

A Call for Restructuring in Acts 6.1-8: A Challenge in a Post-Colonial, Multi-Ethno-religious Nigerian Society

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Abstract

The point of departure for this study is to reassess a thought-provoking pandemonium that engulfed the embryonic church in Jerusalem as portrayed in Acts 6: 1-7. The challenge of injustice and lack of fairness among believers climaxed to murmuring and uncluttered agitation. This encounter with the apostles was a threat to the union of the already-built Christian community in Jerusalem. The Twelve acted positively and swiftly because drastic and instant measures were required to correct the mess or the Church runs the risk of fragmentation. The study, through the historical-critical method, narrative criticism and socio-rhetorical criticism and form criticism, examines the agitation against inequality in Acts 6:1-7, adopting the apostolic model of restructuring to draw dynamic lessons for the Nigerian experience. The paper adopts these approaches to critique and addresses the effect of socio-religious and political volatility in Nigerian society as initiated by the "divide and rule" and the "amalgamation" dogma of the Colonial Masters that preferred the North against the South. The seed sown by the British is what has steadily grown into a beast that is bullying the peaceful co-existence of Nigeria. The study reveals that to reinstate peaceful co-existence in a heterogeneous nation like Nigeria, there is a necessity for restructuring by ensuring the security of lives and property, fair representation and equity. This paper recommends a holistic restructuring, an Apostolic model that would restore justice and enable the devolution of powers amongst the federating regions or units.

Keywords: *Apostles, Hebraic, Hellenists, Multi-ethno-religious, Restructuring*

Introduction

In the first century Palestine, the distinction between Jews and Gentiles and the conflict between Jews and Christians were of great ideological significance. In Acts 6:1-7 the conflict between Hebrews and Hellenists triggered by the daily distribution of food had a great significance in the development of the early Christian Jerusalem community of the first century. The overarching aim of this study is to pose the likelihood of how Acts 6:1-7 can be applied in addressing the problem of injustice, ethnic-religious discrimination, and nepotism in Nigerian society. It is high time

Nigeria left the unitary government instituted by the military to practice federalism whereby power is shared among the regions; now that it becomes obvious the centre could not hold. The gravity of the cry in Nigeria is more severe in comparison to the injustice on the fair distribution of resources that caused a cry for reorganization in Acts yet the Apostles responded swiftly and the problem was solved.

According to Makande & Dada, the 1999 Nigerian Constitution is the utmost mishap owing to Lord Lugard's amalgamation of the

Southern and Northern Protectorates in 1914¹. The constitution emphasises spending rather than making money, in so doing increasing the fights for power flanked by the legislature and the executive whereas the judiciary is being corruptly polluted and condemned. Unambiguously, as a matter of selfish interest, Agbu upholds that agitation in Nigeria's federal set-up has fundamentally exhibited itself over the quest for access and control over the political power to federally pull together revenue². The flop of federalism in Nigeria's pluralistic state and its upshot of backing ethnic interests grounded on high cultural variances hence demanded the agitation for restructuring in the Nigerian society. This impediment is ostensible in the numerous calls for a restructuring of the Nigerian federation, and it avails that these calls underscore the impact of a dialogue premeditated to advance a constitutional framework for an all-encompassing Nigeria where there will be equal prospects for all.

A Call for Restructuring in Acts 6.1-8

The apostolic church had its compounding problems like any group, and yet she handled them positively. The encounter and result in Acts 6:1-6 show the complications they were

facing which were the problem of cross-cultural conflict among Christians and deficiency in administration. This spurred them to restructure the system to facilitate the spread of the word of God.

In those days, when the number of disciples was snowballing, the Grecian Jews among them grumbled against the Hebraic Jews because their widows³ were being ignored in the everyday circulation of food. So, the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word". This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit; also, Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. So, the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith⁴.

¹ F. Makinde, & P. Dada, Nigeria won't progress with 1999 constitution says Bisi Akande, viewed 06 October 2018, from <https://punchng.com/nigeria-wont-progress-with-1999-constitution-says-bisi-akande/>, 2017.

² O. Agbu. "Re-inventing Federalism in Post-transition in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects", *Africa Development*, 29(2), (2004): 26-52.

³ Widows were some of the poorest people among the Jews; John Hargreaves, *A Guide to Acts*. (London: SPCK, 1990), p, 59.

⁴ Acts 6: 1-7, NIV, see B. M. Newman, & E. A. Nida, *A Handbook on the Acts of the Apostles* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1972), 134-135; In Jerusalem, there were several widows of men who had resided outside of the Holy City, but had returned to Jerusalem to die and to be buried. Intending to care for these widows, the Jews had arranged an avenue whereby they would be given money for food. Palpably the Christian community had borrowed a parallel tradition. The daily circulation of funds is accurately 'in the daily distribution,' and may be considered to denote either funds or else to food. In light of how the Jews themselves handled the care for the widows, it is rather

The grumbling and rumbling of the “Hellenistic Jews” were not unfounded, but neither was it the proper response. The translation of the term, ‘complaint’ (6:1) of the NASB would be better rendered as “grumbling.” Every reference to grumbling in the Bible is looked upon as a sin. Hence, the KJV declaims, “. . . there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews . . .” Most of all, the rendering of the NLT is polished: “But as the believers rapidly multiplied, there were rumblings of discontent. This occurrence was the first cross-cultural conflict among Christians in the early Church. Nonetheless, there are diverse opinions on the nature of the incident. Acts 6:1-7 makes available some treasured insights for the multiethnic conflicts. Some scholars reason that the matter in question was somewhat practical; such as Montgomery Boice, deep down his memory lane adduces that it was a puzzle of management instigated by the swift growth of the Church⁵. Scholars decamped and argued that it was the problem of distribution due to the influx of population explosion. Barrett follows in Boice's footsteps, he pinpointed it was a trivial shortfall in management⁶. Dragging the matter in a different dimension Peter Wagner deduces, with illustrations, that the nature of the puzzle was cultural and political⁷.

Scholars also seem to have different understandings of who the Hellenists and the Hebrews were. As Aramaic was the language of worship, the Hellenists who did not speak it were considered inferiors and had even difficulties contributing their views and having access to decision-making. This argument is well supported by Shillington, when he asserts, “the complaint has been lodged against the Hebrews because the Hebrews held the balance of power by their number or their status as Aramaic-speaking Jerusalemites.”⁸ Therefore, that linguistic difference could result in injustice and unequal measures in that community. Hellenists appeared to have a Jewish-Greek mixed subculture in Jerusalem. Howard Marshall avers that, apart from their topographical origin and the gradation of their religious cleanliness, after much dialogue, there is a growing agreement that the Hebrews were Jews who spoke the Semitic language but also knew some Greek. It can be safely assumed that almost every Jew knew at least a little Greek since it was a *lingua franca* of the eastern Mediterranean world. The Semitic language which they spoke was most possibly Aramaic rather than Hebrew itself. By contrast, the Hellenists were Jews who spoke

probable that the circulation is that of money instead of food.

⁵ James Boice Montgomery. *Acts: An Expositional Commentary*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 112.

⁶C. K. Barrett, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles. Vol. 1. Eds. John Emerton, Charles Cranfield, and Graham Stanton. *The International Critical Commentary on the Holy*

Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments Series. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994). 303.

⁷ C. Peter. Wagner, *Acts of the Holy Spirit*. (Ventura, Calif.: Regal, 1994), p. 141.

⁸ George, Shillington. *An Introduction to the Study of Luke-Acts* (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 50.

Greek, and knew little or no Aramaic⁹. Dean Flemming ascertains that the lexis 'Hellenists' (Acts 6:1) denoted Greek-speaking Jews from the Diaspora, which is different from the 'Hebrews,' whose principal dialect was Aramaic¹⁰.

According to John Hargreaves, long before the advent of Jesus, these two groups had engaged in labyrinth misunderstanding. The Hebrews alleged that the Hellenists were too copiously inclined to Greek culture; the Hellenists on the other hand assumed that the Hebrews were too reluctant to accept innovative notions¹¹. Wagner elaborates more to shed light on the ongoing traces that the Hebrews would probably have been Judeans. Many had personally known Jesus and they would, and did, think of themselves as spiritually higher to the Hellenists; the Hellenists, on the other hand, were the Greek-speaking Diaspora with limited Aramaic eloquence and none of the Hellenists would have had a personal reminiscence of Jesus himself, as did many Hebrews, so they might effortlessly yield to a spiritual inferiority complex when they were around the Hebrews¹². Stott on the other hand differentiates a clear-cut identity of the two groups, that, it has generally been supposed that they were differentiated from each other by a blend of geography and language¹³. Explicitly, the *Hellenistai* emanated from the

diaspora, had established in Palestine and spoke Greek, whereas the *Hebraioi* were populaces of Palestine and spoke Aramaic¹⁴. Dunn argued that while earlier scholarship presumed that there must have been a theological variance between Hellenists and Hebrews, the linguistic, and hence principally cultural, basis of the comparison has been so broadly acknowledged such that, currently the reality is firmly undeniable¹⁵.

At this juncture, the researcher opines that the contrast is simply the fact that both groups were all Jews but the Hebraic were more Jewish than the Hellenist who contaminated their cultural status in the diaspora. Barrett, nevertheless, submits that the Greek word for the Hellenists has a dialectal and cultural implication and that of the Hebrews has no dialectal undertone¹⁶. To recapitulate and add up all these diverse opinions on the identities of the two groups in question, the Hellenists were plausible a community of the Diaspora Jews and the proselytes whose mutual ground was the Greek language, the lingua franca of the time and the knowledge of the Greek culture in addition to the Christian faith. The Hebrews were probable cosmopolitan while remaining religiously an unadulterated community of Palestine Jews who had a healthier knowledge of ceremonial laws and Jesus' teachings. This paves way for the

⁹ I. Howard Marshall, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries; Acts* (England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980), 134.

¹⁰ Dean, Flemming, *Contextualization in the New Testament: Patterns for Theology and Mission*. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 32.

¹¹ John Hargreaves, *A Guide to Acts* (London: SPCK, 1990), 59.

¹² C. Peter. Wagner, *Acts of the Holy Spirit* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal, 1994.), 137-138.

¹³ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts* (England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1990), 120.

¹⁴ Stott, 120.

¹⁵ J.G.D, Dunn., 'Christianity in the making', vol. 2, *Beginning from Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 246.

¹⁶ C. K, Barrett, 308.

subsequent logic of superiority over the former. Most scholars give the impression that the two concepts are to be demarcated as disparities. It is more likely that there were the Hellenists who moved back to Jerusalem for quite some time and assimilated into the majority of the society and that there were the Hebrews who were cosmopolitan while remaining religiously pure. I, therefore, think there was a spectrum of two conflicting blocs.

Marshall held that the panacea to the problem was the nomination of an innovative group of leaders to serve tables. While the verb ‘serve’ originates from the same root as the noun which is rendered into English as ‘deacon’, it is significant that Luke does not allude to the seven as deacons; their job had no official name. The premium of seven men paralleled to Jewish exercise in appointing boards of seven men for specific responsibilities¹⁷ John Stott reasons that the Twelve did not impose a solution on the church, nevertheless, but congregated all the followers together to involve them in decision-making to solve the problem with them¹⁸. Predisposed to the same line of thought as Marshall, Stott added, "this delegation of social welfare to the seven is commonly thought to have been the origin of the diaconate. It may be so, for the etymological of *diaconia* is used in verses 1

and 2, as we shall see later. Nevertheless, the Seven are not essentially termed *diakonoi*. The scrutiny of form criticism (*Formgeschichte*) of the passage and similarly the scholarly agreement now maintain that Luke did not designate the Seven *δηθνλνί* in Vv. 5f¹⁹. Tannehill maintains that there is a modification in Stephen’s duty for which “we are not prepared by Acts 6: 1-7” The Twelve distinguished palpably draw a difference between two kinds of service: serving tables (*δηθνλεῖλ ηξαπεδαθο*, 6: 2) and the service of word (*δηθνλνία ην ὃ ιόγνπ*, 6: 4). Stephen, selected to serve tables uses the spirit and wisdom not to coordinate charity, but to preach and perform miracles. Similarly, Philip selected to serve in the circulation of charity turned out to be a missionary²⁰ To wait on or to serve (ESV), “*διακονέω*”; to carry out official obligations, minister²¹. Acts 6:2 postures a distinct problem: care for, take care of. To look after tables can be branded as serving food at tables, but it is improbable that some widows would be denied food shared.

Undeniably, the scholars understand the meaning of Acts 6:1-7 from the original text and its setting in life (*Sitz im Leben*), signifying that there is a static denotation existing in the text²². Nevertheless, Acts 6:1-7 is construed by most scholars as pinpointing to the

¹⁷ Marshall, 135.

¹⁸ Stott, 121.

¹⁹ See for additional niceties, F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary*, 3rd (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1990), 182; Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 266.

²⁰ Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity in Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, vol.2: *The Acts of the Apostles* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 82.

²¹ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 229.

²² See Randolph W. Tate, *Handbook for Biblical Interpretation: An Essential Guide to Methods, Terms, and Concepts*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic Press, 2012), 197.

construction of the office of deacons, but some tread on the opposite path.

“Therefore, select from among you, brothers, seven men of good report, full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business” (v. 3). This solution is reminiscent of the story of Moses and Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law. When Jethro had observed that Moses was trying to handle everyone's problems, he recommended that Moses “represent the people before God” and “teach them the statutes and the laws, and ...show them how they must walk, and the work that they must do.” Then he suggested that Moses appoint “rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. Let them judge the people at all times. It shall be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they shall judge themselves” (Exodus 18:18-22). Moses took Jethro's advice, which made his work manageable.

Unyielding to restructuring, a chaotic nation could spur devastating consequences as was evident in Israel the Northern tribes could not have broken off that easily; but Rehoboam listened to the wrong advisor. He was a weak and insensitive leader with the wrong advisors. When Jeroboam came to Shechem for the coronation of Rehoboam (1 Kings 12), Rehoboam acted as a weak and indifferent leader. Rehoboam accepted Jeroboam as spokesperson instead of taking action against him as Solomon had attempted (1 Kings 11:26-40). He listened to Jeroboam and the

representatives from the ten tribes who requested him to reduce taxation (1 Kings 12:4). The old advisors were experienced men who had stood up to Solomon (1 Kings 12:6). They advised Rehoboam to accept the request of Jeroboam and the elders and reduce taxation. This would have been understood as a sign of goodwill. Instead, Rehoboam threatened to increase taxation and forced labour. This announcement was based on the advice of some young men, who had grown up with him and were dependent on the new regime²³. His answer devaluated the voice of the people. That caused the break off of the ten tribes: “When all Israel saw that the king would not listen to them, the people answered the king, ‘What share do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! Look now to your own house, O David.’ So, Israel went away to their tents” (1 Kings 12:16).

Challenges that Triggered Call for Restructuring in Nigeria

Historically, Nigeria is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-lingual state with a population of well over 200 million people and evidence of further population explosion. So naturally, there would be the crisis of partiality and flagrant nepotism, as was the case between the Hebraic and the Hellenistic Jews in Acts 6:1–3. But apart from overpopulation, Nigeria's major problem has been its pluralism. Ngele argues that ethnoreligious plurality has not been for the best safety of Nigeria as it has been the source

²³ R. D. Nelson, *First and Second Kings (Interpretation)*, (Louisville: John Knox, 1987) p.78; J. A. Soggin, *A History of Israel: from the Beginnings to*

the bar Kochba Revolt, AD 135. (London: SCM Press, 1984), 194.

of myriad conflicts. To admit this, the state is a mixture of people from diverse religious and ethnic upbringings, and thus the dispute for civil liberties and privileges is predictable²⁴. Ethnic groups are social formations renowned for the shared character of their borders, the applicable communal factors being language and culture. Ethnicity is ubiquitous and dominates the public life of the Nigerian federation. Mezieobi asserted that inter-ethnic rivalry, crises, aggressiveness, and suspicion are still prevalent, seem to have resisted any maintainable resolution and have mortified Nigeria here and in the global showground. Every ethnic gentleman in Nigeria sees people from the other ethnic clusters with jaundiced eyes, with suspicion in high pulse such that all inter-ethnic relations attract distrust and have an ethnic hint²⁵.

Ethnicity has ruined fairness because it permeates the national cognizance, as well as the accessibility of public offices, welfare, and support such that, whenever someone is given a position in public office it turns to a required prospect for members of his or her ethnic group to have right of entry to the nation's resources, or the so-called "the national cake". There is the forceful tussle by the various ethnic or cultural groups primarily the major ethnic groups such as the Hausa/Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba that make up the federation of Nigeria to commandeer power at the federal

level and to manipulate or manoeuvre such power for their ethnic profits instead of being a benefit for all members of the federation. Central governance is no longer a service to the people but an obligation to the accessibility of resource control and to amass wealth. minority ethnicities suffer subjugation and domination under the major ethnicities²⁶.

Obiora laments that the military intrusion into politics from 1966 to 1979 and also from 1983 to 1999 did not fare well for the federal prestige of the nation. The military customarily operates on a unified command structure being an institutional undemocratic regime with ahierarchical series of commands which debilitated the powers and autonomy of the constituent units and concerted power and resources at the federal level. This swapped a rightly federal structure with pseudo unitary structure, more for administrative and political manipulation than for the unity and comfort of the country²⁷. This unfair structure has persevered over the years, even during civilian governments, because it has seemingly benefited those ethnic nationalities that have monopolized the levels of power for a longer period. This coxed to over-centralization of power and resources in the federal government which is conceivably the furthestmost widely bemoaned feature of the Nigeria federal system at the moment.

²⁴ O.K. Ngele, 'Religion, politics and ethnicity: Challenges of pluralism in Nigerian development', *Bassey Andah Journal* 1, 177–190, (2008): 184.

²⁵ K. A Mezieobi, *Ethnicity in Nigeria: De-ethnicizing Road Map*. (Owerri, Priscilla Omana Publishers, 2014), 94.

²⁶ O. Nnoli, *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1980), 5.

²⁷ C.A. Obiora, "Federalism and Democratic Rule in Nigeria", being a chapter in E.A. Obi, et al., *Federalism and National Integration in Nigeria*. (Onitsha: Book Point Ltd, 2004): 52.

Religious tension, conflict and violence in Nigeria have continuously been instigated by the thoughtful influence of some powerful leaders such as the enforcement of Sharia Law and the unsubstantiated membership of the Organization of Islamic Conference by Nigeria (December 1985/January 1986) under the then Head of State, General Badamosi Babangida. Religious sentiments and undertakings have succeeded in thwarting the progress of federalism in Nigeria despite the fact, from independence hitherto, the Nigerian presidential election has retained Moslem/Christian steadiness to guarantee the safety of the multi-ethnic and plurality in Nigeria²⁸. The insecurity generated by Boko-Haram and Fulani herdsmen terrorists, Muslim/Christian crises, and the like is a vibrant rupture of the fundamental rights embedded in the Federal Constitution for instance: the right to freedom of religion and worship; right to life; and right to privacy²⁹. And such religious crises by fanatics have resulted in the loss of lives, displacements of people and destruction of properties worth billions of Naira. Islamization's agenda of going the extra mile to impose religion on people has already divided this nation.

A protuberant piece of the crisis in Nigerian federalism, consistent with the groundwork laid for the federation by the British Colonial masters emerged irrepressibly. Some communal groups have been exploited and suppressed by other dominant groups. Oil-producing communities are not given a fair share in the distribution of oil revenues and hence underdevelopment and pollution of such communities have deteriorated. The Niger Delta minority groups have been victims of this unfortunate incident. Various agitations have been carried out against the federal government in different phases as the oil-producing communities demand that ownership and management of these resources empower them to address the resultant magnitude of dilapidation and pollution of their environs³⁰. There have been tussles that have been pressing for the amendment of the Nigerian Constitution to review the ownership and control structure of the mineral resources in the country and the formula for sharing in the minerals wealth which will favour oil-producing areas³¹.

Nigeria as a failed state could be linked to leadership problems³², which Udogu traces to an unjust social structure under the present system in the country³³. Wilmot agrees with

²⁸M. C. Iwuchukwu. "Christianity and Nigeria's Ethical Development" *NACATUS Journal of African Theology I. Ibadan Claverianum*. 1 (3), (1990): 252-254.

²⁹ Section 37, 38, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999.

³⁰ G. G. Darah "The Niger Delta Manifesto", Paper presented for the Delta Peoples Academy Abraka Delta State, at the 3rd All Nigeria Socialist Conference, Benin City, (February 2003): 20-22.

³¹ D. Alameyeseigha "Oil Exploration and Youth Restiveness, the example of Balyelsa State", reported in *Tell Magazine* No. 16 (April 18, 2005): 13.

³² Chinua Achebe. *The trouble with Nigeria*. (Oxford: Heinemann Educational publishers, 1983), 1-5, 11.

³³ E. Udogu. *Nigeria in the 21st century: Strategies for political stability and peaceful co-existence*. (Eritrea: Africa World Press, 2005), 19-41.

Achebe's argument that the trouble with Nigeria is bad leadership. He contends that leadership in Nigeria is without ambition, vision, intelligence, competence and integrity³⁴. Regardless of huge revenue ensuing from oil exports, the economic and social decline in Nigeria continues to the extent that even with the fact of being one of Africa's highest producers of crude oil and the world's sixth-highest exporter of the product, the country is categorized by the United Nations as one of the poorest nations on earth. The majority of the citizens, mostly in the bucolic areas are penurious, while public infrastructure decay gradually and elementary amenities are out of the reach of the poor³⁵. Generally, the issue of social injustice in Nigeria has spawned so much worry and unease over the years due basically to the experiences of the citizens and the policies of the state which sporadically bring the country to the brink of disintegration. The citizens experience cases of class, social, economic, and political deprivation and marginalization, tribe discrimination and infringement on their human rights by some organs of the state; the ethnic nationalities complain of inequalities and unjust distribution of resources, while the state is largely blamed for totalitarianism, arbitrariness and alienation of citizens in the wheel of governance and the political process,

making it a kind of colonizing power³⁶. The problem of lack of freedom and access to political power and office by all citizens is similarly very common.

Agitations Birthing for Restructuring in Nigerian System of Governance

It is very useful to draw attention to the fact that even though the amalgamation of 1914 remains indubitably the most significant affair in Nigeria's colonial antiquity, it has constantly provoked antipathies from its various peoples who professed it as a nuisance by British imperial power³⁷. Tamuno argues that separatist tendencies in Nigeria are ascribed to the nation's diverse ethnic structure, cultural multiplicity, enormous scope... mixed administrative practices, provocative political and constitutional provisions... and the nonappearance of a strong philosophical attraction³⁸. The military dictatorship which governed Nigeria for the lengthiest period since post-colonial successfully repressed these propensities through barefaced power without inevitably annihilating them. Nevertheless, the advent of democratic rule since May 29, 1999, has perceived a rebirth of separatist agitations which have divided the federation along ethnic, regional and religious lines hence

³⁴ K. Wilmot, "Nigeria must Throw out Bad Leaders". *Guardian Newspaper. Sahara Reporters*, (2006). <http://174.143.70.125/interview-political/450-qnigeria-must-throw-out-bad-leaders-patrick-wilmot.html>.

³⁵ K. Nwajiaku- Dahou, *The Political Economy of Oil and Ethnic National in Nigeria's Niger Delta*. Unpublished Paper presented at "Celebrating Gavin Williams" Programme at the University of Oxford (9-10 July 2010).

³⁶ J. Moda, *Micro-analysis of Nigeria democracy: Anniversary imprecations*. Vanguard newspaper

9/8/2008. <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2009/09/08/title-3>.

³⁷ Sir Bernard Bourdillon and Richmond Palmer, "Nigerian Constitutional Proposals" (1945) *African Affairs* 120, 123-4.

³⁸ Tekena N. Tamuno, "Separatist Agitations in Nigeria since 1914" (1970) 8 (4) *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 563, 564.

backing up the opinion articulated by Emerson that the initiation of democratic establishments may occasionally heighten existing ethnic dissections in ethnically unglued polities³⁹.

Rising insecurity in Nigeria seems to be firming up autonomy movements across the country and diverse cultural nationalities are utterly agitating for self-government frightening the corporate survival of the state. Primarily, in January 2020, the Indigenous People of Biafra, (IPOB), a group agitating for the freedom of the Igbos in Eastern Nigeria, established an armed security component termed Eastern Security Network (ESN). The goal of the outfit is to repel equipped Fulani herders, who are repeatedly responsible for attacking farmers and indulging in felonious acts in the area. Moreover, Yoruba separatist groups have been calling for the formation of a self-governing state labelled the Oduduwa Republic ensuing unrestrained assault and absolute attacks on Yoruba land by Fulanis from Northern Nigeria⁴⁰. 'Mass Atrocities Report 2020' through the Country Director, Abiodun Baiyewu declared that the people are upset with the set of circumstances throughout the year, specifically in October 2020, which was publicized during the End SARS crusade, which was "not just about police brutality, but about insecurity, and social injustice. It was a

cry for good governance starting with one theme⁴¹

While federalism has been experienced in Nigeria over the years, the campaigning for restructuring to accomplish resource control or "true federalism" as well as separation is not a new sensation in the country's political history.⁴² Almost all parts of Nigeria are not contented and gratified with the contemporaneous federal procedure. Customarily established is that the central and the other constituents of the federation of Nigeria profoundly depend on revenue allocation from the federation account with a bigger percentage coming from the oil revenues. Within the framework of the political economy of oil in Nigeria's federation, the issue of control which is portrayed as "resource control" is not unanticipated⁴³.

Considering the gravity of a threatened unity, it has become very imperative to reassess the challenges of political restructuring with a vision to reevaluate what prospects existing demands have to obviate a conceivable reaction to Nigeria's communal survival.

It is necessary at this juncture to reiterate that the agitations by concerned Nigerians for a restructuring of the polity have had a fairly

³⁹ Rupert Emerson, *From Empire to Nation: The Rise to Self-Assertion of Asian and African Peoples* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1960), 222.

⁴⁰ Sunday Aniochi Chiemiwo, Ngozi C. Ewuim and Zayum Solomon Sumumma. "Effect of Growing Insecurity on Agitation for Self-determination in South-Western Nigeria", *Nigerian Journal of Social Development*, 10, 1 (2021): 18.

⁴¹ Chiemiwo, Ewuim and Sumumma, 17.

⁴² O. Awofeso. Secessionist movements and the national question in Nigeria, *IJRDO Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research*, 2, 7 (2017): 35–55.

⁴³ S. U Chijioke, Innocent, E.O &, I.E.J. Emeh, "Issues in Nigerian Fiscal federalism: The relationship between the Principle of Derivation and Resource Control", *Kuwait Chapter of Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review*, 1, 5 (2012): 54-72.

long history. It started under the euphemistic demands for a “Sovereign National Conference” which the protagonists believed will logically lead to a restructuring of the country. According to Olorode, the need for a sovereign national conference was unwittingly ignited through the Major Gideon Orkar⁴⁴ ill-fated coup d'état of April 21, 1990, where he averred in the radio broadcast announcing the putsch that some states have been excised from the federation for being too powerful. Though the coup failed with the coup plotters rounded up and executed by the General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida administration, by the time the dust settled, other patriotic elements took a cue from it, formed the National Consultative Forum led by late attorney, Alao Aka-Bashorun and attempted to hold a sovereign national conference on 6th September 1990, which was again thwarted by the Babangida regime. However, it is demonstrated obviously that by 5th December 1992 when the late Chief Anthony Enahoro launched his Movement for National Reformation and went ahead to re-ignite the call for a sovereign national conference in which the main agenda will be on how to “restructure the Nigerian federation” the imperative for restructuring had become quite necessary and glaring.⁴⁵

Innovative Ways to Nigeria's Future

Nigeria as a multi-Ethno-religious state with inhabitants of well over 200 million people and

a consistent increase in population has been exposed to the problem of marginalization, prejudice and barefaced favouritism, as was the situation between the Hebraic and the Hellenistic Jews. This is because Nigeria is dancing to Lugard's tune or mechanism. Henceforth, to maintain the unity of the nation and be wholly efficient, a new constitution must be invented in which the ethnic and religious multiplicity must be branded and valued. Preferably, a return to the 1922 Constitution, which permitted more representation of Nigerians than there were in the Nigerian council. In Acts 6:1–3, the apostles, who were all Hebraic Jews, succumb to pressure by enabling the devolution of powers to balance the equation. The swift Apostolic approach to restructuring their system by devolution of responsibilities should serve as a model for panacea in the Nigerian milieu. This, when done, will reduce the tension at the Federal level that is triggered by the scramble for political power to rheostat the state's natural and mineral resources.

“Seek out from among you”: The apostles spoke to the general group of believers and followed the solution with loads of brainstorming and contribution from among the people. The final decision rested with the apostles but they even requested especially those who felt maltreated to recommend men of good character to do this work. The Twelve prudently required and cherished the involvement of the congregation. This was a

⁴⁴ See details on revolutionary agitation in Abel AorInyaregh, *The Message of Amos to Israelites on Justice and Righteousness: The Relevance to Contemporary Nigerian Experience* (Makurdi: Business Oracle 2011), 91.

⁴⁵C. Osakwe, C., & E. P. Habib. “The sovereign National Conference; Appraising the Contending Issues”. In V. Egwemi, J. Wuam and C. Orngu (Eds.), *Federalism, Politics and Minorities in Nigeria: Essays in Honour of Professor G.N Hembe* (Lagos: Bahiti and Delila, 2014): 563-578.

delightful mode to solve the problem. They didn't throw out the protestors nor divide into two congregations. Instead, they delegated and brought more people into doing the work of ministry. Giving attention to unmet requests is an inordinate way to bring more people into ministry. The criteria of leadership prefer people of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom': This can be a hard recipe to find. The qualifications labelled by the apostles fixated on the *character* of the men to be chosen. The apostles were far more concerned with the internal superiority of the men than their external appearance or image. Seven men were to be chosen 'to serve tables. It was a simple, practical service that they are appointed to; yet the criteria state that they must be well competent in a spiritual sense, particularly because of the threat of division. Thus, men need to be of good reputation. They had to be men the church trusted.

To avoid 'to your tents O Israel,' Nigeria should adopt the Apostolic model of calling people to a round table discussion. Nigeria should go the way of Apostles to ensure a sincere constitutional amendment that will truly replicate the secular nature of the Nigerian State and the wishes of the federating units to safeguard peaceful co-existence in a heterogeneous state like Nigeria. Nigeria should be restructured and power should not only rotate among the major ethnic groups but slots should be given to minority groups. This will address the political, religious and other

social-economic issues that are threatening the peace of Nigerians.

Nigeria should address the issue of resource control and marginalization. All geo-political zones should be treated fairly in terms of development, appointments and employment. Neutrality is anticipated in any multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious nation like Nigeria. The roles of the protection of lives and properties of the citizens should be decentralised to reflect a true federal democracy in a federal system of government. Nigeria should uphold the constitutional devolution of powers to establish, organize, maintain and control the police by sub-national units making up the Nigerian federation. Just as the Jerusalem council, Nigeria in a democratic setting should emulate the practice of electing and appointing people into governance; those who are well qualified, God-fearing and full of wisdom to salvage the menace. As a last resort, Nigeria should be restructured under six regions and hence revert to true federalism. Agitators for good governance should not be declared insurgents but be invited to a round table discussion to address grievances as the Twelve did.

Conclusion

Bosch states that evil is not only in the human heart but also in social structures⁴⁶. The Nigerian system of governance is bedevilled with tribalism, corruption, bad leadership, monopoly of power by major ethnicities and lack of patriotism; issues such as mediocrity,

⁴⁶D. J. Bosh. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Book, 1991), 407.

fraud in public offices, nepotism, political marginalization, economic deprivation, and environmental degradation. As a result, the significant issue virtually frightening the corporate existence of the country is the revolutionary agitations prompting restructuring as the centre can no longer hold. Politicians in government acquire power for

personal aggrandizement, act arbitrarily, and make unfair public rules while the people are deprived of necessities, social-services and die in poverty and disease. There is an urgent need to transform Nigeria, adopt a new form of leadership and restructure the federal system presently in practice.

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