

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND PEACEBUILDING: PANACEA TO INSECURITY IN THE CHURCH AND NIGERIAN STATE: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPHETIC MINISTRIES OF ABRAHAM AND AMOS

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ABSTRACT

Social justice and peace-building are fundamental factors for development and sustainability in the quest for a prosperous society and nation such as Nigeria. The primary purpose of this paper is to underscore the importance of the role of the Nigerian church in promoting social justice and sustainable peace as in peace-building. The paper argues that the church should be involved in dealing with the problem of injustice and oppression for the promotion of social justice and peace-building. Everywhere in Nigeria is been ruled by insecurity. There are series of killings, rape, insurgencies, maimed and all the likes without any Messiah to rescue the situation. There have been series of suggestions by Politicians, Church leaders through religious resources and other Nigerians on what will be the Panacea but failed, could we say that social justice and Peace-building could be the Panacea to the insecurity in the Church and Nigerian State? The Study adopts conceptual clarifications and usage of theories. Biblical passages of the books of Genesis and Amos, concerning their ministries on Peace-building and Social Justice were interpreted using exegetical method. The research work realized that Abraham's peaceful character and the fearless attitude of Prophet Amos to his generation served as the Panacea to the insecurity of their days. The same fearless attitude was realized to be missing in many Prophetic Ministries of the ministers in Nigeria; which in any case could have been the Panacea to the ugly situation of insecurity in the Church and Nigerian State.

Keywords: *Social Justice, Peace-building, Panacea, Insecurity Church and Nigeria*

INTRODUCTION

The conflict and evil events in Nigeria were in nexus or juxtaposed with the evil deeds and lack of peace in the days of Abraham and the 8 B.C. during the ministry of Prophet Amos. The church should be involved in dealing with the problem of injustice and oppression for the promotion of social justice and peace-building. Everywhere in Nigeria is been ruled by insecurity. It was realized that Abraham's character of peace and the Ministry Amos was blunt against the insecurity of their days. Abraham demonstrated his character of peace over friction between his Herdsmen and that of Lot's while Amos was revealed to be Prophet who will never spear insecurity and injustice. He was able to convey the messages of doom to his generation not minding the consequence. The prophecies of doom made people to tag Amos

'the Prophet of doom'. Amos never looked at the unrighteous people for his daily meals, but rebuked them openly and told them of their evil deeds. The paper realized that this fearless attitude of Prophet Amos to his generation and Abraham's character of peace served as the Panacea to the insecurity of their days.

The same fearless attitude was realized to be missing in many Prophetic Ministries of the ministers in Nigeria; which in any case could have been the Panacea to the ugly situation of insecurity in the Church and Nigerian State. Panacea to the insecurity of the Church and Nigerian State is Abraham's character of peace and the fearless ministry of Prophet Amos who warned his people against the imminent dooms, if they refuse to change their lifestyles.

BRIEF BACKGROUND OF NIGERIA

Normally, to the indigene of Nigeria, there may not be need of any glimpse about the Country, but it is essential to understand some few things that are not common to many Countries in the World. People have settled in the area called Niger Area as far back as 11 BC. The name Nigeria was Christened by Wife to Lord Lugard, who was the Governor of the territory in 1914, which was coined from area around River Niger. Several Governors ruled Nigeria aftermath before a landing of Independence on 1st October 1960 as the first republic was in 1963. The Nigeria- Biafra war broke up in 1966 and ended in 1970, as the war ended precisely on the 13th January 1970, when General Gowon was the Military President of Nigeria during the period of the Civil War. The epidemic and setback experienced by the Nigerians made people who witnessed the same to pray, never again to witness a related event again in Nigeria. Rather should the timidity procured as a result of fear of any civil war make an ethnic group a monopoly of war on the soil of Nigeria, a country that belong to many ethnic groups. Nigeria has 643 Ethnic groups with their different ethnic dialects. Therefore, Fulani is just one ethnic group out of six hundred and forty-three groups and is summarized in a tabular form as indicated below:

S/N	Geo- Political Zone	Number of Ethnic Groups in the Geo- Political Zone	Number of States in the Geo- Political Zone	Number of Local Governments in the Geo- Political Zone
1.	North Western Region	85	07	186
2.	North Central Region	144	06	144
3.	North Eastern Region	249	06	111
4.	South Western Region	16	06	135
5.	South Eastern Region	11	06	11
6.	South Southern Region	131	06	106

Fulani is a micro- fragment among the 643 ethnic groups in the Country and the agitating group for possession of all the spaces in the Country (Ogidiolu, 2019:157-158).

BRIEF HISTORY OF BOKO-HARAM INSURGENCE

According to Andrew (2012) United States Institute of Peace said Boko Haram's origins lie in a group of radical Islamist youth who worshipped at the Alhaji Muhammadu Ndimi Mosque in Maiduguri a decade ago. In 2002, an offshoot of this youth group (not yet known as Boko Haram) declared the city and the Islamic establishment to be intolerably corrupt and irredeemable. Boko Haram, which means “Western education is forbidden”, was founded in 2002 but started the movement in 2001 by an Islamist cleric named Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf in response to Nigeria's democratic transition, nationalism and Western influence. The group's official man is not Boko Haram but Jama'atu Ahlis Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, which means “People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad”. Members are known to reference the Islamic verse that states, “Anyone who is not governed by what “Allah” has revealed is among the transgressors”. Osama Bin Laden invested 1\$3million in northern Nigeria, where Muslim are majority, to promote his brand of Salafist Islamism. Bin Laden also endorsed an Islamist revolution in order to topple the Nigerian government and establish a sharia-based state (Jacob, 2018). Yusuf had an estimated 280,000 followers and his armed supporters were referred to as the Nigerian Taliban and dozens trained in Afghanistan. Yusuf was killed on 30 July 2009 by Nigerian forces in the city of Maiduguri in Northern Nigeria and replaced by its current leader, Abubakar Shekau. In November 2013, the U.S. State Deputy designated Boko Haram as a Foreign Terrorist Organization, as well as a splinter group named Ansaru. The U.S. government said Boko Haram has links to Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Magreb and is responsible for killing thousands of people according to Best (Longkat, 2020: 11-13).

Boko Haram Main Objective

The immediate objective of Boko Haram is to establish strict sharia law in northern Nigeria, where the majority of the population is Muslim. Although there are nineteen (19) states in Northern Nigeria but (12) twelve northern states have implemented sharia governance, Boko Haram believes it is too lenient and violates Islam. Islamist ideology holds that Muslims are required to wage jihad until all territory once under Muslim rule is returned. Boko Haram regards itself as the successor to Usman Dan Fodio who founded the Sokoto Caliphate, which ruled parts of Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon from 1804 until it was formally abolished by the British in 1904. Boko Haram has specifically identified the U.S. and other Western countries as eventual targets.

Major Attacks

Boko Haram has killed over 2,000 people since 2009. The leadership of Boko Haram believes disarmament is un-Islamic and opposed to negotiated solutions. Spokesperson Abu Qaqa said in January 2012. “We will consider negotiation only when we have brought the government to their knees... we will only put aside our arms-but we will not lay them down. You don't put down your arms in Islam, you only put them aside”. Likewise, Shekau said in his 2014 video taking credit for the abduction of 300 Nigerian schoolgirls (<http://www.BBC.com/news/world-africa-22538888>).

Some major attacks carried out by Boko Haram (2017 to 2020)

1. 26th June, 2017 Borno State multiple suicide bomb attacks in Maiduguri killed at least 9 people and 13 others injured (Duke, 2017:8-14).
2. 21st February, 2018 Boko Haram seized 110 school girls from schools in Dapchi Yobe State, Nigeria.
3. 14th December, 2019 (GMT+3) 22, 000 Nigerians missing which most are children since Boko Haram crisis began: Red Cross (aljazeera.com by 3:00pm).
4. 18th, 21st, 23rd January, 2020 the killing of a University of Maiduguri student and indigene of Plateau State; killing of an abducted CAN chairman of Michika LGA Adamawa state Rev Lawan Andimi and 2 other Pastors and 2 other students from the same State by Boko Haram through a video that went viral through TVC news 2.24pm 13/5/2020.
5. 24th March, 2020 (GMT+3) at least 50 Nigerian Soldiers killed in Boko Haram ambush.
6. 5th May, 2020 (GMT+3) Nigeria has killed 134 members of the Boko Haram and Islamic state of West Africa Province (ISWAP) armed groups (Longkat, 2020:11-13).

The Brief Background of Fulani Herdsmen

The question is who are these Fulani Herdsmen? They are tribe of nomad, who move everywhere in search of grass or pasture for their animals. The Fulani and the Hausas are the major population of the northern Nigeria with the population of about 30, 000,000 people. The Fulani people are against the artificial birth control hence, are numerous all over places in Nigeria. They are believed to be everywhere in Africa. A source says that they are the largest tribe in Africa. The Fulani Herdsmen have taken the opportunity to raze houses, rape women and killed many innocent members of the communities. Muhammandu Buhari had been a Patron to this set of people since after his reign of the military governance. There was an instance when some Fulani Herdsmen were displaced on a land in Ibadan metropolis in the era of Rasheed Ladoja as the Governor of Oyo State. The then, General Muhammandu Buhari travelled to Ibadan to fight for his people. This same spirit has been the faith of all the Fulani Herdsmen- fighting to defend their tribe. It was recently published that all the lands in Nigeria belong to their tribe and they are ready for the possession now. The possessing fight for the possession of the vast land in Nigeria has been wrapped with Islamic Jihad (Ogidiolu: 2019).

The Concept of Grazing Reserved Bill

This is a concept or a phenomenon by which considerable vast hectares of land will be allocated for the Fulani Herdsmen as their properties and for grazing their Cows. They will have a leader like a small Emir to start with, all over Nigeria. Such Fulani Grazing reserved areas will have the entitlements of all entitlement appertaining to the indigene of the land. Instead for President Buhari to condemn and rebuke his tribe identity head long for constant killings, he is appealing for grazing bill. The Grazing Bill for Fulani Herdsmen hectares of lands in sizes of nothing less than four (4) Local Governments in each State. In short time, the 36 States of Nigeria will be victims of Fulani Herdsmen Jihad war. Kings will be dethroned, Emir will be replaced, Southern Muslims will be seen as second-class believers in their faith and Christians will face a war of abolition on their Fathers land (Ogidiolu, 2019:167-168).

CHURCH AS INSTRUMENT AGAINST HERSELF

Unfortunately, today, there is a lot of leadership tussles in the Church giving way to Christian Politician dammed the consequences of their spiritual negligence over the Church and often permits the Muslim counterparts to use them against the killings of their brethren. The rank of these Christian Politicians who permitted themselves to be used for the destruction of the Church ranges from Pastor to Members of the Church.

Some denominations Overseers and Leaders pay allegiance of the same set of Government who give no regard to the Church destroyers. Many have no reasonable sense of humour as long as they receive financial support from the enemies of the Church. Sometimes you will hear such people saying “receive their money but don't vote them”. Some campaign on the Pulpit as against the warning set out by Prophet Abraham and Amos. They Prophets openly cast their rebuke, but many Church Leaders today hail and campaign for the enemies of the Church on their Pulpits- what a pity? The gap of unity is missing in the Church as good number of Christians condemns themselves of the evils that is happening against the Church instead of condemning the Islamic Jihadists who are the perpetrators (Ogidiolu, 2019).

THE NEXUS THE EVIL EVENTS IN THE DAYS OF ABRAHAM AND AMOS WITH THE PREVALENT EVILS IN THE CHURCH AND NIGERIAN STATE

The cry of Abraham and Prophet Amos was not limited to the State of Israel. The cry for Peace and Peace-building and Social Justice and Panacea for the prevalent evils of their days was extended to the neighbouring State. The problems with the Nigerians are enough for our current Prophets to battle with. For Abraham and Amos days, Nations of Sodom and Gomorrah and Israel were negatively influenced by the evil practices of the neighbouring nations. The neighbouring Countries to Nigeria derived some resources from the Country and make better use of the same. For, instance, River Niger flows from through Ghana and beyond. Ghana as a State has been able to celebrate years of uninterrupted power supply. It was so strange to hear that the Country, people sojourned in our Nigeria for years because of their once bad Government are far better than us. I was in Ghana to confirm this said (Ogidiolu, 2019:169). There is slavery of the less privileged and the rich and wealthy people's children scale true. Politicians or people at Power who steal millions of naira are punished to pay small amount of the money back to the purse of the Government for bail, while the poor man on the streets who stole small thing from the market will be imprisoned for years. Indeed, I witnessed one clear injustice over the poor when I was Pastoring a congregation (COCIN LCC Vodni RCC Pushit) in Mangu Local Government of Plateau State, where 3 youths attempted robbery and ran away with some little among of money from 2 women coming from the Mangu Friday market in 2017. Two of the youths were sons of widows and they were subjected to all sort of maltreatment and imprisoned which led me to advocating against such social injustice and they were released. People are on the streets of Nigeria with Masters Certificate without a tangible job. Whereas, the seating allowance of the people in government are in billions of Naira. Amos profusely rebukes and nicknamed women who instigated their husbands to do evil things as the 'Cow of Basha'. Worse of this kind of event is operative in Nigeria as many Church Leaders pretends as if nothing happens and Abraham was an embodiment of peace-building wisdoms and strategies especially how he managed the conflict between his Herdsmen and the Herdsmen of lot in Genesis 13:1-8.

ABRAHAM'S PEACE-BUILDING STRATEGY (GENESIS 13:1-8)

Abram and Lot's Genesis 13:5-8; herdsmen were quarreling on Grazing land. That was the main cause. V.5a increased livestock increased space problems, especially for grazing. Does that ring a bell for us in Nigeria because of insecurity? Genesis 13:6 *“But the land could not support them while they stayed together.”* It is clear the land could not support the two rich families. They needed space. But did they need to fight? What does fight indicate? It shows lack of Christian maturity. It was the herdsmen who were fighting. But it was moving towards the direction of Abram and Lot and that would engulf the family and destroy relationship. Today, and increasingly so, land is the major cause of conflict.

1. Lack of space always ignites conflict between main and interest parties as in the case of Abram and Lot. *They forget they are brothers.*
2. Greed and conflict between ministers of the Gospel. *They forget they are brothers.*
3. Corruption in the Church that is when leaders pilfer with Church funds, the stories always go around and get others angry. Those who are not part of the corruption express their feelings in backbiting and rumour mongering. They forget they are brothers.
4. Biblical illiteracy among leaders: The Bible is our tool but it gets abandoned for traditional methods. They forget they are brothers.
5. Immaturity in Christ is a major factor: The conflict in Corinth which drew Paul's attention was clear case of spiritual immaturity and leadership sycophancy. Instead of worshipping God we have been worshipping each other. WE see false sense of worship and respect in the name of respect. (1Corinthians 3:1ff). They forget they are brothers.
6. Lack of walking close with God: How does it feel like to work for someone without walking with him? Many of us are working for God without walking with him.
7. Lack of following Church policy: COCIN is an organized Church with fairly organize policy. Many leaders just do not use the instruments.
8. Postings and limited space, they forget they are brothers
9. Looking for richer congregations in form of lobbying with personal interests of gaining popularity and getting gifts from rich members.
10. Poor time management by leaders frustrate time conscious leaders
11. Control of resources: Who is in controls and who gets what have been a major source of conflict in the Church. They forget they are brothers
12. Wives of Leaders themselves, they forget they are brothers and sisters
13. Children of Pastors and Leaders, they forget they brothers and sisters
14. Lack of Tolerance, they forget they are brothers
15. Tribalism, they forget they are brothers and one big family/tribe of Christ
16. Desperation for leadership Position: Chairman/Secretary up the ladder and down the ladder, they forget they are brothers
17. Discontentment, they forget they are brothers 1 Tim.6:6ff (Dashan: 2016).

MINISTRY OF PROPHET AMOS

The Times of Amos: Amos' ministry occurred in the latter part of the reign of Jeroboam II (c. 782-753 B.C.), when this prosperous and idolatrous sovereign ruled contemporaneously with

Uzziah (Azariah) of Judah (c. 791-740 B.C.). Therefore 765-750 B.C. would be approximately the time of Amos. It was age of economic boom with luxurious living, injustice, oppression against the poor, moral corruption and rampant idolatry. Amos directed his fiery oratory against these sins.

The Prophet: Amos (“burden”) was a simple shepherd and dresser of sycamore fruit (7:14) from Tekoa, a hill country town about 10 miles of S of Jerusalem. He was called to be prophet to the whole house of Jacob (3:1, 13), but chiefly to the northern kingdom (7:14-15) at the main sanctuary at Bethel (7:10). He met the opposition of the high priest Amaziah, who reported the fearless prophet and preacher to Jeroboam II. Amos doubtless reduced his prophecies to writing shortly after his return to Tekoa (Merrill, 1967:407). The 8 B.C. Prophetic Ministry was a tough one existed amidst the corruption as mentioned earlier of Amos day. Israel at the days of Amos was politically insecure and spiritually smug. About 40 years earlier, at the end of his ministry, Elisha had prophesied the resurgence of Israel's power (2Kings 13: 17-19). Jonah made a resemblance prophecy over the restoration of Israel greater than it has ever witnessed since the days of Solomon (2Kings 14: 25); then the nation got assurance of the restoration. The core of the Prophet Amos Message is in Amos 5:24 *“But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream”* NIV (Kenneth: 1995).

Social Justice and Peace-building as Panacea to Church and Nigerian State

The Panacea to the Church and Nigeria State is Amos 5:24; *“But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream”* (NIV). Justice is missing in the Church and the society of Nigeria State has been grossly affected. Some concerned Church Fathers who so wish to enact Justice have limited range to which they could perform. For instance, the authority of Christian Association of Nigeria, C.A.N., cannot exact any law over denominations that are not under participating under them. There are some evils that are been perpetrated in the closest of the Church. The Stefanos Foundation are doing a lot in advocacy for social justice and needs encouragement from C.A.N and other faith-based organizations to intensify in their advocacy for social justice in the Church and the Nigerian State.

Some people have denied rights to political positions for lack of qualified certificates. Unfortunately, the President cannot boldly present a substantive certificate and still contested for the second tenure and was said to won by all means. Injustice is the order of the day in Nigeria like what Israel and Judah experienced in the days of Amos. Nigeria is a vast land with boundaries of States, the paper hence suggests that the Fulani Herdsmen should go back to their State and operate as they like there. The Governor of Kano State made a clarion call to Fulani's to come to his State and rear their Cows, but they said that they prefer the forest region of Nigeria then, why are they giving the forest region Problems? The Federal Government should either legalize the use of AK 47 to all Nigerians and not only to a particular tribe. Carrying of weapon should not be restricted to the Fulani Herdsmen only. No tribe has the monopoly of war. The recovery of the weapons has only be traced to the middle belt and Southern Nigerians, as the Northerners, Fulani's who carry the guns are left untouched.

Another possible solution was suggested by Ayodele Fayose, as in Ogidiolu (170), the former Governor of Ekiti State, who encouraged his people and the vigilante group to arm themselves

with weapons and kill any Fulani Herdsmen who attempt to kill their Children or rape their wives.

The silence of President Muhammadu Buhari on this speaks volumes of his support and mentorship to the ongoing killings. There have been a lot of open riots, peaceful protest and demonstration and displays against the killings with the recent one by the Southern Kaduna women and female children dress almost naked in a protest without any action from the Presidency. A change of Presidency to another tribe may be a possible Panacea to the Herdsmen killings (Ogidiolu: 2019). Nigerian Leaders are with the attitude of self-satisfaction in expense of the poor Masses that they govern. Embezzlement is the order of the day; such is seen as the National Cake which only could be bitten by few as other majority go on hunger strike. A State government was recently making jest of the Church Leaders as incompetent to correct him. To him, the accused Church Leader does everything that he practices. Then who will correct who? Serious of this is the jest of Church Leaders to end COVID- 19 pandemic.

THE PANACEA

The Panacea from all the afore-listed injustices are outline as indicated below:

- Ministers of the Gospel must be ready to jettison gifts that could distract them from saying the truth. They should be ready to contended and having self-reliance like Prophet Amos and Patriarch Abraham.
- The cry for Masses should not be assignment of few people like in the days of Prophet Amos and people who are seen as opposition to the government when they talk. It must be a collective vision and passion.
- Restructuring of the Constitution is extremely necessary, as the current Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is not in favour of non-Muslims.
- Social Justice and Peace-building must start from the house of God. For Christians to make a reasonable impact in the society, justice, peace and equity are needed.
- The Godly values are missing in the Church and Nigeria State. Truth is the bedrock of Justice and peace-building. There is need to revive all of our distorted values.

CONCLUSION

A lot of problems have compounded the situation of Nigeria as a whole. All of these cases demonstrate that justice and peace are important factors in fighting against insecurity in the Nation. It is believed that the application of the above Panacea could be a possible way out for the progressing Nigeria. The mission to build peaceful State must be the passion and desire of every Church member and the State of Nigeria as a whole.

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