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**INSECURITY, TERRORISM AND CHRISTIAN
MISSION IN NIGERIA TODAY¹**

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Abstract

While the problems of terrorism and insecurity in Nigeria have taken an ethnic and a religious coloration, this paper engages in a critical analysis of the country's historical founding, and the institutional acts and decrees of subsequent heads of state, to show that the root cause of these problems lies in the country's faulty architectural structure. This faulty structure, which concentrates power and resources in a central government and deprives citizens of their rightful voice in the governance of the country, presents an urgent task for Christians to foster a restructuring of the country based on the Catholic Social Doctrine principles of participation and subsidiarity in order to tackle the raging problems of insecurity and terrorism which daily threaten the lives and sense of wellbeing of millions of Nigerians.

Key words: Insecurity, Terrorism, Amalgamation, Catholic Social Doctrine, Participation, Subsidiarity, Restructuring, Christian Mission

Introduction

As a nation, Nigeria has witnessed much violence and insecurity in her brief history. In addition to intertribal and religiously motivated clashes, between 1967 and 1970, she suffered through a civil war which claimed the lives of more than one million persons. But never has Nigeria experienced so much insecurity and terrorism, ever on the rise and occurring with disturbing regularity, as she has in the last two decades.

Indeed, kidnappings, extortion, terrorist attacks, mass murders in rural communities, and all manner of banditry have now become a part of the daily existence and expectation of Nigerians. The plague of kidnappings began with Niger Delta militants targeting expatriates, soon they were also targeting wealthy Nigerians. In no time, kidnapping and extortion became widespread affecting Nigerians across the board in all parts of the country, and even as militancy in the Niger Delta waned, new gangs with different interests have become the perpetrators of this heinous crimes which cost the life of many Nigerians daily. The long-standing problems and struggles between herders and farmers became aggravated, degenerated, and persists with no resolutions, resulting in numerous deadly intercommunal clashes in the Northern and Middle belts of the nation. In the North, the Boko Haram terrorist group sprang up in 2009, first as a small group of agitators advocating for the imposition of Sharia Law in the country and the rejection of Western education, which they perceived to be the cause of our corrupt polity and a hindrance to the spread of pure Islam. But with time, especially after the extrajudicial killing of their leader, Mohammed Yusuf, they degenerated into a terrorist organization, taking over some parts of Northern Nigeria and regularly launching attacks on the populace, both civilians and military.² Their earlier attacks majorly focused on Churches and Christians, but Christians have not been their only victims.

The violence has marked religious and ethnic colorations. The members of the Boko Haram group are mainly from the North and are Muslims. The herders are mainly from the Fulani tribes of the North and are Muslims. A fleshy percentage of kidnappers who ambush their victims on the road and in farms are mainly from the North and are Muslims. There are also other kidnappers from the South linked to Niger Delta militants and other tribes. Armed robbery and other violent crimes continue to afflict the nation.

Many Christians have been victims of these criminal actions. Some have been deliberately persecuted or killed for their faith, as we find in the many instances of bombing of Churches and kidnapping of Christians.³ A notorious case among these is the refusal of the kidnappers to release Leah Sharibu, one of the 110 Dapchi school girls kidnapped in 2018. Even after releasing her other schoolmates, the then 14-year-old girl has been held hostage till date because she refused to convert to Islam. The latest that has been heard of Leah Sharibu is that she is suspected to have been delivered of a second baby.⁴

It would, however, be simplistic to think that the problem of insecurity and terrorism in Nigeria is primarily a religious or tribal one. It is rather a symptom of the breakdown of the architectural framework of the country capitalizing on ethnic and religious sentiments to flower. This paper shall elaborate on this root cause of our current crisis, show how it affects our mission as Christians, and the consequent challenge before us as Christians.

The Root Cause of Insecurity and Terrorism: A Faulty National Framework.

A nation that comprises a people should be an expression of their free association and their coming together to pursue common goals and objectives. At present, neither the element of free association nor the pursuance of common goals can be said to essentially define the fabric of the Nigeria nation. Nigeria still labours under a forced amalgamation that was birthed at the convenience of the British colonial masters. The immediate reason given by Frederick Lugard (1858-1945), the then British Governor-General, in a speech to proclaim the administrative act that invented the country, is that the amalgamation of North and South would facilitate rail transportation of raw materials like groundnut and cotton from the North to the port of the city of Lagos. This would ease transportation to Britain for their industrial revolution drive⁵. So, it was neither the wish of the people nor their common interest that was primary in the amalgamation that would constitute the newly invented Nigeria. It is little wonder

then that the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo would say that Nigeria is a mere geographical expression.⁶

This contraption, solidified by a constitutional framework that did not reflect the wishes of the people,⁷ enabled a Nigerian nation in which government was far from the people and the people did not majorly participate in governance. The self-serving interest that essentially defined the British colonial masters was immediately assumed by the Nigerian elites and oligarchs, both military and civilians. While after Independence, Nigeria began with a parliamentary system which gave some representation to the people, the unification decree of Aguyi Ironsi, the Nigerian military ruler in 1966, consolidated power and resources in a central government, taking away land, resources, and a just degree of self-governance from the regions and so further alienated the people from the state.⁸ Before and after the Nigerian civil war, the three-decade long reign of military rule, which was only interrupted by a four year spell (1979-1983) of civilian rule, effectively solidified the practice of governance as the wish of the rulers and for the sake of the rulers.

The current practice of democracy, inaugurated by the military government of General Abdulsalam in 1999, has not recovered from the years of military mis governance. This is because it was not established with a constitution that reflected the wish and common good of the people. As it has been said several times, the current Nigerian constitution, put together by a select few and decreed into existence in 1999, is one that lies against itself because it begins its proclamation with “We the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria”⁹. A constitution that neither consulted the people nor is ordered for their common good and aspirations cannot claim to speak for the people. It is rather, a constitution designed to serve a centralized government that gives power and resources to a select few even as it takes away resources from the people, emasculates the states, and enables the states to hinder efficient governance at the local government level. As long as states have to depend on a centralized federal

government for their main income, governors are chief security officers of their states without control over the security apparatus, the judiciary is tied to the apron strings of the executive, the head of the electoral body is an appointee at the beck and call of the president, Nigeria will remain, in the words of Anthony Akinwale, an “empire dressed in the stolen robes of federalism.”¹⁰

Governance that lacks the effective participation of its citizens and which is not ordered for the common good, such as has come to define the faulty architectural framework of Nigeria, can only have one outcome: a failed state evidenced in the breakdown of major societal institutions, in particular the frameworks for education, security, and justice, and in the chaos and violence that follows in the wake of this collapse. As Bishop Kukah so eloquently put it in his 2020 Christmas address – “A Nation in Search of Vindication”:

The prospects of a failed state stare us in the face: endless bloodletting, a collapsing economy, social anomie, domestic and community violence, kidnappings, armed robberies etc. Ours has become a house of horror with fear stalking our homes, highways, cities, hamlets and entire communities.¹¹

As the country’s resources have not been efficiently deployed, Nigeria has come to be the poverty capital of the world, and in a recent survey, the country with one of the highest rates of unemployment in the world.¹² About thirteen million children, mainly from the North, are out of school.¹³ They grow up uneducated. Over time, these children have become easy recruits for kidnappings, banditries, and other criminal activities.

The Role of Religion and Christian Mission

Nigeria is a deeply religious country. The average Nigerian breathes and smells religion. The two main religions of Christianity and Islam have been warmly embraced by the majority of Nigerians. The Nigerian landscape is dotted with

Churches and Mosques. But the practice of religion is not one that has significantly helped to address the ills of the nation. This is because religion itself has become a victim of the very selfishness that defines our current contraption as a nation. Just as our current “unity” as a nation is promoted to serve the interest of a few, the practice of religion has become an accomplice in fostering a parochial mentality where God is sought as a means to short-sighted material goals irrespective of the common good.

In other words, the practice of religion has largely been hijacked. Instead of helping its adherents to become good citizens serving the good of one and all, it has become a tool for the self-promotion and self-enrichment of the oligarchs, a means for the masses to seek “prosperity,” and a victim of manipulation of many ministers of religion, who have reduced themselves to fortune tellers for the ruling class and charlatans preying on the hopes of the common people. Needless to say, the current state of affairs in religion has not helped many Christians to realise their vocation to be good citizens, and to fulfill their roles of being the salt of the earth.

While many Christians are making well founded complaints of the threats of fulanisation and Islamisation, currently being entrenched by the present Fulani and Muslim dominated central government, we must, however, note that the architectural framework for this domination was laid when Christians occupied the reigns of governance in the country. The most significant acts which solidified the country’s concentration of power and resources in a central government were acts taken under presidents who professed the Christian faith.¹⁴ The ball was set rolling by the unification decree of the Military government of Aguyi Ironsi in 1966, and the Land Use Act of 1978, which took away land from the people and gave it to the government, was decreed by the military government of Olusegun Obasanjo. Current legislation being pushed by the present government to deprive the states of their water ways and make them the possession of the central government, is a continuation of the vision of government that sees itself to be greater than its

citizens.¹⁵ Since the resumption of Democracy in 1999, two failed attempts were made at constitutional reforms by presidents who were Christians. The first attempt was scuttled by the failure of the then President Olusegun Obasanjo to drive through his tenure elongation, and the second one introduced by the government of President Goodluck Jonathan came at the tail end of a six-year administration leaving its implementation to the next government which did not believe in it.¹⁶

What this shows is that our primary problem is not the religious affiliation of Nigerians, but a corrupt practice of religion that has become an accomplice of our social and political dislocation. Christians have not proved their worth in governance because they lack the formation to do so. If we do not take formation seriously, if ministers of the Gospel continue to brand themselves as fortune tellers and not prophetic figures that should re-awaken and form the consciences of persons, the practice of Christianity will not be a remedy, but an accomplice to our current problems. A corrupt practice of religion cannot drive the ethical project that is needed to help politics live up to its pristine motivation of intelligently ordering the society to foster the common good. *Gaudium et spes* captures this well when it notes:

The political community exists, consequently, for the sake of the common good, in which it finds its full justification and significance, and the source of its inherent legitimacy. Indeed, the common good embraces the sum of those conditions of the social life whereby men, families and associations more adequately and readily may attain their own perfection.¹⁷

What we would have instead, as is the case today, is a machiavellian notion of politics that doggedly strives to grab power for narrow and selfish reasons that are far from, and often conflicts with, the common good of the people.¹⁸

The Way Forward: The Challenge Before Christians Today

One cannot deny that many Christians are being killed and martyred in the current spate of insecurity and terrorism in Nigeria. The targeted attacks on Christians and the number of those who have been killed for their faith should not be taken for granted. Such Christians should be listed in the Church's martyrology. But in addressing the current problem, Christians must know that the real betrayal lies within. It is their refusal to live up to their faith, their readiness to give it up for selfish reasons, the way Jesus Christ was given up, that is the greatest problem we face. Whenever there are disciples who selfishly love money and material things like Judas and are therefore ready to sell their Saviour for thirty pieces of silver, the amount the ancient Jews used for buying a slave (Cf. Matt. 26:14-16, Ex.21:32), then Christ will be crucified again and again, and the Christian mission can only be pursued half-heartedly.

The Christian mission in the realm of politics is a choice for an ethical stand that would promote right politics oriented to serving the common good. Within the context of Nigeria's particular problem, the urgent and never to be seconded task before the Christian mission in politics today is to drive the participation of citizens in governance. According to Catholic Social Doctrine,

Participation in community life is not only one of the greatest aspirations of the citizen, called to exercise freely and responsibly his civic role with and for others ...but is also one of the pillars of all democratic orders and one of the major guarantees of the permanence of the democratic system. Democratic government, in fact, is defined first of all by the assignment of powers and functions on the part of the people, exercised in their name, in their regard and on their behalf. It is therefore clearly evident that every democracy must be participative This means that the different subjects of civil community at every level must be informed, listened to and involved in the exercise of the carried-out functions.¹⁹

This can only happen when the country is returned to the people. Allowing Catholic Social Teaching to guide us further, the most practical way to ensure this participation is to foster the principle of subsidiarity, where every component of the society is allowed to perform its role, and larger bodies do not take over the functions of smaller ones. In its *Compendium*, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, summarizes the Catholic Church's vision of the principle of subsidiarity thus:

*The necessity of defending and promoting the original expressions of social life is emphasized by the Church in the Encyclical Quadragesimo Anno, in which the principle of subsidiarity is indicated as a most important principle of "social philosophy". "Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do. For every social activity ought of its very nature to furnish help to the members of the body social, and never destroy and absorb them"*²⁰

After stating this principle of subsidiarity, the *Compendium* thereafter states how this will facilitate an orderly functioning of the society:

On the basis of this principle, all societies of a superior order must adopt attitudes of help ("subsidium") — therefore of support, promotion, development — with respect to lower-order societies. In this way, intermediate social entities can properly perform the functions that fall to them without being required to hand them over unjustly to other social entities of a higher level, by which they would end up being absorbed and substituted, in the end seeing themselves denied their

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dignity and essential place.²¹

By way of reaffirming the indispensable benefit of the principle of subsidiarity, the *Compendium* shows how this principle protects smaller entities, and by implication their freedom and responsibility:

Subsidiarity, understood *in the positive sense* as economic, institutional or juridical assistance offered to lesser social entities, entails a corresponding series of *negative* implications that require the State to refrain from anything that would de facto restrict the existential space of the smaller essential cells of society. Their initiative, freedom and responsibility must not be supplanted.²²

From this explanation of what the principle of subsidiarity entails, where it states that it is an “evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do”, it is not difficult to discern the problem of Nigeria. In so far as power is concentrated in a central governing apparatus, the government cannot address the particular and diverse needs of the various ethnic groups in their communities, nor can it be a guardian of the common good of all the people of the nation and safeguard those institutions – education, justice, and security – that foster the unity and common aspirations of its people. Our current system of government is bigger than the people, and here lies the root cause of the problems of insecurity and the many challenges we face today. Nigeria is deficient and pathetically anaemic from a lack of practice of the principle of subsidiarity. The components of our supposed federating units should be made to function. The primary organs for the effective functioning of any society such as the institutions of education, security and the adjudication of justice should be restructured to primarily reflect the determination of the people at the local level, at the most basic community. People who do not enjoy the right of self-determination and the organization of

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their immediate community cannot exercise the freedom of free association.

The tendency towards centralisation of governance in the country is often promoted under the pretext of protecting the unity of our country, especially after the civil war experience. But this fear, *ab initio*, is misplaced. The true unity of people should be birthed from their free association. Long before the amalgamation and the self-serving apparatus of governance that it instituted, there have been interactions and cultural exchanges among the peoples of current Nigeria. The Ijaws have been in Lagos, the Igbos have been in the North, the Hausas have been in parts of current Western Nigeria etc. This association between tribes and communities was free and in service of the self-determination of the various tribes and peoples. As a result of an amalgamation that did not express the genuine aspirations of the different peoples, the ethnic differences which should have constituted strengths of diversity in the unity of the nation have become grounds for tensions and divisions. A response to these tensions that would reinforce the selfish motives that informed the 1914 amalgamation of our nation, rather than one that seeks a restructured polity that would serve the interest of all, would simply be disastrous. We need to protect the unity of our country by seeking how to make it useful for the benefit of all, and not for a self-serving few.

Conclusion

In conclusion, in order to tackle the root cause of insecurity and terrorism in Nigeria today, the mission of Christians is to allow their faith to help them foster an ethical project that would drive the participation of the people in governance through the principle of subsidiarity. This Christian mission must do this by first conscientising Christians to recognize the ills of the current self-serving Nigerian structural framework tailored towards the interest of a few oligarchs. Here, the martyrdom demanded from the Nigerian Christian today is to refuse to be an accomplice of these narrow interests. Those who have always resisted ills

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have turned to be agents of change in the society. Vivian Ogu exemplifies this agent of change when she refused to be raped after being captured by armed robbers at her family home in Benin City in 2009. For her vehement refusal, she was killed by the bandits.²³

The late revered archbishop of Chicago, Cardinal Francis George, who died in 2015 said he will die on his bed, his successor will die in prison, while the one after his successor will die as a martyr.²⁴ What the Cardinal is saying here is that if Christians wish to bring about a social change in the society by being steadfast to their faith, they should be ready to endure persecution. At present, the entrenched interests that have held the nation captive would not let go. The endurance of the Christian today is to be tested by the willingness to be a good citizen who will allow his or her faith to guide him or her to stand for justice and a more secured Nigeria.

Endnotes

¹This paper is a modified version of a Virtual Conference paper presented at the 2021 Catholic Theological Association (CATHAN) Conference which was held from April 6-9, 2021.

² A study of Boko Haram explains their motivations thus: “While the overriding goal of Boko Haram is to wrest control from the Nigerian state and to impose Sharia across the country, the cocktail of political corruption, chronic poverty, and youth unemployment in northern Nigeria continues to fuel members and supporters of Boko Haram.” Daniel Egiegba Agbiboa, “No Retreat, No Surrender: Understanding the Religious Terrorism of Boko Haram in Nigeria” *African Study Monographs*, 34, 2 (2013), 74.

³In response to the spate of killing of Christians in Nigeria, the French Philosopher, Bernard-Henri Lévy, exclaims: ““Will history be repeated in Nigeria?” “Will we wait, as usual, for the disaster to be consumed in order to be moved? And will we remain idly by while the Islamist international, contained in Asia, fought in Europe, defeated in Syria and Iraq, opens a new front on this immense land where the sons of Abraham coexisted for a long time? This is what is at stake on this journey to the heart of the Nigerian darkness”. Bernard-Henri Lévy, “Au Nigeria, on massacre les chrétiens” *Paris Match*, December 5, 2019. Accessed April 3, 2021, https://www.parismatch.com/Actu/International/Au-Nigeria-on-massacre-les-chretiens-le-SOS-de-Bernard-Henri-Lévy-1662940?fbclid=IwAR3nUcTh3arWHl2-2hQ2oqXRJh-bBB8Nn34fIcJQIRCtdPAlln_wX4bvg7w. John Burger. “Bernard-Henri Lévy provides eyewitness testimony to killing, raping and mutilation by Fulani herdsmen”. *Aleteia*, December 18, 2019. Accessed April 3, 2021. <https://aleteia.org/2019/12/18/french-philosopher-documents-deadly-persecution-of-nigerian-christians/>.

⁴See Friday Olorok, “Leah Sharibu: Report of second baby heartbreaking, say parents” *Punch*, March 28, 2021. Accessed April 4, 2021. <https://punchng.com/leah-sharibu-report-of->

⁵According to Lugard, “The construction of rival railways in Northern and Southern Nigeria accentuated the necessity having a single railway policy, with a single administration, and over a year ago the Secretary of State decided that the time had come to give effect to the scheme of constituting a single Government for Nigeria.” Cited in Teslim Opemipo Omipidan, (November 12, 2014). Speech by The Governor General of Nigeria, Sir Frederick Lugard On January 1, 1914 (Amalgamation Proclamation of 1914). *OldNaija*. Accessed April 7, 2021. <https://oldnaija.com/2014/11/12/speech-by-the-governor-general-of-nigeria-sir-frederick-lugard/>.

⁶“Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression. There are no “Nigerians” in the same sense as there are “English” or “Welsh” or “French” See Obafemi Awolowo, *Path to Nigeria’s Freedom*, (London: Faber and Faber, London, 1947) 47 – 48.

⁷The first written constitution of Nigeria is the Clifford Constitution of 1922, named after the successor of Lugard, Sir Hugh Clifford. See *West African Constitutional Development*, “Hugh Clifford Constitution” (1922). Accessed April 7, 2021. <https://nigerianscholars.com/tutorials/west-african-constitutional-development/hugh-clifford-constitution/>.

⁸The Decree 34 of 1966 was named the Unification Decree, which abolished the then regional and ethnic groups which existed in the parliamentary system. It dissolved 81 political associations and twenty-six tribal and cultural associations. Although later abolished by the successive government of General Yakubu Gowon with the promulgation of Decree 14 of 1967 which broke the country into twelve states and Military governors were appointed for each state, the concentration of power at the center which the Unitary Decree sealed has remained an abiding feature of the successive Nigerian military and civilian rules. As a result of the way the Decree 34 aborted the parliamentary system that operated since the country’s Independence in 1960, decimated the free aspirations of the Nigerian peoples, critics labelled it

the De-unification Decree. See Eric Teniola, “History and the Future of Decree 34 of 1966”, *Guardian Newspaper*, September 4, 2017. Accessed April 5, 2021.<https://t.guardian.ng/opinion/history-and-the-future-of-decree-34-of-1966/>.

⁹Nigeria, *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*, May 1999. Accessed April 4, 2021.<https://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/ng/ng014en.pdf>.

¹⁰Anthony Akinwale, “Corruption, Insecurity and the Christian Faith in Contemporary Nigeria” Academia, (2018), 9. Accessed April 4, 2021.

https://www.academia.edu/43586250/Corruption_Insecurity_and_the_Christian_Faith_in_Contemporary_Nigeria.

¹¹For the full text of the address, see Matthew Hassan Kukah, “Christmas Message 2020, A Nation in Search of Vindication”. The Catholic Diocese of Sokoto. Accessed April 26, 2021. <https://catholicdiocese-sokoto.org/latest-news/nation-search-vindication>.

¹²According to the World Poverty Clock, over 89 million Nigerians out of an estimated 200 million live in extreme poverty, which is about 3million more than India which has a population of about 1.3 million. See World Data Lab, “World Poverty Clock”, (2021). Accessed April 5, 2021.<https://worldpoverty.io/map>. See also Borgen Magazine, “Poverty Capital of the World: Nigeria”, August 28, 2020. Accessed April 5, 2021.<https://www.borgenmagazine.com/the-poverty-capital-of-the-world-nigeria/>; Ruth Olorounbi, “Nigeria’s Unemployment Rate Rises to 33%, Second Highest on Global List” March 15, 2021. Accessed April 6, 2021.<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-03-15/nigeria-unemployment-rate-rises-to-second-highest-on-global-list>.

¹³VOA, “UN: In Nigeria More Than 13 Million School-age Children Out of School”, December 11, 2018. Accessed April 6, 2021.<https://www.voanews.com/africa/un-nigeria-more-13-million-school-age-children-out-school>.

¹⁴See Federal Government of Nigeria, “Public Order Decree 1966”, May 24, 2021. Accessed April 6, 2021.<https://gazettes>.

africa/archive/ng/1966/ng-government-gazette-supplement-dated-1966-05-24-no-51-part-a.pdf. For a copy and a critical review of the Land Use Act Decree, see A. N. Allott, Nigeria: Land Use Decree, 1978, *Journal of African Law* Vol. 22, No. 2 (Autumn, 1978): 136-160.

¹⁵A draft of the controversial “National Water Resources Bill 2020”, which was first rejected by the National Assembly in 2018 and reintroduced to the Assembly in 2020 by the Federal Government can be obtained here: <https://placng.org/i/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Committee-Report-on-the-National-Water-Resources-Bill-2020.pdf>. Accessed April 28, 2021.

¹⁶For a critical evaluation of both constitutional conferences, see Ben Nwabueze, “Between Jonathan’s National Conference and Obasanjo’s reform confab”, *Vanguard News*, December 17, 2013. Accessed April 6, 2021. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/11/jonathans-national-conference-obasanjos-reform-confab-prof-ben-nwabueze/>.

¹⁷Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. “*Gaudium et spes*, [Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World], December 7, 1965, sec. 74”. The Vatican Website. Accessed April 7, 2021. https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

¹⁸See Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Russell Price & Quentin Skinner, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). Cf. Anthony Akinwale, “Religion and Societal Conscience Formation” *Academia* (2019): 3. Accessed April 7, 2021. https://www.academia.edu/40446961/Religion_and_Societal_Conscience_Formation. According to Anthony Akinwale, “In Nigeria, we have managed to build a society where politics is bedeviled by an acute deficiency of morality, and symptoms of this deficiency are too many to itemize. They are visible in anti-social behavior, in violence and in vote buying, fake news and propaganda, promises made while those who make them have no intention of keeping them, the manipulation of ethnic

and religious diversity to attain selfish political interests. The objective is to get into power to enrich oneself so that one can buy mansions in Dubai, in cities in Europe and North America.”Ibid.

¹⁹Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. “Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church April 2, 2004, sec. 190”. The Vatican Website. Accessed April 7, 2021. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html. In the buildup to the 2019 election in Nigeria, the Catholic Theological Association of Nigeria (CATHAN) published a Vademecum for electors in Nigeria. The document spoke about the indispensable role of participation of the people in government thus: “Participation is at the core of the realisation of the common good. It is not enough for one individual or group, however well-equipped, to saddle itself with procuring the common good on behalf of everybody else. All are invited to work for it and must be given every opportunity to participate in it, both as contributors as well as beneficiaries. The active participation of citizens in the electioneering process, including the possibility of voting and being voted for, in a free, fair and credible contest is a value to be cultivated and encouraged. It is also an obligation whose fulfilment is a good indication of a society that is built upon, and respecting of, the common good. By their votes, citizens have the right and corresponding responsibility to determine the candidates who would govern them. Consequently, Christians are morally obliged to promote this common good, by voting for the right candidates. The conscientious exercise of the right mentioned here relies to a large extent on how well formed the consciences of the electorates are. The formation of consciences is a lifetime project, and this Guide is a small contribution to it, with regard to election.

As *bona fide* citizens of Nigeria, Christians have the same constitutional rights and duties as everyone else to participate actively in public life. It is in this light that Nigerian Bishops reiterate the teaching of the Council Fathers that it accords with

human nature “that juridical-political structures should, with ever better success and without any discrimination, afford all their citizens the chance to participate freely and actively in establishing the constitutional bases of determining political community, governing the state, determining the scope and purpose of various institutions and choosing leaders. Hence, let all citizens be mindful of their simultaneous right and duty to vote freely in the interest of advancing the common good.” The Catechism of Catholic Church also lends credence to the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria’s assertion on active participation in politics in this pronouncement: “It is necessary that all participate, each according to his position and role, in promoting the common good. Obligation is inherent in the dignity of the human person. ... As far as possible, citizens should take active part in public life.” Being actively involved in the electoral process is to the mind of the Nigerian bishops a demand of patriotism, an important religious virtue of piety. True piety is tantamount to respectful and responsible devotedness both to one’s familial father, God and one’s fatherland. Our refusal to actively participate in the electoral process, pose great danger to our ability to truly practice and carry out our mission or contribute to the common good, thus we might be forced to sacrifice our faith, our fundamental teachings and moral principles. Thus, the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria enjoin all to be active participants in the electoral process: “It is the noble right and serious duty of every responsible citizen to do what he can towards the establishment, maintenance and successful operation of a good government...everyone with the right to vote does have the opportunity, which should be exercised responsibly, to help form, mandate and direct his government.” Catholic Theological Association of Nigeria, *Vademecum for Electors in Nigeria: Manual for Responsible Citizens According to Catholic Social Teaching*. (Abuja: Pauline Publications, 2018), 9-10.

²⁰Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, sec. 186. Emphasis in original.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

²³See This Day. “Vivian Ogu, A Heroine in Death”, November 11, 2019. Accessed April 26, 2021. <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2019/11/11/vivian-ogu-a-heroine-in-death/>.

²⁴Francis Cardinal George, “The Wrong Side of History”, October 20, 2012. *Chicago Catholic*. Accessed April 7, 2021, <https://www.chicagocatholic.com/cardinal-george/-/article/2012/10/21/the-wrong-side-of-history>.