

Nigeria's Post-Amalgamation Volatility: Are the God's to Blame?

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Abstract

Nigeria appears fated to a volatile existence. It is apparently under the curse of centrifugal forces. While some scholars like Ola Rotimi argue that the 'Gods' are not to blame for the persistence of this violent existence, others like Wole Soyinka find the 'Gods' solely culpable. This article revisits this debate with the objective of offering hope that Nigeria is not necessarily fated to volatility. Yet we must confront ourselves with hard questions. Can there be justice that heals a divided nation where there are clashes of narratives about Nigeria's existence? How courageous are we in confronting our past, especially the truth about ourselves and groups to which we have 'primordial ties'? The article concludes by offering, through the perspective of the Human Rights Violation and Investigation Commission Report, some ways beyond the culture of impunity that has made developing national consciousness almost impossible even after a century of Nigeria's existence.

1. Introduction

There are several suggestions for Nigeria's volatility (Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission, May 2002; Kirk-Greene, 1971a, 1971b; Korieh & Nwokeji, 2005; Okpaku, 1972; Suberu, 2001; Uwazie, Albert, & Uzoigwe, 1999). The suggestions range from the political to the cultural; from the economic factors to the religious ones; from the historical to post-colonial effects; from the patrimonial tendencies in the groups that make up the Nigerian state to effects of the globalising economy. This contribution, however, argues and shall substantiate that Nigeria's post-amalgamation tragic past has not passed. It is mutating in several protracted domestic conflicts due to a perversion of memory based on some sense of 'primordial' ties. For memory perversion mixed with toxic emotions engenders twisted values motivating unethical behaviours (Aina, June

2013). We shall revisit Nigeria's volatility structured around the role of the 'gods' of Nigeria's past and the (im)possibility of peaceful coexistence and reconciliation among Nigerian peoples.

2. All things pass, except the past

Huyse (2009) argues that in dealing with a horrendous past, justice should not be hurried. It must involve a reasonable balancing of fundamental values dear to the parties which should not be played against one another. As we pay attention to victims' traumas, we should pay attention to perpetrators' fears which led them to abominable atrocities. Parties' history of survivorhood is as important as contending histories of victimhood. We have to write our own history in spite of the past and not replicate the past today. This implies giving all parties a voice in the kind of processes of justice that shall be used to deal with their collective past.

I generally agree with Huyse's position. What is envisioned by scholars like Huyse is a justice system that evolves from collaborative decision-making "among communities that share interest in and/or influence over ... a 'problem domain'" (Helling & Thomas, 2008: 180). This is what Nigeria most direly needs as it celebrates its post-amalgamation centenary. However, to reach that point, it must reach back to the past, and seek healing from the roots.

My principal argument is that responses to a violent past which do not have at their core the human psychology of doers of evil and the communities that formed that psychology will not succeed in creating an environment of sustainable peace. Perhaps, Nigeria is not fated to volatility and doom. However, institutional responses to discontents and violence have not shown courage and creativity in unearthing the various psychologies motivating protracted social conflicts. So, to create the imagination for proactive initiative for Nigeria's intractable past, we should know where the rain started beating us, as our elders say, and what made Nigeria's past conflagrations possible in the first place. To this I turn forthwith.

3. Human psychology and post-conflict justice in Nigeria

According to various commentators on Nigeria's volatility, poverty and the manipulation of primordial ties (e.g. ethnicity and religion) are fundamental factors for the country's prolonged social conflicts and mass atrocities. I shall briefly present two interlocutors to buttress this point.

Rotimi (1975) presents a provocative play after the Nigeria's Civil War, *The Gods are Not to Blame* – an adaptation of the Greek myth “Oedipus Rex”. Rotimi conveys the message that the destiny fashioned for the land by the “Gods” [read 'British colonialists'] was not to be blamed for the calamity that befell the land. Rather, it was the arrogance, disrespect, hot-temper, and unquestioned acquiescence to cultural ethos of the major protagonists that caused the calamity. Rotimi's colleague, Soyinka(2007:54), disputes this position. He puts the blame squarely on the shoulders of two groups: first, “the Gods” who he recalls taught Nigerians the art of election rigging, through the 1959 elections; second, those claimed “born to rule” in Nigeria i.e. the purported 'Kaduna-Mafia' (Soyinka, 1988:177; 2007:54).

Indeed, both Rotimi and Soyinka are right up to a point. Nevertheless, it is not enough to prove the link between manipulation of ethnicity / religion, or poverty, and mass atrocity. Others in similar situations like Nigeria are likewise volatile, e.g. pluralist countries in Europe; poverty-stricken places like India (Sen, 2007, January 2008:5-15). Hence, facts alone, for instance the manipulation of peoples, do not always lead to “an evaluative conclusion” (Bowker, 2005:75). I propose that social commentators or political analysts should be complemented by religious ethicists. These excavate the primordial ties, needs, and economic conditions to discover the underlying 'social' and human psychologies that make people so susceptible to the manipulation of their primordial ties or economic conditions. Furthermore, unearthing especially these human psychologies should probably unravel why people persist to give in to manipulations when it has even been exposed that opportunists are simply manipulating them. Ethicists, unlike social scientists and public commentators, have the task to unravel and give an articulated ethical reflection on the myths and values informing public practice and ethos affecting their respective contexts for good or for ill. Understanding the values and rationality behind atrocious acts of otherwise normal people is part of an ethical resistance to such acts. In my estimation, this is what Salihu (2012) does in his analysis and critique of violent conflicts in post-colonial northern Nigeria. Successive politicians in northern Nigeria “simply examine societal values and strive to embody them in order to create the image that sets them apart as the champions of the causes of their immediate constituency” (p. 45). Salihu's argument confirms the necessity of asking three questions, according to Bowker (2005), that can help in unravelling the values, causes of and constraints that lead to conflicts: “To what do people with competing ideas appeal to support or justify what they

are saying? What warrants do they offer for their assertions? Are those warrants sufficient or adequate for the task?" A sure place to begin I propose is the prevailing psychology of stakeholders, because "reason is not sufficient to deliver us from evil" (p. 11). 'Redemption' from evil needs both the cognitive and emotive faculties of persons, and not just the cognitive faculty alone.

This claim is inspired by an ethical insight about moral perception of the human person that points out how "a situation affects the weal and woe of the human beings involved in it" (Vetlesen, 1994:162). Moral perception is rooted in the dynamically receptive capacity of the human person: "It is thanks to this underlying active receptivity, this sensuous-cognitive-emotional openness to the world, that moral perception is provided with a direction, is 'tuned in' to deal with specific features of specific situations" (ibid.).

Accordingly, in confronting the past, we must pay attention to the role of emotions. Whether real or imagined they serve crucial functions (Kirk-Greene, 1975). They serve as 'rational measurement of value' both individually and socially (Fattah & Fierke, March 2009, pp. esp. 69-73). Every human person and group has the capacities and dispositions to experience and act on any human emotion (Appadurai, 2009:235-251; Burkitt, 2009:157-169; Butler, 2009:387-402; Jaggar, 2009:50-68). No one has immunity from emotions and actions that flow from these because emotions "are indispensable apprehensions of moral reality" (Vacek, Winter 2003:68). Hence, with the fact of "emotional cognition" being a human attribute (ibid:72), differences arise when it comes to the kind of actions allowed to be inspired by emotions. Those who do not pay attention to generated, but especially latent, emotions cannot properly understand the past they want to overcome nor can they create a durable justice system that can take care of that thorny past.

One might be struck by the forthrightness of the following remark by the Northern delegation to the inconclusive Constitutional Conference of September 1966:

We all have our fears of one another. Some fear that opportunities in their own areas are limited and they would therefore wish to expound and venture unhampered in other parts. Some fear the sheer weight of numbers of other parts... Some fear the sheer weight of skills and

aggressive drive of other groups... These fears may be real or imagined; they may be reasonable or petty. Whether they are genuine or not, they have to be taken account of because they influence to a considerable degree the actions of the groups towards one another and, more important perhaps, the daily actions of the individual in each group towards individuals from other groups(Kirk-Greene, 1971a:14-15).

This remark clearly sought to explore the role of emotion, in this case 'fear', in the political debacle of 1966. This is a compelling insight in understanding Nigeria's volatile years up till the end of the Civil War. Kirk-Greene (1975) repeats this statement in his research report on the connection between the role of emotion especially fear and war (p. 20). More recently, Wunsch(2003:172) mentions this fear and 'politics of paranoia' as contributory factors to ethnic conflicts in Nigeria.

4. 'Irrational' factors, politics of vindication and violence in Nigeria

'Irrational' factors like the sentiments of anger, fear, hurt, and xenophobia, what Aina refers to as toxic emotions (June 2013:37, 41), contribute to peace or war depending on how these are handled. In fact, sentimental factors are not 'irrational'. They are sensible and predictable if one pays attention to the dynamics of human sentiments and responses to them. Responses to toxic emotions are guided by the need for vindication of one's/ peoples' innocent victimhood.

If perpetrators of atrocities are from a domineering group, then they will be seen as heroes who are advancing the cause of the group. Hence, attempts to bring them to justice will be scuttled. This leaves the victims from other groups seething with anger and frustration that they could not receive justice because they do not control the levers of political power. Nevertheless, they take exception to the impunity forced on them. Resistance to the impunity of the domineering group will be conveyed through two means. First, they sporadically attack the vulnerable members of the domineering group. Second, they plan in the meantime to compromise, jeopardise, decimate and wrest power from that 'humiliating' group. For instance, Kirk-Greene writes in the aftermath of January 1966 failed coup and subsequent Military government of Aguiyi-Ironsi: "...the North knew how - and was already beginning in its leadership circles - to apply the break to Southern acceleration" (Kirk-Greene, 1971:45). The aim of the second response is to sever the arrowheads of the group - political

leaders, bureaucrats, and senior military officers so that power vacuum is created and the 'humiliating' group is left in confusion. During the interregnum the hitherto 'humiliated' group takes control of the reins of power. It sets out immediately – either brazenly or tacitly – to settle old scores. The fallout is another set of victims created which in turn demands justice but will not get it as long as its group remains in a humiliated position. Hence, the vicious cycle does not end and people remain trapped (DeRouen Jr. & Bercovitch, January 2008:56-57).

So, in the politics of 'irrational' vindication, yesterday's victims, denied of justice, and subjected to series of humiliation (either by omission or commission), become today's monstrous perpetrators. Afigbo (2005) opines that uprising and mass actions, even violent ones, are statements about the absence or failure of 'legal justice': "The fact of the matter is that uprisings, rebellions and revolutions, whether popular or unpopular, are an attempt to dramatize in blood and broken bones the shortcomings or failings of a particular political order and if possible to abolish such shortcomings" (p. 572). To drive home this point, let's revisit the aftermath of the 1966 failed coup.

Even if unjustifiable, one should understand why the military governor and other authorities in the Northern region did little immediately the mass atrocities against Southerners, mostly Igbo, began in mid-1966 (Kirk-Greene, 1971a:266-270). They were simply following the logic above. If the ritual of justice had been performed after the January 1966 coup, the magnitude of hatred, reprisals, and mass atrocities would probably have lessened. Accusation of genocide (by the Igbo against the Hausa/Fulani) would probably not have arisen because hatred was not directed at the Southerners, especially the Igbo, per se. Mass atrocity was an unjustifiable and hideous response to unmitigated sense of humiliation and lack of experience of reparative, if not retributive, justice after Northern leaders were killed and the North left in unimaginable shame and humiliation.

This is why one should take exception to the partial reading and interpretation of events between 1966 and 1970. Soyinka (2007) for instance publicly and understandably agreed with the Igbo's decision to secede from Nigeria for the following reason: "When a people have been subjected to a degree of inhuman violation for which there is no other word but genocide, they have the right to seek an identity apart from their aggressors" (p. 101). This is troubling. It seems for Soyinka and popular hagiography only one

side has gripping stories of humiliation and collective shame to tell. Little or less attention is paid to the anguish and “a degree of inhuman violation” of the North by scholars who research on Nigeria's past in order to find a way forward. It is as if the North, by the fact of the projection of its post-colonial regional dominance onto the national stage, can only be seen as what I may call 'the primordial Perpetrator'. According to this logic, whatever the North suffers, though unfortunate, is nothing compared to what it had done to other parts of the nation. This one-factor thesis and justified response is nothing but ignorance of “political historiography” (Amoda, 1972:155) and an abuse of memory. This leads us to another issue making Nigeria's possible more perfect union a delayed project. It is the instrumentalisation of memory.

If post-conflict actions taken by either the victors or the vanquished will carry some legitimacy or draw some sympathy, then the actors' vision of 'peace' and 'justice' will have to be sold to the people. Thus, we glimpse the commodification and instrumentalisation of memory by the triumvirate: political leaders, the intelligentsia, and the media (Dinerman, 2006:26; Louw, 2005:232-233). I agree with Dinerman (2006) that “the real can be mythologised just as the myth can engender strong reality effects” depending on the approaches adopted between the 'revolutionary', the 'counter-revolutionary', and 'revisionist' (p. 27). This is where one finds some ideological trend noticeable today, even in Africa: post-conflict memoirs [or narratives] of certain parties in conflicts are published or are marketable. Yet, these stories are not ethically neutral.

5. The ethical ambiguity of some storytelling

The stories we tell about Nigeria's past (1914, 1966-70, 1970 till date) are not ethically neutral. These can be situated within the discourse on the tension between 'mythical' and 'real' stories and how these affect any particular project, and in Nigeria's case, the project of national reconciliation.

Narratives in whatever form presuppose the awareness of emotions' role in dealing with the past and in keeping memories alive. We love to tell stories, but hardly do we pay attention to what the emotions conveyed in the stories do to us and our future. This 'blind spot' exists because some of these stories are 'mythical', not real. When we narrate these stories, we are simply engaging in 'mythical' true storytelling – not necessarily the real story. Mythical stories are not effectively lies or fabrications. They are some idealistic presentation of facts to bolster an argumentation, or a project, or a

way of life. They are what Daly (2002) refers to as 'stories of origins'. These must be balanced with real stories that are independent stories which validate or contest mythical claims. This comes with a risk. The project of 'mythical stories' may 'die' prematurely. But the risk is worth taking (pp. 56-57). If we do not pay special attention to the dynamics of 'mythical' stories, emotions embedded in these stories will continue to escalate the centrifugal pull in post-amalgamation Nigeria.

Consequent on the above, mythical stories in scholarship on post-amalgamation Nigeria delay national reconciliation, which can be defined as the rebuilding of inter-personal and inter-group trust. Trust is rebuilt, and hence national reconciliation, when there is a narrative harmony between hitherto apparently incompatible and indivisible narratives of primordial identities (Govier & Verwoerd, June 2002:183). Crucial to this construal of reconciliation are the bearers of these conflicting identities who constantly interpret events according to their mythical stories of the past.

Though a unanimous national narrative may be an illusion in Nigeria, at least for now, the narrative presented by the Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission (aka Oputa Panel) Report (henceforth The Report) is laudable because it can serve as the basis for historical studies on Nigeria. Its more balanced account can possibly serve as the basis for civic education and national consciousness, and the bedrock for further political rearrangement in the country, without excessive myths – a phenomenon that The Report highlights and criticises (Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission, May 2002b, Petition no. HRVIC 1648, 1268-1277, May 2002c, chapt. 2, nos. 2.1-2.31, chapt. 33, nos. 33.31-33.244, May 2002d, chapt. 1, nos. 1-33, chapt. 32, nos. 31-84, chapt. 33, nos. 53-91, May 2002e, 1-246, May 2002f, chapt. 2, nos. 2.6-2.34, chapt. 36, nos. 36.27-36.48, chapt. 37, nos. 37.31-37.50).

From the arguments above, one can aver that the reign of 'mythical stories' mixed with toxic emotions is a principal factor for Nigeria's protracted volatile fate since the dying days of colonialism, particularly since the post-war era. We seemed to have missed this point. The Report rightly notes that reconstruction and structural rearrangement do not heal deep-seated hatred and persecution, no matter how hard the government tries (Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission, May 2002c, chapt. 6, no. 6.25). Time and again, we are reminded that for peace, justice, and reconciliation to build up, the heart is indispensable. Some of the factors impeding

peaceful and trustful relationships among Nigerians today (e.g. fear, getting people to overcome hatred, taking responsibility for an irresponsible past, forgiveness) are matters of the heart, imagination, and spirituality.

What Amstuz (2006) avers of post-genocide Rwanda is apposite regarding Nigeria. As long as “distrust and fear dominate ethnic relations, the consolidation of constitutional government and the development of the national economy will not be possible” (p. 564). The way successive governments have handled Nigeria's violent past lends credence to this point. They are always in a hurry to stabilise the nation, and entrench democratic culture. Unfortunately, they failed to understand that adequate “time perspectives” contribute to healing a nation after a horrible past. Our past governments seemed to say: 'The patience of a nation is measured in months.' In fact, the patience of a nation after war is measured in years. The lack of proper time perspective had a negative consequence. Historical revisionism of the past has been blossoming through parties involved in various violent internal rivalries, as part of 'selling' their versions of 'victimhood, justice, and peace'.

Revisionism's danger was pointed out immediately after the Civil War when there seemed to be a tension between scholars and politicians on how to respond to the post-bellum situation. Politicians took the naïve approach: “the less we look at the past, the better for us all.” Scholars, on the other hand, adopted George Santayana's approach: “nations which do not learn their lesson from history are condemned to relive it” (Kirk-Greene, 1971b:465). Kirk-Greene (1971b) warned in the “epilogue” of his two-volume work on Nigeria's conflict and Civil War that Biafra sentiments and attachment would not go away even if the word 'Biafra' had been outlawed by Gowon's government: “Memory does not respond thus to administrative decree; it is even less ready to do so when it has been blooded in sentiment” (p. 466). Accordingly, the way to respond to the sentiments aroused by that bloody past is the presentation of historical truths and facts, not mythical narrative and attachment to legends (p. 467). Unfortunately, otiose hagiography, pretending to be historiography, has flourished ever since. Because of this ideological trend, one still feels among Nigerians today, even at the 2014 National Conference, the tensions of and experience the anger and arrogance, suspicion and intransigence, and feelings of inferiority and persecution complexes associated with unanswered questions left in the debris of the country's past.

6. Proposals for overcoming Nigeria's volatile past: Inspirations from Oputa Panel Report

The Report exists online since January 1, 2005. It should have been treated with seriousness and academic engagement "for the benefit of the Nigerian people" ("Nigeria: Oputa Panel Report," February 2005). Hence, Aina (2010) and Kukah (2011) similarly opine that Nigerian scholars should engage with it. While Nigerian scholars appear unenthusiastic, their counterparts outside Nigeria have taken interest in it (Freeman, 2006:318-325 [Appendix 311]). This article's final section takes inspiration from The Report, taking up Aina and Kukah's challenge.

6.1 *The (ecumenical) Church at the service of nation building: Engaging The Report*

The Church as a member of the civil society has pivotal role to play in the modern 'secular state'. There is a caveat to this though. Cavanaugh (1998) argues that the rules of the modern state are violent due to its soteriology. So, the Church cannot be expected to play strictly according to the rules of this state. Accordingly, it should not align itself too closely to the state. If the Church sees itself more aligned with its peoples wrestling with issues related to delayed nationhood, then it must respond to the biblical call to be 'co-creators'. Being a co-creator implies moulding to bring about a creation that continues to radiate the goodness present at the primordial creation. Sometimes as part of its co-creation, the Church must first clear the landscape. This implies seeking the underlying human and social psychologies that make people so susceptible to manipulation of their primordial ties or their economic conditions. Furthermore, unearthing especially these human psychologies should probably unravel why people persist to give in to manipulations when it has even been exposed that opportunists are simply manipulating them. Understanding the values and rationality behind atrocious acts of otherwise normal people is part of the task of a redeeming co-creation that shows ethical resistance to such acts. Accordingly, in confronting the past, we must pay attention to the role of emotions. Consequently, I offer below two proposals that can deal imaginatively and proactively with these emotions, their sources and effects, from the perspective of The Report.

6.1.1 *Creating a space at the base to engage The Report*

In view of remarks above, it is crucial for the Church to find creative ways to engage The Report, which provides Nigerian peoples some narratives on why they are so polluted with 'toxic' emotions. Unfortunately, according to

Kukah (2011), the lack of enthusiasm among Nigerian scholars is exasperating (p. xviii). He states further, "Even without the formal release of the Report, a sense of academic curiosity should have compelled the social science faculties to rummage through the Report as a means of guiding their students" (pp. xviii-xix). Continued lack of interest in The Report, even and especially by the Church, is giving supremacy to the Nigerian state. The current crop of Nigerian rulers is more interested in its status and defending the interests of its patrons over and above a project of authentic nation-building that carried such great legitimacy in the eyes of the Nigerian peoples much unlike the 2014 National Conference.

Against the foregoing backdrop it is incumbent upon the Church to 'be response-able' in order to create alternative imaginations that envision "new and better ways of conceiving those everyday struggles and aspirations which lie at the basis of a people's social existence" (Katongole, 2005:163). The alternative imagination can be achieved through a methodological approach called "the network of representation of life stories" which explores the "boundaries of narratives" (Smith, February 2007:22-23). Accordingly, creating, developing and teaching this methodological approach is an area that the Church can be helpful. The Church as an anamnestic community may contribute towards the purification of memory in a way that the memory of the past does not keep today and the future hostage (Volf, 2009:10-11). As such I agree with the World Council of Churches (2006) that the Church has a central role in overcoming stereotypes fuelling the 'politicisation of victimhood': "the churches have a contribution to make: based on their tradition they can help deconstruct myths, stereotypes and prejudices that impede the appreciation and of others in their irreducible otherness" (no. 85).

One of the ways the Church can help to subvert these myths is giving space for traumatised survivors and survivor-communities to reconfigure their narratives of selfhood since defragmentation is one of the effects of 'toxic' emotions. It is through the narrative of pain that humans begin the movement from disorganisation to reorganisation. It is the successful movement from disorganisation to reorganisation that brings restoration of persons, and what is referred to as the social capital. This movement reveals an interpersonal, and ritual-like, private/public process in the human community where victims are present.

The Church is crucially needed to provide the kind of safe haven where traumatised persons, peoples, and communities can begin that journey from disorganisation to reorganisation/re-configuration. I suggest that discussing the narratives of our past as contained in The Report is a salutary way to begin at our base communities, which, hopefully, can embrace fellow Nigerians of various denominations as they are seeking to make sense out of and come to terms with the forthright reflections and conclusions The Report provides. This can be a modest contribution of the Church towards Nigeria becoming a nation, beyond being a 'nation space', to use Soyinka's phrase (March 6, 2009). This will be a salutary contribution to ecumenical dialogue of life, and bridge the missing ecumenical structures in Nigeria. It is important to note the nature of ecumenical engagement in Nigeria originally. In other words, original engagement was not focused on worship, doctrine and dogmatic dialogue. Rather, there was a pragmatic attention. The ecumenical church can deploy resources of its three blocks for national reconciliation and deconstruction of myths and stereotypes.

6.1.2 Teaching non-violent culture: Mandate for seminaries/houses of formation & Catholic institutions of higher education

From the synodal and post-synodal interventions of the Second Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Africa, we get the message that social actors need to be targeted for education and training on 'witness ethic' at the service of justice, peace and reconciliation in Africa. They in turn can educate and train their people on realistic ways of 'waging peace' instead of 'waging war'. The youth especially are crucial to the future of peace desired in Africa. Catholic education, according to Benedict XVI (2011), must focus on the youth so that they can be living witnesses of Christ (nos. 74-78, 134-138).

In the light of the foregoing, future leaders, pastors and pastoral agents have to be scientifically educated on conflict resolution and peace studies. If *Africae Munus* calls for the cultivation of the culture of justice, peace and non-violence, then we must acknowledge that living in justice and peace is skilful. Even though the Church proclaims that Catholic education is at the service of Justice, peace and reconciliation, one wonders if the Pontifical Council for Christian Education – or even SECAM – has a curricular framework for use in Catholic Schools. Is there any even for the seminaries and other houses of formation? Yet, graduates of Catholic educational institutions generally become civil leaders, pastors and pastoral agents in many local communities in Africa. These graduates, when faced with crises

threatening their communities' fragile justice, peace and reconciliation, are normally left to improvise through trials and errors. This has to change; Nigerian theologians and educationists who are involved in the educational sector should take the lead.

This suggestion is apt because as the Yoruba say, “oun ti eiye ba je ni eiye a gbe fo” – “a bird flies [only] with what it swallows.” If pastors and pastoral agents are not well-trained before they are thrown into the fray in a post-amalgamation Nigeria that is replete with 'toxic' emotions across ethnic, regional, religious, and gender lines, they will make lots of false starts. They are ill-equipped with scientific and credible analytical tools that can assist them to rise beyond analyses and advocacy which betray sensitivity to their primordial ties, and less commitment to common citizenship.

Since 2005, the National Universities Commission mandated all Nigerian universities to teach Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies as GES course. There are about twenty-five Catholic degree-awarding institutions and major seminaries, affiliated to various Nigerian universities (Catholic Church in Nigeria, 2011, p. xliii). As part of its commitment to the Nigerian peoples who desire to overcome their 'toxic' emotions towards one another, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria can mandate these institutions to include The Report in their didactical materials and mandatory readings for the Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies course.

This proposal is based on an earlier assertion that the narrative presented in The Report can serve as a viable basis for historical and peace studies on Nigeria. It is a balanced account that should serve as the basis for civic education and national consciousness, and the bedrock for further political rearrangement in the country without much volatile myths at the service of the instrumentalisation of collective memory. A Church that is committed to the concrete manifestation and realisation of the nation can lead the way in its academy and various institutions of higher studies, thus showing taking serious the suggestion of one its hierarchy (Kukah, 2011, pp. xviii-xix).

In this regard, this may be a clear dedication towards realising one of The Report's way forward: “We need to begin a process of moral reorientation and national re-birth, a process of national healing and reconciliation, anchored firmly on a common ground, where we accommodate and respect our ethno-cultural and regional diversities, without undermining our unity

and solidarity” (Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission, May 2002b, chapt. 3, no. 3.239). This should be done, The Report states in its “Recommendations”, through “civic/moral education from Nursery to Primary, Secondary School and Tertiary levels anchored on the principles of oneness and indivisibility of Nigeria” (Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission, May 2002g, chapt. 3, no. 20). Even if the Church may not print the kind of popular version of The Report, as recommended to the Nigerian state ('Summary of Recommendations,' no. 26), using it as a course material for Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies in Nigeria, nonetheless, will come close to The Report's expectation of widespread dissemination which in turn might help towards cleansing the nation-space of 'toxic' emotions. This will contribute to creating transformative emotions and dispositions, like tolerance, accommodation, trust, and informed understanding that can make justice, peace and reconciliation blossom in Nigeria (Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission, May 2002d, chapt. 1, nos. 29, 30, 32).

7. Conclusion

Looking at Nigeria a century after its amalgamation, there isn't transformation yet of our collective story, which is inclusive of what can be regarded as the blossoming of peace and reconciliation. This does not mean Nigerians cannot together overcome national violence and conflicts and even pursue the common good. So, 'the gods are not to blame' for Nigeria's fate a century after the 'gods' amalgamated Nigeria, and planted the centrifugal forces still wreaking havoc. We are not fated to the gods' self-serving action. The narrator in *The Gods are Not to Blame* rouses its audience: “To lie down resigned to fate is madness. Up, up, struggle: the world is struggle.”

The proliferation of toxic emotions has made it easier over the decades for the triumvirate (political leaders, the intelligentsia, and the media) to manipulate Nigerians' primordial ties for their selfish advantage. This manipulation made it possible for Nigeria's post-independent 'original sin' (impunity), which is holding Nigeria hostage. Impunity is the bane of Nigeria's apparent ill-fated existence. To struggle beyond this absence of justice, Nigerians have to recall where the rain started falling on them in the first place. Hence, this article started by articulating the role of human and social psychologies as well as mythical stories in Nigeria's political and ethno-religious volatility. With the conviction that Nigerians can overcome their violent past, the article offers some suggestions in this regard with the

inspiration of the Oputa Panel Report. I chose to bring it into scholarly discourse as a modest contribution towards keeping alive the hope expressed by those responsible for the release of The Report and many Nigerians. It is a hope that Nigerians shall have a fuller and sombre, hopeful and reconcilable truths of their past, while those responsible for the menace of impunity and are implicated by The Report would be brought to justice in future when there is a government untainted with the sins of the past (Falana, December 20, 2004).

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