

## RELIGIOUS AGITATIONS AND POLITICAL RESTRUCTURING IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

This paper discusses ethno-religious agitations and political restructuring in Nigeria. As a result of Nigeria's different categories of ethnic and religious groups replete with different norms and values, political restructuring in Nigeria has been greeted with issues of contentious debate where various politicians, scholars and human right activist argue that federalism promote disunity. Thus, ethnic and religious agitations in Nigeria continue to take different dimensions from the cries of power sharing, economic and infrastructural development distribution, states and local governments creation, resource control, religious manipulation to restructuring of the current federal construct. Hence, in view of the trending arguments and agitations inspired by ethnic and religious affiliations in the country pertaining to political restructuring, the need arose for an academic investigation into the matter, in order to unearth how these have hindered unity in the country with a view of proffering sustainable recommendation so as to avert the looming danger that may soon be rekindled through ethno-religious agitations. Historical and phenomenological research methods were employed in this work. The historical method provides the means through which problems that arise from past events are dealt with whereas, the phenomenological method presents the experiences just as they are to avoid bias. Data were aided through the application of primary and secondary methods of data collection and were descriptively presented. The findings revealed that political restructuring if applied would favour the Nigerian populace better due to Nigeria multi-ethnic nature.

**Keywords:** Ethnicity, Religion and Political Restructuring

### Introduction

Many years after the first and second amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1906 and 1914 respectively by Lord Lugard, Nigeria has never rested from agitations by her ethnic and religious groups. Initially, it was amongst the people who referred to themselves as the 'majority', that is – the Hausa/Fulanis, Yorubas and Igbos. However, the relegated 'minority' ethnic groups who reside in the North East, North Central, South-South and Ondo State started to agitate as a result of marginalization. This led to the creation of mid-western region and other subsequent states and local governments' creation exercises. According to Ekot (cited by Paul, Audu and Eri, 2017), Nigerians on 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1960 became the official rulers of the gigantic entity called Nigeria put together by the British with heaps of unresolved problems. Thus, the seeds of disunity sown at amalgamation are growing everyday with ominous signs. In addition, Paul, Alih and Eri (2014) assert that:

There have been waves of unrest in which erstwhile neighbours are pitted against each other and those assailed are told to 'go home' and are expelled from specific geo-physical spaces. Furthermore, the assailed ethnic groups are frequently referred to as 'settlers' by other groups who claim to be indigenes of particular geo-political settings (p.88).

A major assumption that underlies the study of ethnicity, religion and national restructuring question in Nigeria is that, it constitutes the fundamental basis for multiple identities,

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diversity and the framework of a single, integrated political system in the country. Therefore, the background of this study ranges from the fact that despite “the unity in diversity” as claimed by Nigerians, there are noticeable divisions in areas such as politics, religion, ethnicity to mention a few. It is this view that Ebun (cited by Paul, Audu and Eri, 2017) observes that:

In Nigeria, the fear of domination of one region by the other is lively. Marginalisation and tribalism are still noticeable. The level of development in the country is still very low. Agitation for state creation is on the high. Religious conflicts are still common in the country (p. 15).

Hence, ethno-religious agitations, protest for power sharing, economic advantage and restructuring Nigeria since the emergence of federalism in 1954 till date has assumed a contemporary issue within the governance circle and recently, the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic. Again, the colonial masters have been blamed by some school of thought for this situation that created a national unity question which involves the challenges and dilemmas associated with accommodating multiple identity communities with the framework of a single, integrated and national political system.

Hitherto, no issue commands a greater, broader consensus in Nigeria today than the need for restructuring the Nigerian federation. Almost the entire Nigerian socio-cultural-political groups (South West/Yoruba nation; South-South; South-East/Ndigbo; Middle Belt and the former Northern region) are working to announce their template for restructuring (Editorial Board, 2018). Even some political parties, have either announced details of their position on restructuring or made ‘true federalism’ the center piece of their manifestos for a better Nigeria. It is fair to admit however that there is still reasonable disagreement regarding the consistency of the case for restructuring and the nature and content of restructuring.

It is in this view that this paper tries to discuss ethno-religious agitations and political restructuring in Nigeria. The purpose is to uncover how these have jeopardized unity in the country. The objectives are to discuss the impact ethnicity/religious agitation have made on the country as well as the challenges to the long clamour for restructuring. Recommendations will also be made on ways to move the country forward. The researchers employ both historical and phenomenological research methods. Data used were derived from primary and secondary sources and were descriptively presented.

### **Conceptualizing Political Restructuring**

Political restructuring is one concept or notion that means different things to different political leaders in contemporary federal systems more so in those where most nationalities seek a radically restructured federation in which the power of the federal state is reduced. For Oluokoshi and Agbu (1996), “political restructuring seems to be informed by the poor praxis of an admittedly formal federal system” (p. 87). In other words, the clamour for restructuring is more stringent in countries with a federal form of government – and perhaps also a federal constitution – but with a unitary practice. As Stepan (cited by Amuwo and Hérault, 2004) has noted, “what counts is not the rather trivial constitutional structure, but rather the political and economical culture” (p. 5).

The political and economic culture of a federal system in terms of the aggregate premises – both value and factual, of governance can, to varying degrees, depending on the nature and character of the federal state, be antithetical to the wishes, aspirations and goals of individuals and nationalities. However, according to Yahaya (2018), “restructuring is a process to change the way in which government conduct business of public affairs” (p. 87). To him, restructuring does not mean the merging of states, as some people would think. Rather, it is a process people envisaged, that could allow each region to control its natural mineral and human resources and pay royalties to the central government. Thus, many scholars, politicians and other pressure groups advocate for restructuring in Nigeria with no fewer than two



political grounds. First, it was argued that this type of federal system operated in Nigeria promote disunity since the different ethnic groups in the country have different norms and values. Secondly, it's being argued that present federal system in Nigeria did not promote economic development because central government dominate the economy while those who produce the economy are living in hunger and abject poverty while the money is going to the pocket of few individuals. Nevertheless, the truth of the matter is that Nigerian politicians have been calling for new pattern of power sharing not because they are genuinely interested in gaining a share of power in the interest of their respective nationality, religious or interest groups, but because they see such arrangement as an easy route to grab power and deploy it for primitive private capital accumulation.

However, the question that is yet to be addressed in a country where a few control the levers of power (both within the public and private sectors and have been over empowered at the disadvantage of the majority), is how can this few minority allow any kind of restructuring to take place for the benefit of poor majority? Thus, lending his voice to the call for restructuring in Nigeria, former vice president, Abubakar (cited by Yahaya, 2018) chose to say:

Our current structure and practices has encouraged a major impediment to the economic and political development of our country, in short, it has not served Nigeria well, and at risk of reproach it has not served any part of the country, the North as well. The call for structuring is even more relevant today in light of the governance and economic challenges facing us as well as rising tide of agitations, some militant and violent, requires a reset in our relationship as a united nation (p. 87).

Restructuring which is a process of relinquishing/decentralizing powers to the federating zones/states will therefore expedite development being that it will encourage competition amongst the geo-political zones/states.

### The Impact of Ethnicity and Religious Agitations in Nigeria

Ethnicity refers to some cultural factors binding a group of people together. These factors include language, dressing, food, mode of greeting and sometimes religion. Obo (2018) says they are people with common identity. Nigeria today was the creation of the British colonists through the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorate in 1914. Prior to this, "Nigeria" was a pluralistic society with many autonomous political entities, hence the multi-ethnic and multi-religious nature of the country. The polarization of religion as an instrumentality for administrative convenience in Nigeria began with the colonial Administrations. This led Akpanika (2017) to say that, "regrettably the seed planted 103 years (1914 – 2017) ago has gradually grown into a monster that is becoming impossible to subdue." (p.65). The historical root of this tragic development is traceable to constitutional regionalism and the divide and rule policy of the colonial administration. The policy rather than unite the heterogeneous nation had many negative impacts on her among which are:

- i) Promotion of political bias:
- ii) Promotion of religious bias:
- iii) Promotion of ethnicity and regional biases:

Despite the 1914 amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates by Lord Lugard, people from different ethnic groups are yet to accept a common identity as Nigerians. Nnonyelu (2001) asserts that:

Nigerian citizen ... see himself first, as a member of a clan, and more interestingly as a member of an ethnic nationality. Rarely, does he regard himself as a Nigerian, except if the sharing of the national cake occupies prime position in the agenda of national discourse. Even then, his greatest qualification is his ethnic identity (p. 145).

Regrettably, Olu-Adeyemi (2017) adds that:

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We seem not to have recognized yet, that the negative use of ethnicity can hinder the orderly development or enforcement of the rule of law as well as the overall conduct and management of national affairs. Today, there are still pockets of ethnicity induced restiveness, replete with growing violence (p. 27).

but it needs to be said also, that this restiveness continues, because some elect to exploit them for political and material gains. Thus, the real culprit in managing inter-ethnic relations in Nigeria is not the diversity which we cannot abolish. Rather, it is the elite manipulation of ethnicity and religion and the failure to define and agree on national rules of the game on which to base our political and economic processes.

Where you come from today in Nigeria determines your life chances and also your position in the social relations of production. Merit has been jettisoned on the altar of mediocrity, federal character, quota system and others which is evident even in unity schools' examination cut off marks. Political parties, political participation, appointments and employments are viewed and handled with ethnic, religious or political biases. Nigeria as multi-ethnic and multi-religious country has two major religious: Christianity and Islam, each competing and claiming superiority and dominance over each other in number and in might. This claim of superiority as well as dominance fuelled by ethnicity and politics has served as the foundation for religious intolerance and several socio-political crises that have bedeviled Nigeria since independence in 1960.

Nevertheless, since Nigeria became a federal state in 1954 after the termination of Macpherson constitution in 1951 – 1952 and subsequently the federal constitution of 1955, the struggle for ethnic development and dominance over the other started (even) along regional divides. Precisely, the "minority groups struggle" surfaced. The result of this agitation manifested in the creation of mid-western region in 1963 with its headquarters in Benin; twelve states in 1967; nineteen states in 1976; twenty one states in 1987; thirty states in 1991 and thirty six states in 1996 and the current cry for additional one state to the present day south-east geo-political zone. All these states creation exercises pointed to the steps taken to moderate the effect of ethnic agitation within the Nigeria political structure. But Attoh and Soyombo (2011) argue that, "some ethnic nationalities have little or no respect for upholding the unity of Nigeria. With states creation, consideration of national unity assumed secondary interest" (p. 42).

Nonetheless, ethno-religious agitations nearly delayed the country's independence due to fear of southern domination harboured by the North. Since then, ethno-religious struggles and clashes have been very rampant in Nigeria and can now be seen as part of the nation's politics. This coupled with the minority agitations have made ethnicity and religion to occupy the centre-stage in political discussions in Nigeria.

Although ethnicity and religion have been seen as having negative impacts on nations, studies have revealed that there are a lot of positive attributes to them. Among these positive impacts includes:

- i. Contributes to democratic practice: Nnoli (cited by Obi and Obikeze, 2004) explains that:

First, the political demands of many movements concern liberty and justice. They express fears about the oppression of their members by other groups and about the nepotistic distribution of public service jobs and social amenities, and the imposition of the culture of the dominant ethnic group on the others. In this way, ethnicity contributed to democratic practice by its emphasis on equity and justice in socio-political relations. Second, it leads to the appreciation of one's own social roots in a community and cultural group which is essentially not only for stability of the individual and ethnic group but that of the country as a



whole. Third, it provides a sense of belonging as part of intermediate layer of social relations between the individual and the state. Fourth, ethnicity provided a local mobilization base for the anti-colonial movement for national freedom. Fifth, ethnic identity has been instrumental in the promotion of community development in the rural areas. Sixth, the mobilization of the various ethnic groups behind the various factions of a nations ruling class contributes to the decentralization of power in the country which is healthy for democratic freedoms (p. 208).

- ii. **Promote national integration:** Obasi (2001) agreeing that ethnicity has some positive sides claims that ethnicity aids national integration in the sense that ethnic groups serve as a mechanism of resocialization. For example, by means of ethnic contacts, the individual is recruited into many non-ethnic nationalist groupings. Also, members of ethnic groups seek to raise the status of the whole group thereby engendering mobility and social contact. Ethnic groups help keep the class structures fluid and so prevent the emergence of castes. This is because by encouraging social mobility, it minimizes any tendency towards castes formation.
- iii. **Serve as outlet for political tensions:** ethnic groups serve as an outlet for political tensions. It helps for instance, to divert expectations from the state to other social groups. By performing this important escape goat function, it may permit individuals to challenge persons rather than the authenticity of the office these persons occupy.

### Problems and Challenges of Political Restructuring in Nigeria:

Although many Nigerians are clamouring for the restructuring of the country as a way of ensuring equity and justice for the development of the nation, yet this appears to be far reaching as this process is faced with many problems and challenges among which are:

- i. **Divergent approaches to restructuring:** the clamour for restructuring has polarised the country. Regions in the south believe in it, but they have different views of what it is all about. To the Igbos in the southeast, restructuring will guarantee confederation in the constitution; the Yoruba in the southwest want a restructuring that would take the country back to regionalism; while the south-south is pushing for resource control. While the positions of regions in the South are not irreconcilable, that of the three regions in the North is a different ball game. The debate has pitched the South against the North, which is different to restructuring in any form. Eminent leaders from the south believe what can save the country from disintegrating is restructuring. They are of the view that the unity of Nigeria and harmonious co-existence of the various ethnic nationalities will be strengthened by fiscal federalism and restructuring of the polity.

Inasmuch as the concept of restructuring has assumed different meanings across the six geo-political zones of Nigeria following the renewed agitations, it is however challenging to establish a common meaning that will be acceptable to all. This resulted from the fact that Nigeria emerged in 1960 as an independent nation with a three imbalance regional configuration, autonomy and hegemony for the so-called majority Hausa/Fulani-North, Igbo-East and Youth-West. Even in the pre-independence, each ethnic group was operating its own different political, economic and administrative system. This metamorphosed into regionalism which empowered dominant ethnic groups in three regions. This arrangement was criticized notwithstanding. According to Suberu (2001), the palpable causalities and predictable critics of this trilateral federalism were the country's estimated 250 smaller or 'minority' communities, which constituted approximately one third of the regional and national populations. He submitted further that, the secondary victims of regional federalism were the South Western Yoruba and South Eastern Igbo groups, whose regional security was menaced



by the demographic preponderance and the political advantage that Hausa-Fulani dominated Northern region enjoyed over the two southern regions respectively.

*Insecurity:* fifty-nine years after independence, calls for restructuring of the country have dominated national discourse with a lot of interest and obsession following the alarming state of insecurity in the country. In the First Republic, Paul, Audu and Eri (2017) observe that, "restructuring took the form of region and native authority governments' creation. Presently, stakeholders are currently placing emphasis on the entrenchment of fiscal federalism, resource control, state police, equity, justice and fairness" (p. 17). The issue became topical following the growing menace of Fulani herdsmen at the birth of Buhari's (civilian) administration as well as the drastic reduction in the nation's earnings with slump of the price of crude oil; the return of militancy in the Niger Delta region; and the bid to review the constitution. Nigerian elders who witnessed the pre-independence and First Republic allude to the glorious days of the First Republic, when there was healthy rivalry and competition among the regions. The regions as they were had relative advantages that evolved around rich agricultural resources and animal husbandry.

Be that as it may, Abubakar (2017) in his own view stated that:

If we cut out all sophistry, posturing and pretentious, it is clear to me that the resistance against restructuring is based on three interrelated factors, namely dependence, fear and mistrust. Dependency of all segments of the country on oil revenues, fear of loss of oil revenues by non-oil producing states or regions and mistrust of the motives of those angling for restructuring. The bulk of the calls for restructuring comes from the south while the bulk of the opposition to it comes from the North (p. 2).

This implies that it will be critical for all parties to put their cards on the table, give one another the necessary reassurances and make the necessary compromises in order to secure a restructuring deal. Although arguments against restructuring came mostly from the North, there are, however, elements from the other regions who are in government and who argue against restructuring, claiming that it is only good leadership that is needed to resolve our nation's challenges as evident in the Vice-President Osibango's speech that the problem of Nigeria was not geographical restructuring but prudent management of national resources and providing for the people properly (Agbakwuru, 2018). Opponents also argue that restructuring is a ploy to break up the country. They insist that national unity is non-negotiable and claim that the matter has been resolved by the civil war. How the current structure is the only guarantee of unity is never really explained, neither is it demonstrated that devolving more powers and resources to federating units would lead to a breakup of the country.

*Corruption:* the high level of corruption in the country poses serious challenge to the clamour for restructuring. It is true that a lot of Nigerians from all walks of life, ethnicity and religion appears to believe that the current Nigerian federal structure needs restructuring. It is not uncommon to hear that Nigeria will never move forward or develop if restructuring of the Nigerian federation do not take place. Some are even saying that breakup of Nigeria is imminent unless restructuring takes place. Egbosiuba (2017) opines that:

The curious thing about the clamour for restructuring of Nigeria current federal structure is that none of the advocates have clearly detailed what they want to see Nigeria look like. It appears that the latest agitation is another excuse by some Nigerians to blame lack of political, social and economic development of the country on the structure of the nation rather than on their fellow Nigerians and their leaders who have failed the country (p. 1).

How anybody thinks that Nigeria will ever develop with the type of rampant corruption that has permeated all aspects of Nigerian life is an illusion. Nigeria has one of the best constitutions in the world and endowed with abundant natural and human resources but has



managed to use these resources in an unproductive manner. The best constitution on the world will not do any good for Nigeria if the people that are supposed to implement it are corrupt and morally bankrupt.

### The Need for Political Restructuring in Nigeria

Political restructuring in a federal polity is intended to achieve certain specific objectives, it is meant to serve as a steering mechanism to properly give focus and locus to attempts at collective identity and distributive politics. The aim is to correct perceived structural defects and institutional deformities. To tinker with political structures is perhaps suggestive that whilst democratic practice may not yet have firm roots, the democratic idea has some form of expression. The importance of the latter ideal in a federal system can hardly be over-emphasized, particularly where there are not only actually existing irredentist movements but also nationalities being driven to agitate for separatist identities.

However, while those calling for restructuring may be driven by different motives, there is certainly a strong case for restructuring our federation. Reasons are simply that the current structure, which concentrated too much power and resources in the centre, makes us economically unproductive, uncompetitive, indolent, politically weak, disunited and unstable. It has made our component units too suspicious of one another, a suspicion that makes any rational discussion very difficult. This structure, which can be called "Unitary federalism", does not serve the country or any section well. It rests on the foundation of dependence on oil revenues, which seem to be in long-term decline and is, therefore, unsustainable. And a country remains united in the long term only because the component units believe that it is in their interest to remain part of the country, that there are important things that they get from remaining part of the country than not. Leaders from across the country acknowledged this and gave voice to it in the last political conference held in 2014.

Although, we have become so accustomed to the current structure and addiction to oil money that even some of the elites still cling to a belief that what we currently have is the most beneficial and is immutable. Nothing can be further from the truth. This is a federal system that has fostered dependence on revenues derived mainly from three states and is characterized by excessive centralization and concentration of power and resources, and intense political competition and political instability. Today, regional gatherings are usually about grievances and how to get more from the central pool of resources but hardly about how to produce and contribute to increasing those resources.

While there is no ideal federal system to which every federating country has to aspire, there are better working federal systems from which to draw lessons. We modeled our current federal system after the US, but seem to have avoided the critical elements that make the American system function better: greater autonomy for federating states and individuals. America's is a system that fosters individual freedom, productivity, competition, innovation and strong institutional checks on power wielders.

Nevertheless, we have a unique opportunity now, with all the agitation and clamour of restructuring, to have a conversation that would lead to changes in the structure of our federation in order to make it stronger, enhance our unity and promote peace, security, better and more accountable governance. Ours should be a federal system that delegates to the federal government only powers and responsibilities for those matters that are better handled by a central government such as defence, foreign affairs, inter-governmental affairs, setting overall national economic policy and standards. Other powers and responsibilities should reside with the states, which will include the power to create and fund local governments as they deem fit.



to partly be a referendum on restructuring. To be credible, political parties and candidates need to spell out the specifics of the restructuring they offer.

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<sup>31</sup> *ibid*



# THE ROLE OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION FOR THE POSITIVE CHANGE OF NIGERIA

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## Abstract

This paper examines the role of theological education for the positive change of Nigeria. The focus is to bring to the fore how theological education can be used to bring about Socio – ethical transformation that in turn will pave the way for national cohesion, peace and justice which are essentials for national development. Past administrations (military and civilian) have to a large extent failed to address squarely the many political and socio – economic problems facing the Nigerian nation at large. The current administration led by the President Muhammadu Buhari came on board with the *Change Mantra* during their electioneering campaign. Unfortunately majority of the electorates are yet to see the said *change*. Against this background, the current topic adopts analytical and phenomenological approaches to explore and study the concept validity of every relevant dimension of the subject under consideration. The work notes that so much depends on the input of the theological educators in terms of teaching by example than by precepts only. It further asserts that the ‘evangelical boom’ being experienced by Christianity in the nation, particularly in the southern part, offers hope through what the Bible says, but despair through the lavish life style of the preachers of the gospel today leaves much to be desired. The paper recommends amongst other things that theological educators should emphasize the ethical teachings of the scripture and while using the same to rebuke, correct and train in righteousness to the end that the citizens will work assiduously in becoming positive agents for national development.

## Introduction

Theology is that branch of learning which concerns the science of God. Theology is a word derived from two Greek words: θεος (*theos*) and λογος (*logos*). The word *theology* is sometimes used in a broad sense, meaning not only the study of doctrine, but also biblical studies and church history, as when one speaks of a faculty of theology in a university. However, the contextual sense in which theology has been discussed in this article is systematic theology - the ordered exposition of the beliefs of a religious faith as a whole<sup>28</sup>. Christian systematic theology is subdivided into the doctrine of God (theology in the strictest sense); Christology, the doctrine of the person of Christ; soteriology, the doctrine of salvation; anthropology, the doctrine of humanity; pneumatology, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit; eschatology, the doctrine of the end time; and ecclesiology, the doctrine of the church<sup>29</sup>.

Paul's Epistle to the Romans is perhaps the nearest approach to a theological treatise in the New Testament. Beginning with the sinful human condition, Paul develops a doctrine of justification by faith and sketches a scheme of universal salvation. As has already been mentioned, theology began among the Greeks as a scientific discipline, and it was the convergence of Greek philosophy and biblical faith that gave rise to the great age of patristic theology<sup>30</sup>. Although German theologian Adolf von Harnack lamented the “Hellenization” of the Gospel, most theologians would agree with Tillich that biblical faith had to respond to the intellectual challenge of Greek philosophy.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup>Wentz, Richard (1977) “Theological Education” The Encyclopaedia Americana New York: American Incorporation, 26:p.362.

<sup>29</sup> Amotham, V (1987) Spiritual formation, one of the two major concerns commended by WCC to the programme on Theological Education (PTE) Vancouver p.1

<sup>30</sup> Ferguson, Sinclair B. (ed. et al), (1994) New Dictionary of Theology, England, Inter-Varsity Press, p 680

<sup>31</sup> *ibid*



The oldest theology of all - that of the Greek philosophers, who invented the word *theology* - was based on rational reflection on God, the world, and human life. These philosophers explicitly contrasted the rational theological approach to the problem of God with the mythological stories of the gods told by the Greek poets. The rational approach has continued to have many adherents, such as Aquinas<sup>32</sup>, but the appeal to revelation as the source of theological truth has also been strong in the Christian, Jewish, Islamic, and several Eastern traditions.

There is no single, universally recognised method in theology. Method varies from one theologian to another and largely depends on the degree of importance attached to the various sources. Eleventh-century theologian Saint Anselm<sup>33</sup> is a good example of a theologian who used the method of rigorous logical argument. In his *Proslogion*, Anselm sought to prove the existence of God from the concept of a perfect being (the ontological argument)<sup>34</sup>, and in *Cur Deus Homo* he argued that, given the existence both of a benevolent God and of the sinfulness of humanity, the Christian doctrines of incarnation and atonement may be deduced by logical necessity. Few theologians<sup>35</sup> have been as rigorously logical as Anselm, but most have aimed at logical coherence. A minority, however, including 2nd-century church father Tertullian and 19th-century Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard<sup>36</sup>, have denied that theology can be conceived as a rational system and have held that the human experience of God reveals discontinuities and paradoxes. Rudolf Bultmann<sup>37</sup> advocated a method of "demythologising" on the assumption that the essential meaning of the New Testament is an understanding of human existence that must be disengaged from the mythological language current at the time when the New Testament was written. Bultmann's project involved the translation of this "essential meaning" into the language of modern existentialist philosophy. Theologians who are reluctant to begin with an appeal to authoritative texts, whether biblical or dogmatic, begin the task from the opposite end, analysing human experience and its problems, and then asking how traditional wisdom might illuminate or resolve these problems. Twentieth-century German theologian Paul Tillich<sup>38</sup> has used the expression "method of correlation" to describe this procedure in theology. He and others have made much use of phenomenology in their analysis of human experience.

### Education

The word education is from the Latin word, 'educare', 'educare' meaning "to direct". It is a process which involves a systematic system of training. In education, behaviour is originated and changed. It is the development of knowledge. Education also is a universal practice engaged in by societies at all stages of development. According to John Dewey "education is the reconstruction of experience."<sup>39</sup> Thus the reconstruction of experience leads

<sup>32</sup> An encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris*, on a major revival of Thomistic influence in the Roman church and Roman Catholic theology and philosophy 1960 p.322

<sup>33</sup> Whaling, F. "The Development of the Word 'Theology,'" *SJT* 34 (1981):pp. 289-312.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid*

<sup>35</sup> Storr, Schleiermacher, Baumgarten-Crusius; also Kling, in Herzog, *Real-Encyklop.* 12: pp.600-606). Theology thus becomes the science of the unfolded, objective self-manifestation of the Divine Spirit in the phenomenal kingdom of God — a practical science which develops progressively and side by side with that kingdom. But it is nonetheless a positive science also through its relation to the kingdom

<sup>36</sup> Pelt, *Theol. Encyklop.* (Hamb. and Gotha, 1843), with whose theory the above article is substantially agreed. See *Encyclopaedia of Theology*, with the literature there referred to McClintock and Strong *Encyclopaedia*, Electronic Database. Copyright © 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006 by Biblsoft, Inc.

<sup>37</sup> Dzurgba, Akpenpuun (1993) *Christianity and Human Mobilization: An Instrument for Social justice, in Quito Ibadan, Journal of Religious Studies*. XXVII-2, June & December 1993, pp76-77

<sup>38</sup> *ibid*

<sup>39</sup> Education, in the sense above mentioned, was at all times highly esteemed, and educated persons were treated with great respect, and, were called "sons of the noble," and allowed to take precedence of others.



to a change in behaviour which is regarded as when learning has actually takes place. Education is equally equipping for life. It is a process by which one generation transmits its culture to the succeeding generation. There are basically two main forms of education; formal and informal education.

From a philosophical point of view, not all learning can be defined as education. Okeke<sup>40</sup> identified three characteristics that distinguish true education from such things as routine learning; purely mechanical training and indoctrination. He therefore said that education:

- deals with knowledge that is recognizably worthwhile and capable of achieving voluntary and committed response from the learner.
- leads to a quality of understanding that gives rise to new mental perspectives in the learner.
- uses methods that encourage the exercise of judgment by the learner and the use of his/her critical facilities.

In a sense, education is a society's cultural reproductive system. By Education, society reproduces itself, passing on its main characteristics to the next generation. The result is that each generation is different from that from which it sprang, yet preserves a family likeness that in the short term is unmistakable. In this sense it is education that keeps the society alive. That is the process of socialization of every given society.

### **Theological Education**

In the light of the above assertion Igbari says: "theology is the study of the word of God, whose task involves its origin its content and its interpretation, for the purpose of discovering and knowing more about God the creator of heaven and earth."<sup>41</sup> In an attempt to defend the integrity of God, Gbonigi observed man's incapability of making God an object of our reflection, knowledge, research and speech in the sense in which natural sciences understand the words by putting forward hypotheses, through which they devise experiments, measuring and calculating<sup>42</sup>. This however does not preclude the fact that believers seek to understand God through various media that are available to them.

In view of this, Gbonigi quoting Karl Barth ranked theology among the field of human endeavour traditionally classified as sciences because theology seems to signify a special science, whose task is to apprehend, understand and speak of God.<sup>43</sup> Rowan William sees theology as a phenomenon to be studied and capable of changing every man. According to him theology begins when something in the human world and human lives has struck at such depth that we need language more than just the conventional language of human agency and historical forces<sup>44</sup>. In essence, theology arises when the world looks new. The impulse to do theology arises when the world looks different from what we thought it was.

same authority deplores the degeneracy of later times in this respect (Mishna, Sotah, 9:15, volume 3, 308, Surenhus). Chardin, *Voyages*, 4:224, Langles; Olearius, *Travels*, page 214, 215; Pietro della Valle, *Viaggi*, 2:188). Smith, s.v. On the subject generally, see Jahn, *Bibl. Arch.* § 106, 166; Ursini, *Antiquitt. Hebr. scholst. acad.* (Hafn. 1702; also in Ugolini *Thesaur.* 21); Dumor, *De scholis et academ vett. Hebr.* (Wirceb. 1782; uncritical); McClintock and Strong *Encyclopaedia*, Electronic Database. Copyright © 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc.

<sup>40</sup> Okeke, T.I. (ed.) (2002) *Religion in a World of Change in African Ancestral Religion, Islam and Christianity*, Owerri, pp. 73-92.

<sup>41</sup> Igbari, Olusola (2001) *Theological Education in Nigeria: A Critical Review*, Ibadan, Codat Publications, p. 11.

<sup>42</sup> Gbonigi, Emmanuel B. (2004) *Refocusing Theological Education in the 21 Century*, A Text of the 46<sup>th</sup> Founder's Day Lecture of Immanuel College of Theology, 13 February p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid*

<sup>44</sup> Williams, Rowan (2006) "Theological Education and the Anglican Way" in Mike McCoy, (ed.), *Theological Education and the Anglican Way in Africa*, *The Anitepam Journal*, No. 52, p.5



For a comprehensive understanding of the discipline, the field of theological education had evolved into various theologies namely: Biblical Theology, systematic Theology, Liberation Theology, Evangelical Theology, Pastoral Theology, Dogmatic Theology, Experiential Theology, Islamic Theology, Historical Theology and Feminist Theology". As there are many theologies, 'it also manifested many disciplines, which is the reason why Alan Richardson and John Bowden described theology as a branch of rational account given of the Christian faith, as furnished by series of sub-disciplines such as Biblical Studies, Church History, Systematic Theology, Ethics and Pastoral Theology.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, theology is a wide area of study, which when properly utilised, has become vast avenue for better character formation of the populace. As vast as Christian theological education is, there is the need to mention that it possesses within it the power of information as well as that of transformation". The existence of this stimulated Rowan William to attempt differentiating between a theologically educated person and someone who simply knows a great deal about the Bible or history of doctrine. According to him, to be theologically educated involves the capability of engaging in the task of innovative interpretation of the scriptures and in ability to recognize holy lives.<sup>46</sup> In essence a theologically literate person agrees totally with consciously addressing the mind to both the study, application and internalizing the words therein into daily life's expressions. This is the stage at which a person is said to have had the fruit of the spirit.

### Significance of Theological Education in the positive change of Nigeria

Though there are many theological disciplines in the field of theological studies, Gbonigi made a clarification on the importance of each subject. In his presentation, we are furnished with the necessity of appreciating the richness of the field of theology. Generally, three major areas were identified which are necessary for our discussion. First to be identified is the area of Academics, which embraced the liberal or classical studies of the Bible. It comprises fields such as the Old Testament and New Testament Literature, systematic theology dogmatic theology, historical theology, philosophical theology etc. These are classed as the theological education which characterises the theoretical speculative and technical exercises. The academics embark on the task of reading and critical study of the Bible, with particular emphasis on understanding the biblical languages with the goal of identifying the mind of the divine from the immediate environment to the present day.

The second identified is the pastoral study. This involves the liturgical theology and homiletics, pastoral theology, evangelism, missiological studies etc.; they are the professional or vocational areas of theological education. This area is not usually taught in the Universities but a very important aspect of training in the seminary or theological schools. The third aspect of theological education which he considered as the main is the devotional; it is the most important aspect of theological education because it deals with ministerial formation for men and women being prepared for Church ministry. It is also important because of its commitment to spiritual issues focused on transforming the person involved in theological education<sup>47</sup>. Having completed the task, he affirmed that the three aspects of theological education and ministerial formation are inseparably linked together.

Obijole added "for theological education to exert the necessary impact on the society, the professional and devotional areas must have the academic disciplines as foundation." This

<sup>45</sup> *ibid*

<sup>46</sup> Obijole, Bayo (1993) "Religion: A mobilizing tool for Economic Recovery" in *Orita, Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, XXV1&2, June & December pp. 77.

<sup>47</sup> Gbonigi *op cit* p.4

<sup>48</sup> *ibid*

<sup>49</sup> Obijole, B  
Religious

<sup>50</sup> Tilich Paul

<sup>51</sup> *ibid*



assertion by Obijole agrees with Thomas Aquinas' thought that: theology is taught by God, teaches of God and leads to God.<sup>48</sup>

### **The Task of Theological Education in Changing Nigeria**

After remarking the triangular shape on which theological education is built, i.e. academic disciplines, ministerial formation and devotional life, it is pertinent to note that the three identified areas have collectively thrown great challenges to theologians and theological educators. In the area of academics, Rowan William tasks the theologians on speculating about the supposed impact that theology should make on those who engage in the discipline. While expressing his view, he understood theology as a practical discipline, which has the task of acquiring skills for living, skills that are shaped by a whole set of heritage of narratives, perspectives, images, metaphors, each of them traceable to some great upheaval in human understanding. This requires a responsibility, with the purpose of creating a sense of obedience in those who are affected by them.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, theology is about personal transformation, holiness and obedience, in order to make the Bible the primary record of the difference that God makes, and to enable it serve as the instrument towards attaining the purpose of the Church in the society. The course of theological discipline enhances authentic development in education, which in turn led to one being educated to respect and promote the values of authentic humanism. Leaders who would emerge within the course of theological integration, therefore, explore theological standpoint to develop an inner set of values which assist in evolving guidelines that help them make some vital decisions. These decisions are guided by different strands of experiences.

Paul Tillich observed that experience is the medium through which God speaks to us.<sup>50</sup> The experiences are not rigid or static, rather they are diverse and influenced by various situations. One is poised to agree with Stanko to lay claim that these experiences range from family examples, mentoring relationships, religious teachings, life failures, suffering through tough times, watching other leaders whom they admired and watching other leaders whom they did not admire<sup>51</sup>. These diverse experiences constitute the veritable sources through which theological education exert the necessary influence on the society. These values are integrated into a body of life, packaged towards attaining the true image of God in humanity, which itself is made up of personal and interpersonal relationship.

The African concept of a person is an all-inclusive one based on a combination of factors such as metaphysical, physical and social relations. As a matter of fact, it evolves the objectives of providing a framework such as the New Christian conception of man by which the African man can be described. Within this set goal, theological educators assiduously labour to frantically dissipate energy towards finding the relevance of theological education with specific assignment of evolving coherent and contextual languages that would showcase the living standard which Christ advocated as stipulated in the scripture.

### **The Pastoral Aspect of Theological Tasks**

The task of the pastoral training becomes enormous in view of the challenges created by the sphere of academics as enumerated above. Recognising the existing interwoven and interlocking relationship among the key players, the major relevance of the pastoral wing is the task of training the professionals who have direct contact with the society.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid*

<sup>49</sup> Obijole, Bayo (1993) "Religion: A mobilizing tool for Economic Recovery" in *Orita, Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, XXV1&2, June & December pp. 76-77.

<sup>50</sup> Tillich Paul *op cit* p.74

<sup>51</sup> *ibid*



Pastoral agents have themselves been transformed towards becoming transforming agent in Nigerian history and to determine what areas of Nigerian life God requires to be transformed. Transformation theoretically emphasises the message of the gospel against the ills in the society and substantially, by using the agency of the Church, to compliment the effort of the government. This is done by addressing neglected areas like social services and other areas currently seeking attention. The devotional life challenge of the task is equally enormous, in that it affects the frame of mind of the theologian. For a proper framing of the mind, the player is consciously being transformed into a devotee of the gospel for a pragmatic appreciation and application to personal living for the purpose of internalising its content.

Gbonigi commends the effect of this area as the most important aspect of theological education as a needed discipline to ensure that this in turn enables the candidate to be an effective servant of God in ministering the gospel of Christ to the spiritual and material needs of God's people in his or her professional or vocational calling<sup>52</sup>. Rowan William agrees with Gbonigi that theological education becomes a finished product, for a guide that educates the Christians on what he/she needed to know and do, as a doctrinal regulation for all living<sup>53</sup>. The level of internalising the scripture confirms the assertion of Apostle John that the word became flesh,<sup>54</sup> without which the effect of the scripture is nothing.

### Theological Education vis-à-vis Socio-Political concerns of Nigeria

Adeolu Adegbola was inclined to re-examine the theological distinction between the sacred and secular nature of Nigeria. According to him, while the term multi-religious or pluralism sound more accurate and helpful towards defining religious responsibility for change and progress in Nigeria, hence the term secularism, inhibit religious involvement in efforts towards mass mobilization<sup>55</sup>. In view of the above, theological relevance could rather be sought in the Latin phrase: *status confessio* meaning 'the status of confession'. Alan Richardson defined confession as: a form of declaration of religious conviction<sup>56</sup>. Practically observed, contemporary theology recognises and acknowledges that for an increasing number of Christians, considerable subjects of social political, economic or secular nature are capable of assuming a status of firm declaration of religious conviction.<sup>57</sup> For example, Desmond Tutu articulated issues such as anti-racism and apartheid, and considered them not merely a cultural or political option, rather of a deeply religious imperative based on firm theological convictions.<sup>58</sup> Current issues in Nigeria such as hot having respect for human lives, kidnapping, cultism in Institutions of higher learning, problems in the Niger Delta, terrorism, corruption, should not be classed as merely cultural or political matters but of religious importance based on firm theological concept. Having attached the status of confession on such issues, then theological relevance is sought by way of discussion, where moral depravity that smeared the image of the country are itemized, and such moral impunity in every segment is condemned in totality. Otherwise, theological solutions must be sought through

<sup>52</sup> ibid

<sup>53</sup> Williams, Rowan (2006) "Theological Education and the Anglican Way" in Mike McCoy, (ed.), Theological Education and the Anglican Way in Africa, *The Anitepam Journal*, No. 52, p.5

<sup>54</sup> John 1: 14

<sup>55</sup> Adegbola, Adeolu "Religious and theological strategies Christian" in *Orita, Ibadan Journal of Religious studies* XXV/1 -2, June to December, 1993, p. 40-14.

<sup>56</sup> Richardson, Alan and Bowden, John *Theology in A New Dictionary of Modern Theology* p.566

<sup>57</sup> Nihinlola, Eniola (2009) "Theological Education and Economic Empowerment in Africa: Investigation of Some Crucial issues" Paper at WAATI Conference at Warri p.53

<sup>58</sup> Aladejana, Tony Idowu (1995) *Philosophical Foundations of Education*, Obafemi Awolowo University of Ife-ife Series in Educational Studies, Nigeria, Macmillan, p.35



the instrumentality of the scripture for further suggestions toward articulating the values to instil new moral imperatives by which the image of Nigeria would get an enhancement.

### **Theological Education as Change Agent**

Theological education and change are two *podia* that must work hand in glove towards attaining moral purity and image enhancing of Nigeria. One does not doubt that as the realm of theology dealt with what concerns the spiritual sphere of the Nigerian society, change as a motto has the goal of creating awareness on Nigerian populace, towards rejuvenating in them the virtues that would re-present the Nigerian people as respectable and reputable citizens in the world. Invariably it does imply that both are committed to imbibe the principles of moral discipline; however, by implication, it involves forming ethical values with goals of making people have new orientation geared towards a new life. As such theological values are obtained in the fact that Christian programmes have mobilizing powers on its adherents. The mobilizing strategies of Theological Educators make the programme become imperative. Scholars have discovered the mobilizing power in religion that makes theological perspectives inevitable in an exercise of this magnitude.

Change from the theological stand-point involves radical approach and this goes beyond concentrating on the physical. Therefore it needs the mobilizing strategy such as exists in theological education. Social groupings are veritable avenues where mental orientations that make one develop the thinking faculty for critical value judgment. Values such as fairness, courage and justice are reassessed virtues in human behaviour which is a product human deployment.

Scholars have discovered the existence of grades of people within any existing social groupings and that each group respond differently to issues. The peasants is a group that lived within the purview of their income, their major concern is to make life continue within any reviling situation. Essentially, they are indifferent to socio-political changes whether positive or negative. Also there are the elitist group who are educated. To a large extent, they control a percentage of the economy, and they are susceptible to change as such they have their perception directed towards social reforms. Also there is an aristocratic group who belong to the ruling class. Their activities determine largely the fate of the educated and the peasants, their daily decisions make or mar the condition of the economy.

### **Theological Education and Leadership**

Theological education institutions are in the business of equipping leaders for the church, for Christian organisations and for society. If an institution is training its leadership well, it is because there is a planned concept of how leadership can be found, encouraged, developed, and used. Theological Education leaders in Nigeria should have a good team that not only leads but also models leadership. Theological education shapes the lives of students so that they can be used by God as leaders and influencers for the good of his kingdom. Ministry and life skills are primarily learned by watching someone do these things well. For excellence theological educators - the leaders, teachers and staff - must demonstrate the same knowledge, skills and character that the programme intends to develop in the students.

One cannot overemphasize the importance of character in leadership. Nigeria has lost direction because Theological education and/or educators have shifted their accents from moral and spiritual uprightness to money. Theological education and educators must go back to emphasising the whole gospel, instead of selective emphasis and hero worship. Whose ox is gored should not be important if the undiluted gospel is preached; and this is the work of Theological education. Who one is in the context of community communicates what is important to that community more than anything that the one might say. Professional



competence in Theological education as teachers or administrators goes hand in hand with godly attitudes and relationships.

A good leadership team will reflect a diversity of gifts, personalities and experiences. Theological educators respect and enjoy one another, rather than compete for control. There must be a collective commitment to resolve conflict and care for each another. Although many excellent programmes have been started by brilliant visionaries, they will not remain excellent if these visionaries don't know how to share their leadership and vision with others. Students will not learn the value of the body, networking and community if the Theological education leaders don't have leaders who trust or empower others. Graduates will imitate the leadership that they have observed. Accordingly, some graduates will start ideas that they alone rule over until they die. Graduates of institution may behave quite differently if they have watched leadership teams build on each other's gifts, and observed leaders willing to step aside and pass their leadership smoothly on to capable new hands. Great Theological education leadership teams will contribute greatly to offering Nigeria what her past and present governments know she needs the most (change) but have not discovered how to offer her.

### How Theological Educators would influence Nigeria

Theological education is the weapon of the Church to positively affect the populace and inoculate the virtue of good moral disposition in them. Whereas social class portrays a tendency to dichotomize between the rich and the poor and often is the cause of stratification and class differentiation, Theological Education is an avenue that comprises the rich and the poor in the society. The scripture is the original instrument of capturing their mind, and the medium of gaining their loyalty; it is an avenue which limits social grouping. Theological education exercise major control over thinking and behaviour. The combination affords theological educators to be properly informed about the state of mind of people at various strata of the economy, since he interacts with both rich and poor. Such understanding that moved the 8th century prophets like Amos, Micah, Hosea and Isaiah to cry for justice when they observed that many of the small farms of the peasants had been absorbed into large landed estates or farms of a new aristocracy of a ruling body of nobles. Theological educators should operate through Christian Institutions, such as schools, seminaries, Church-based Universities, hospitals, clinics, orphanages, rehabilitation centres, leprosy centres, business enterprises, social welfare. They should also work through the Associations like Christian Association of Nigeria, Boys' Brigade, Girls' Brigade, Fellowship of Christian Students, Scripture Union, etc. they should also labour through programmes such as catechism, evangelism, revivals, crusades, workshops, retreats, camps, seminars and symposia.

### Conclusion

Corruption is growing because, the law enforcement agencies, police, Independent corrupt Practice Commission (ICPC) the Economics and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and other related offences commissions have become mere toothless bulldogs. Theological education should enable the populace to confront the ills of the nation. The politicians that amass and flaunt wealth and rogues who should be rotting in jail but walk freely as heroes on the streets should be denounced. Common sense does not prevail in social issues because a large part of the populace is illiterate who and does not know its rights. Religions have been corrupted. The church has lost the prophetic voice because leaders had compromised their call, had lost their essence, had received selective favours from government and is in league with mal-administrators and tyrants. The church has joined the race for vanity and materialism at the expense of the oppression and impoverishment of the citizens. The Church has become a part of the problem of the nation. Indeed, "the corrupt

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church has become a challenge to the nation". The resultant effect of this state of disorientation, falsehood and meaninglessness is poverty lack of appreciation for human labour and dignity, poverty of good minds and ideas for progress, poverty of healthy physical and social environment conducive for peaceful co-existence etc. This is the environment where theological education must flourish and become a veritable tool to change Nigeria.

Theological institutions should be able to train and empower men and women in the society to be the real instruments for change. Theological Education programmes are poorer if they do not empower students for all-inclusive development of Nigeria, Africa and beyond. Therefore, since Theological education is a comprehensive exercise that exposes theologians to the theoretical and applied area of the scripture, it is a task whose major assignment is to primarily and consciously engage in the medium of information at two different levels; spiritual and physical for the purpose of making the "Word to become Flesh".

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