that you are convinced that social work would make a difference in the lives of people, as it is the art and skill for change and development. I assume therefore that you are consciously willing to accept and champion this theoretical but most practical discipline to effect change in our world.

The Topic

I have been asked to speak on 'the mission of social work'. This is, in my guess, an assignment that is direct even if multidimensional in approach. Articulating such a response in detail gives us room to expand the scope of the given, to initiate and generate new thoughts, to determine the teleology of social work, to reconstruct new methods, strategies and technologies necessary as a response in this vast but most relevant area of study. Finally we can to develop new themes which are adaptable and contextual and link them all up within the intellectual/academic criteriology which make for a systematic study with a practical orientation that makes all theory credible. In the words of Emmanuel Kant, the famous German transcendental philosopher of the eighteenth century, 'there is nothing as practical as a good theory'.

I shall try, though not exhaustively and not necessarily in order of importance, to outline in a cursory manner what the mission of social work will have to be as we look forward to the next

millennium, a few years hence. As you know, the year 2000 will be the magic year: health for all by year 2000; water for all by year 2000; housing for all by year 2000; education for all by year 2000; poverty eradication by year 2000, etc.

The Context.

1. Our context in the world and in Nigeria is first of all that of contradictions

Technological advancement in a primitive world.

So much wasted wealth in the midst of poverty.

Modernisation, enlightenment and civilisation even in the midst of primitive and negative development.

New life styles and immense possibilities contradicted by cultural rigidity and orthodox refusal to change.

Our age witnessed the contradictions of liberal democracy versus communist fascism, liberal capital economy versus socialism, intellectual freedom versus militant aggressive religious fundamentalism.

Plurality of opinions and world views including ideological, sociological, cultural, economic and political options even as we witness conservatism, orthodoxy, and fanaticism bordering almost on madness.

A wealth of values, whether social, cultural or religious, versus family instability, drug abuse, and criminality.

The contradictions are many and one could go on and on. It is in the context of these contradictions that we are called to define the scope of the mission of social work. I must however assert as a thesis and postulation that social work can only exist in the setting and context of contradictions. If the time comes when social work is irrelevant and therefore disappears because we have achieved all positive human values, have wealth for everybody, education for all, health for all, jobs for all, and life in abundance for all, that

time will be when polarities and contradictions in human exigencies cease to exist. When such a time comes (and we often pray that it comes soon), social work will become irrelevant and will cease to exist or have any mission at all. If contradictions however continue (and it does seem to me that they are not coming to an end), the discipline of social work will not only grow in strength but also in scope, method and target groups.

Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, the facts on the ground, considered from a rational and comparative analysis, do not give any alternative speculation or chance -despite all our optimism- to expect 'the sudden or near death' or even the extinction of social work in human societies; for everywhere, conflicts, polarities, tensions and contradictions exist. Though young as a discipline, social work has come to stay because human beings have desired to base their actions on the antinomy of pluralities, polarities and contradictions.

A Change in Attitude from the Individual to Society

2. Second postulation: Focusing on people at the centre

With the benefit of hindsight in the future, the aim of social work to me must have to undergo a radical reappraisal of its final goals, namely *society* and undertake an inward self-recovery and self-exploration to return to its original point of departure. This, in my view, is its life and meaning, namely, concentrating on people, and helping them to become what their creator initially made them to be: 'Social Beings'. Aristotle had long asserted that man is a '*Homo socialis*', and this view was held until the capitalist era of the nineteenth century individualism set in following the steps of Adam Smith. The Industrial Revolution and Capitalism set the stage that was to reverse society. The human person is
...an entity existing as a distinct unity
incapable of being divided actually or

conceptually without losing its identity; a particular, a single thing; opposite to general, universal; person, self, ego; (Angels, P. *Dictionary of Philosophy*, Bares & Noble Books, NY, 1981, p.131).

Individualism therefore whether as a philosophical school of thought or a political theory refers to:

the theory that the principal concern of all political and social groupings is to preserve the rights, guarantee the independence and enhance the development of the individual person. The State is the means used by individuals in the attainment of these goals and is never an end in itself. Society exists for the sake of its individual members.

Government must never interfere with the individual's pursuit of his wishes unless this can be shown to produce harm to other individuals:

All governments must stem from the self-directing and self-regulating powers of individuals and must not be imposed by regulations and external coercion. It is such thoughts that lead to the metaphysical conception of the world which elevates an individual over the corporate body and *individualises*, that is, discriminates, distinguishes, singles out and identifies from among others a class or species, determines the particular individual from its universal or general type and elevates it above others. This individualism, which is hydra-headed believes in *I before others* and so generates selfishness, grabbing, ethnicism, clannishness and egocentric, anti-social, anti-human and anti-communal behaviour.

The scourge of all human societies is the vice of individualism which leads to loneliness, atomisation, particularisation and isolation. The contradictions of atrocious wealth versus excruciating poverty; oppression and injustice; various forms of domination;

quota system syndrome and mediocrity; unemployment; lack of planning, etc., which are noticeable problems in various human societies today, are traceable to the lack of a social education and social conscience. Catholic social teachings assert that 'there can be no genuine personhood in isolation from other persons'. Even though the border is a fluid one, Professor Mbiti's postulation may be useful here for us Africans: 'I am because we are and since we are, I am'.

Today, the great ethical problems and also other great threats and evils have a social character or even an international one, caused by individuals for selfish and myopic reasons. War is the greatest of all these threats; race rivalry (ethnicism) comes not far behind; poverty is still another; marginalisations and exclusions follow. With the industrial revolution, the concentration of people in conurbation and the abolition of distance, all human life is more and more dominated by large-scale social structures, national departments, governments, commercial corporations, international organisations, trade unions, public media, etc. Unless we refocus on people and society from a value orientation, not simply from a 'goods and services perspective', problems will continue. This, in my guess, is one of the missions of social work as we enter the twenty-first century.

In spite of all the supremely fruitful discoveries of mankind and its magnificent institutions: telematics, informatics; the invention of the aeroplane and the engine; spaceship and aeronautic attempts, etc., this age has been spectacularly wrong in its underlying philosophy of life. An age which is wrong about *God* is almost certain to be wrong about *Man*.

3. The Tasks Before Us

Now I come to the 'should' propositions of my paper, which prepare the 'is' situation of tomorrow:

Every child should find itself as a member of a family housed with

decency and dignity, so that it may grow up as a member of that basic community, in a happy fellowship unspoilt by underfeeding or overcrowding, by dirty and drab surroundings or by a mechanical monotony of environment.

Every child should have the opportunity of an education till the years of maturity so planned as to allow for his peculiar talents and make possible their full development. This education should throughout be inspired by faith in God or whatever dignifying essential value one finds as a focus in worship.

Every citizen should be secure in possession of such income as will enable him to maintain a home and bring up children in such an environment as already described.

Every citizen should have sufficient daily leisure, and if an employee, some leave and holidays to enable him to enjoy a full personal life with such interests and activities as tasks and talents may direct.

Every citizen should have a voice in the conduct of the business or industry which is carried on by means of his labour, enterprise or capital. It must be clear also that these contributions benefit the entire community be it socially, economically, politically, religiously or culturally.

Every citizen should have assured liberty in the forms of freedom of worship, of speech, of assembly and of association for special purposes.

As you can see, social *work* has a mission and a future, and to this we have all been called.