

TACKLING POVERTY: A REQUIREMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The existence of abject poverty in Nigeria in spite of its abundant human and natural resources is challenging. This West African country has the required potentials to transform into a world economic power. In recent times, Nigeria was named world poverty headquarters and that over 133 million of its citizens are multidimensionally poor. These realities can hardly guarantee sustainable peace and development. Report from World Bank titled, “Nigeria Poverty Assessment”; and from National Bureau of Statistics entitled, “2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)”² support the above claims. Nevertheless, all is not doom for the country. As the Chinese did in the past,³ Nigerians can equally rescue their country by tackling the current poverty situation. This article seeks from the perspective of social ethics to offer suggestions to Nigerian leaders, the elite, and ordinary citizens on how to eradicate the abject poverty which has brought untold hardship, crimes, violence, destitution, and deaths across the country.

Key Words: Poverty, Social Justice, Injustice, Nigeria, Political Class, Economic Injustice, Liberation, Morality, Citizens, Government, Multi-dimensional Poverty, Common Good, Oppressed, Violence, and Solidarity.

Introduction

The fact that some persons are wealthier than others seems not to be a serious moral justice issue. Nonetheless, a problem arises when there is abject poverty and superfluous wealth in the same society. When few citizens live in prosperity and millions of others lack basic necessities of life, then the question of social justice must come to mind. The existence of poverty in Nigeria is undeniable. Majority of families across the country are affected by this menace. In this country, there are citizens who were born in poverty-stricken circumstances, grew up in them, and are probably still living in them. Interestingly, there is a saying that Nigerians have nothing to do with poverty, since their country is rich in natural resources. This sounds nice; but the daily life experience of an average Nigerian contradicts this opinion. Is Nigeria really a wealthy country? Why the extreme poverty amidst plenty natural resources in the land? In fact what is poverty?

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² <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/03/21/afw-deep-structural-reforms-guided-by-evidence-are-urgently-needed-to-lift-millions-of-nigerians-out-of-poverty> & <https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/news/78> (accessed on 05/06/2024).

³ <https://americanaffairsjournal.org/2022/02/how-china-defeated-poverty> (accessed on 05/06/2024).

Tackling poverty in Nigeria is the problem of this study; its significance is to enhance sustainable peace and development in the country. The method of the study is descriptive and analytic.

Poverty

In our modern world, prosperity and poverty exist side-by-side. This cuts across all the continents of the world. But while some countries are determined to breach the gap between the well-off and the poor, others are yet to find the political will to do so. Perhaps, poor economic policies of governments; or greed; or scarce resources are other factors.

The fact that needs, culture, and historical realities are not the same in all countries of the world makes it difficult to have one acceptable definition of poverty. *Fratelli Tutti* acknowledges this difficulty: “In other times, for example, lack of access to electric energy was not considered a sign of poverty, nor was it a source of hardship.” Therefore, “Poverty must always be understood and gauged in the context of the actual opportunities available in each concrete historical period.”⁴ In spite of the definitional challenge, Jeremy Waldron argues that poverty may be understood

“as a long-term predicament that requires members of a given household to repeatedly make hard choices between satisfying various needs for one or more of their members (shelter or minimally nutritious food but not both; or basic medical care or shelter, but not both; or medical care, shelter, and minimally nutritious food, but not adequate clothing, and so on).”⁵

Poverty relates to a situation of injustice which manifests in different ways. According to Social Teaching of the Church, “poverty is characterized by an unequal growth that does not recognize the equal right of all people to take their seat at the table of the common banquet.”⁶ As a result, those citizens who are affected are hindered from attaining their goals as human beings. Denied their right to participate at the banquet of the common good, the poor are marginalized and made to live in suffering and pain. The denial of this inalienable right is often the work of the powerful in society who no longer want to listen to the voice of conscience which calls everyone to do good and avoid evil. A morally good conscience calls people to care for one another and enhance commutative justice in society. Without listening to conscience, the powerful may become exploiters of ordinary people. Derecka Purnell laments that “Exploitation creates poor people, who

⁴ Fratelli Tutti, n.21.

⁵ Jeremy Waldron, “Property Rights and Welfare Redistribution,” in *A Companion to Applied Ethics*, eds. R.G. Frey & Wellman Christopher Heath (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2005), 38.

⁶ Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2004), n.449.

are then more easily exploitable again when they seek basic services like legal representation.”⁷ In this way the poor become more like objects to their exploiters.

With the enormous potentials in every human being, poverty can be reduced or eradicated. However, this is achievable only if everyone gets the right opportunity at the right time and uses it properly. Poverty in Nigeria is not unconnected with poor resource-management by leaders. This may be likened to George Orwell’s play in *Animal Farm*:

“Is it because this land of ours is so poor that it cannot afford a decent life to those who dwell upon it? No, comrades, a thousand times no! The soil of **Nigeria** is fertile, its climate is good, it is capable of affording food in abundance to an enormously greater number of **persons** than now inhabit it... Why then do we continue in this miserable condition? Because nearly the whole of the produce of our labour is stolen from us by **our leaders**. There, comrades is the answer to all our problems. It is summed up in a single word – **leadership**.”⁸

Economic deprivations do not happen by accident. Often they are planned and executed by the powerful in society. “Poverty does not grow from the ground.”⁹

Cause(s) of Poverty

It is not uncommon knowledge to many Nigerians that poverty in the country is caused not by scarcity of resources, but rather by personal and structural injustices due to weak institutions. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala affirms, “Nigeria’s natural resource wealth has not served its population as well as it should because certain key institutions remain weak or non-existent and a small kleptocratic ruling elite has perpetuated and taken advantage of this vacuum.”¹⁰ Many public servants continue to betray the trust reposed on them through acts of stealing, embezzlement, and mismanagement of common goods. These corrupt practices have been going on since Nigeria’s independence in 1960. The World Bank reports that in four decades about \$400 billion was looted from Nigerian treasury by its ruling class.¹¹ General Sani Abacha alone reportedly stole about \$4 billion.¹² In Achebe’s words, “This theft of national funds is one of the factors essentially making

⁷ Derecka Purnell, *Becoming Abolitionists* (New York: Astra House, 2021), 137.

⁸ George Orwell, *Animal Farm* (Varna: Pretorian Media GmbH, 2021), p.6. Adaptation: ‘Nigeria’ replaces ‘England’; ‘persons’ replaces ‘animals’; ‘our leaders’ replaces ‘human beings’; and ‘leadership’ replaces ‘man’

⁹ Purnell, *Becoming Abolitionists*, 141.

¹⁰ Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, *Fighting Corruption is Dangerous* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2018), xvii.

¹¹ Chinua Achebe, *There Was a Country* (New York: Penguin Books, 2013), 249.

¹² Susan Rose-Ackerman & Bonnie J. Palifka, *Corruption and Government* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 514–514.

it impossible for Nigeria to succeed.”¹³ Pope Paul VI expresses concern on the suffering brought on ordinary people by the powerful: “In certain regions a privileged minority enjoys the refinements of life, while the rest of the inhabitants, impoverished and disunited, are deprived of almost all possibility of acting on their own initiative and responsibility, and often subsist in living and working conditions unworthy of the human person.”¹⁴

Poverty and Violence

Poverty leads to violence, and violence creates poverty. It is probably difficult to convince many Nigerians that the violent conflicts the country has experienced in the last two decades are unconnected to poverty. Managerial inefficiency of both human and natural resources is largely responsible for the poverty and conflicts. In many instances the powerful exploit ordinary citizens for their personal aggrandizement. But Martin Luther King Jr. warns on the danger of exploiting a people, “As long as people are ignored, as long as they are voiceless, as long as they are trampled by the iron feet of exploitation, there is the danger that they, like little children, will have their emotional outbursts which will break out into violence in the streets.”¹⁵ The danger observed by Luther is avoidable if leaders are determined to manage public resources justly.

For sustainable peace and development, the primary causes of poverty and violence must be properly addressed. Government must deal decisively with the abject poverty bedeviling all the regions of the country. It must not be forgotten that these regions are in ways interconnected. *Spe Salvi* exhorts, “Our lives are involved with one another; through innumerable interactions they are linked together. No one lives alone. No one sins alone. No one is saved alone. The lives of others continually spill over into mine: in what I think, say, do and achieve. And conversely, my life spills over into that of others: for better and for worse.”¹⁶ Patriotic citizens, therefore, need to stand together in calling on authorities to end poverty and violence in Nigeria.

Solidarity

The principle of solidarity is important in the fight against poverty. Those who hold political, economic, and religious power need to exercise their authority in good conscience without which compassion and justice (key drivers of human development) may not function. Concerning this, Pope Benedict XVI admonishes, “While the poor of the world continue knocking on the doors of

¹³ Achebe, *There Was a Country*, 249.

¹⁴ *Populorum Progressio*, n.9.

¹⁵ Martin Luther King Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2010), 120.

¹⁶ *Spe Salvi*, n.48.

the rich, the world affluence runs the risk of no longer hearing those knocks, on the account of a conscience that can no longer distinguish what is human.”¹⁷

Catholic Social Teaching sees solidarity as a call to be Christ-like in recognizing, identifying, and standing with the less privileged in society especially victims of social injustice. This entails literally coming into physical contact with the poor to see and experience life from their own perspective. For without such contacts someone cannot but refer to the poor as ‘them’ – the object of one’s own sympathy.¹⁸ Through solidarity victims of injustice may gradually come to accept a would-be-reformer as someone who shares their interest, namely liberation. In the words of Donal Dorr, “Solidarity involves shared understanding and values, leading to shared commitment”¹⁹ which aims at inspiring hope in the marginalized through works of compassion and generosity. Compassion and generosity are important because life for many oppressed people is characterized by feelings of alienation, anger, rejection, pain, fear and anxiety. In identifying with them, concerted effort should be made to empower them so that they become agents of transformation in society.²⁰ Since justice is the foundation of solidarity, it is necessary to listen to victims of injustice and their alleged oppressors if reconciliation is to be achieved. Anger against persons or structures responsible for poverty must be channeled towards achieving justice and not revenge. Standing with victims of oppression involves risk. In some quarters those who identify with them and advance their cause are misunderstood as promoters of violence. It is so because many oppressors would not like to relinquish their acquired privileges. Hence *Fratelli Tutti* exhorts, “Solidarity is a word that is not always well received; in certain situations, it has become a dirty word, a word that dare not be said. Solidarity means much more than engaging in some acts of generosity. It means thinking and acting in terms of community. It means that the lives of all are prior to the appropriation of goods by a few.”²¹

In the spirit of solidarity the Church in Nigeria needs to provide citizens with social analysis of the situation of things in the country. This is important because many people look up to her in good and bad times. Social analysis helps the oppressed understand the structures responsible for their agony as well as encourages them to work for liberation. As a crusader of social justice, a mother

¹⁷ Caritas in Veritate, n.75.

¹⁸ Donal Dorr, *The Social Justice Agenda: Justice, Ecology, Power and the Church* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd, 1991), 110.

¹⁹ Ibid., 173.

²⁰ Ibid., 174.

²¹ Fratelli Tutti, n.116.

and teacher, the Church has a duty to educate Nigerians that the crimes in the country and the suffering they are passing through is not punishment from God but consequences of poor political leadership. Quoting George Jackson, D. Purnell argues that “Criminals and crime arise from material, economic, and sociopolitical causes.”²² Perhaps Chinua Achebe meant the same thing when he asserts that “Economic deprivation and corruption produce and exacerbate financial and social inequities in a population, which in turn fuel political instability.”²³

The pretext that God shall fix Nigeria’s socio-economic problems has no place in Christian theistic belief. Men must learn to take responsibility of things within their power, because so far no country in the world has overcome injustice, corruption, poverty, and other social ills through prayers only. Doing the right things in life is the first step in prayer. In Catholic Christian spirituality, hard work goes hand-in-hand with prayers – *laborare est orare*. Social justice is an integral part of the Gospel of Jesus and the surest way to fruitful spiritual life. Aware of this fact the Church declares, “When we fight poverty and oppose unfair conditions of the present, we are not just promoting human well-being; we are furthering man’s spiritual and moral development, and hence we are benefitting the whole human race.”²⁴

Citizens who seek for social justice need to be encouraged to rise above fear of physical harm, intra-group marginalization and threat of material deprivation by the powerful in society. It is high time bridges of mutual trust were built across all cultures, regions, and beliefs in Nigeria. Patriotic citizens therefore, need to differentiate between “bonding trust in in-groups (i.e. related and familiar others) and bridging trust in out-groups (i.e. unrelated and dissimilar others).”²⁵

Tackling Poverty

In order to tackle the multidimensional poverty in the land, it is important to ask the question, “How did we get here?” This may help guard against two errors namely: rewarding poverty caused by laziness and placing unnecessary moral burden on people’s legitimate wealth. Poverty caused by injustice, or reckless economic policies of government should be ethically interrogated and the common good redistributed. Although many beneficiaries of structural injustice may resist attempts to redistribute the commonwealth, government has an obligation to make sure it is done.

²² Purnell, *Becoming Abolitionists*, 115.

²³ Achebe, *There Was a Country*, 250.

²⁴ Populorum Progressio, n.76.

²⁵ Christian Welzel and Ronald Inglehart, “Political Culture,” in *Comparative Politics* 6th ed., ed. Daniele Caramani (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 322.

Concerning redistribution of common good, J. Waldron recommends two methods. Firstly is the provision of certain services and opportunities to citizenry, for instance free education and healthcare. Secondly is support in form of income (cash or kind) to those in abject poverty.²⁶ While these are laudable economic strategies, their efficacy in a country without a functional data-based system is only probable. Perhaps the corruption allegation against Nigeria's Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation in January 2024 points to the above assertion.²⁷ For effective wealth distribution, a transparent tax system is required. Tax-payers in Nigeria need to be patriotic in fulfilling their obligation to government. On the other hand, institutions and agencies of government must ensure that tax payers and all Nigerians get quality social services.

In another development, tackling abject poverty involves curtailing wastage, preventing theft, redirecting the flow of resources and creating opportunities for sustainable economic production. In the words of Waldron, "We must develop principles of acquisition that respect each person's fundamental right to derive sustenance from this world that is our common heritage."²⁸

The processes of tackling poverty must be completely devoid of violence. The oppressed must resist the temptation of using violent means to express their frustrations and anger. Instead, they should support government efforts in fighting poverty. *Fratelli Tutti* exhorts that "Violent public demonstrations, on one side or the other, do not help in finding solutions."²⁹ Cooperation among citizens, regardless of differences, will assist in bringing the desired results. Regarding this, Desmond Tutu writes, "We are sisters and brothers of one another whether we like it or not and each one of us is a precious individual. It does not depend on things such as ethnicity, gender, political, social, economic, or educational status – which are all extrinsic."³⁰

Dismantling structures of injustice responsible for poverty requires thoughtful resilient effort. Active nonviolent resistance is probably the best method for confronting such structures. This is inspired by Jesus' life and teaching. While on earth, he neither endorsed violence nor shied away from telling truth to powers. Similarly, the Church, the body of Christ, has a vital role to play in the struggle for the emancipation of the oppressed. *Redemptoris Missio* expresses the Church's role, "It is not the Church's mission to work directly on the economic, technical or political levels,

²⁶ Waldron, "Property Rights and Welfare Redistribution," 39.

²⁷ <https://www.arise.tv/pdp-alleged-n44bn-fraud-by-betta-edu-is-a-tip-of-the-iceberg/> (accessed on 07/04/2024).

²⁸ Waldron, "Property Rights and Welfare Redistribution," 46.

²⁹ Fratelli Tutti, n.232.

³⁰ Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 196–197.

or to contribute materially to development. Rather, her mission consists essentially in offering people an opportunity not to ‘have more’ but to ‘be more’, by awakening their consciences through the Gospel.”³¹ The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria (CBCN), therefore, needs to continue to challenge political leaders to govern in truth and justice.

Politics and Morality

Like a double-edged sword politics is capable of building or destroying society. This depends on how politicians utilize power in advancing and managing competing interests and ideologies. To ensure social justice in society, morality must not be severed from politics. It is importantly so because politics involves decision-makings which always have consequences. For ordinary citizens, the essential task of politics is to create a just society where all are equal before the law in terms of duties and rights.³² This can be achieved in many ways including citizens’ free participation in elections and governance. Cicero’s expression “freedom is participation in power,”³³ quoted by Luther supports this.

Without morality politics may degenerate into an art of manipulation. Consequently political brigandage and social instability might be enthroned. The past two decades of democracy in Nigeria were characterized by these challenges. As a result, our National Dailies were characterized by traumatizing headlines of kidnappings for ransom, killings, assassinations, vandalism, arson etc. Regrettably, these crises claimed lives and properties, and further pushed many into extreme poverty.

It is high time leaders understood that governance is a vocation to sacrifice, service, and deep responsibility.³⁴ Government needs to be determined in eradicating poverty and creating wealth. In addition, there is an urgent need to rekindle the dying flame of hope in the hearts’ of suffering Nigerians. To achieve this, government will need to pay more attention on local issues and content than on IMF’s or World Bank’s recommendations, except if they are in line with Nigerian vision. Any policy which shall not enhance the social welfare of citizens must not be prioritized by government. Political decisions should lead to the attainment of certain goals³⁵ such as social

³¹ Redemptoris Missio, n.58.

³² Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria, *The Struggle Against Corruption* (Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, 2015), 15.

³³ Luther, *Where Do We Go from Here*, 55.

³⁴ Orwell, *Animal Farm*, 32.

³⁵ Cailin O’connor and James Owen Weatherall, *The Misinformation Age* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2019), 71.

justice and peace. Pope Francis draws the attention of politicians to the fact that social peace is more important than popularity. He challenges them to ask themselves the following questions as they think of the future: “Why am I doing this? What is my real aim?” With regard to the past, Francis calls them not to reflect on the following questions: “How many endorsed me? How many had a positive image of me?”³⁶ Rather,

“The real, and potentially painful, questions will be, How much love did I put in my work? What did I do for the progress of our people? What mark did I leave on the life of society? What real bonds did I create? What positive forces did I unleash? How much social peace did I sow? What good did I achieve in the position that was entrusted to me?”³⁷

‘Let the poor breathe’ is a slogan of the current Federal Government of Nigeria. It is interesting to know that the political class is not unaware of the plight of ordinary citizens. Letting the poor breathe is much more than sharing palliatives. Poverty cannot be eradicated or wealth created by distribution of foodstuff. End the insecurity and structural corruption, strengthen distributive and social justice, and Nigerians will breathe again. Possibly China offers an example in this direction: “In concrete terms, China lifted people out of poverty first and foremost by identifying and reducing the barriers preventing people from enriching themselves, rather than merely giving handouts—in short, by following the ancient adage, ‘Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.’”³⁸

Worthy of commendation are social justice activists who argue that “dropping extra coins in the poor box does nothing to challenge systemic injustice and the growing gap between rich and poor.”³⁹ This is not to underrate the importance of charity or almsgiving. Although helpful, almsgiving alone cannot address the problem of multidimensional poverty in Nigeria. Justice is a necessary requirement in this project. Pope Pius XI insists that “charity does not replace justice.”⁴⁰ If strengthened, distributive justice will ensure responsible allocation of common goods (such as food, electricity, water, healthcare, access to education etc.) to all citizens. But this is not aimed at creating equality in wealth among citizens but rather a striking-balance between the extremes: under-development and super-development. The goal is to ensure a good living standard for all.

³⁶ Fratelli Tutti, n.197.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ <https://americanaffairsjournal.org/2022/02/how-china-defeated-poverty> (accessed on 05/06/2024)

³⁹ David Matzko McCarthy, “Catholic Social Teaching,” in *Oxford Handbook of Catholic Theology*, eds. Lewis Ayres and Medi Ann Volpe, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 444.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 446.

Politics without commitment to moral principles is partly responsible for hate speech, political violence, electoral fraud, extremism and polarization in the system. Extremism and polarization is an ugly situation in which “political life no longer has to do with healthy debates about long-term plans to improve people’s lives and to advance the common good, but only with slick marketing techniques primarily aimed at discrediting others.”⁴¹ Unfortunately this often leads to violence. But must someone instigate violence in order to become a leader? It is unacceptable that to access leadership positions people will instigate violence by weaponizing ethnicity and religion. This must not be allowed to continue. Elections should unite and not polarize citizens. Against the abuse of politics and religion, Jonathan Sacks insists that “Terror, the killing of the innocent and the sacrifice of human life in pursuit of political ends are not mere crimes. They are sacrilege. Those who murder God’s image in God’s name commit a double sacrilege.”⁴²

To correct the above anomaly, Civil Society Organizations have to play important roles. These organizations must never fall asleep before, during, and after elections. Through orientations they should continually enlighten and encourage citizens to take active part in governance and nation-building. The orientations should reach citizens in cities and rural communities alike. The duty of Civil Society Organizations continues inasmuch as there is government in power. Matthew H. Kukah thinks in this direction,

Arriving at the promised land is not the same as taking it over. Taking it over is not an end, but a means to establishing a land of justice and peace. This is the nature of our project. We must be under no illusion. Though democracy is desirable today, it is not a cure-all drug to be administered to us. It is not an end in itself, but only a means to self and national actualization of our God-given potentials.⁴³

The ‘do-or-die’ syndrome in our landscape is against the ethics of democracy. Politicians should imbibe the virtues of prudence, respect, and tolerance. It is common sense that winning and losing are integral parts of democratic elections. Winners should thus learn to be humble and magnanimous in victory; and losers should be gallant in accepting defeat. Above all, the common good must be the concern of both sides. Gallantry in losing and magnanimity in victory are the foundation stones of democracy.⁴⁴ Concerning the matter above, Walzer admonishes, “Even more

⁴¹ Fratelli Tutti, n.15.

⁴² Jonathan Sacks *Not in God’s Name: Confronting Religious Violence* (New York: Schocken Books, 2015), 202.

⁴³ Matthew Hassan Kukah, *Democracy and Civil Society in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd, 2007), 36.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

important, it would not be legitimate if, having won, the winners used their unequal power to cut off the voting and participation rights of the losing side. They can rightly say: because we argued and organized, persuaded the assembly or carried the election, we shall rule over you. But it would be tyrannical to say we shall rule over you forever.”⁴⁵ Such political insensitivity is capable of creating tension between political parties. And in the words of Kukah it may make “those who win spend so much time, energy and resources building barricades to defend their newly conquered fiefdoms that by the time the electoral wheel turns, the gap between them and their losers/enemies becomes insurmountable.”⁴⁶

Since governance concerns national development and not a political party’s affairs, it is morally wise for government in power to welcome constructive criticisms from opposition parties. This is one way of nurturing democracy. Those in power need not reject positive contributions coming from their opponents. On the other hand, opposition parties must avoid creating difficulties for government in the name of politics. Their criticisms should help government perform effectively in order to deliver good governance. In view of this, Senator Ibrahim Shekarau says, “Our opposition is not a blind opposition; when you do good we commend you; but if you do wrong, we shall criticize you. What we want is good governance in Nigeria, even if you are from *Shaitan*’s party.”⁴⁷

Conclusion: Fighting poverty is fighting crime.⁴⁸ This may be carried out by preventing the unlawful concentration of resources in the hands of few, as well as initiating economic programmes to empower the poor. Certainly infrastructure such as roads, railways, bridges, flyovers etc. are laudable, but they are not the yardstick for measuring sustainable peace and development. Citizens’ existential needs come first; and they are fruits of social justice. The availability and affordability of existential needs create positive impact on security which is key to sustainable peace and development. Government must therefore take its primary duty, “the security and welfare of the people,”⁴⁹ serious.

In tackling poverty, the culture of transparency and accountability in public and private life must be promoted. This means strengthening public institutions so that they function efficiently. In

⁴⁵ Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defeat of Pluralism and Equality* (USA: Basic Books, 1983), 309–310.

⁴⁶ Kukah, *Democracy and Civil Society in Nigeria*, 4.

⁴⁷ Senator Ibrahim Shekarau on “Politics Today,” <https://www.channelstv.com/live/> 09/01/2024 (*Shaitan* is the Hausa word for Satan).

⁴⁸ Purnell, *Becoming Abolitionists*, 193.

⁴⁹ The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Section 14 (2b).

addition, citizens will need to place patriotism above personal or group interests. This is important because when private or group interests become the primary focus for satisfying people's socio-economic needs, loyalties and allegiance will remain in that direction;⁵⁰ and this may not foster national unity, peace, and sustainable development.

In conclusion, agents responsible for structures of injustice need to listen to what the author of the book of Sirach says: "The bread of the needy is the life of the poor; whoever deprives them of it is a man of blood. To take away a neighbor's living is to murder him; to deprive an employee of his wages is to shed blood."⁵¹

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⁵⁰ Georg Sørensen, "Globalization and the Nation State," in *Comparative Politics* 6th ed., ed. Daniele Caramani (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 468.

⁵¹ Sirach 34:21–22 (The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition).

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