

Chapter 8

SOUNDS FROM THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

You may be familiar with many shades of the joke about the investor who wanted to know how Church men spend their money. One minister, the story goes, said that he personally had no problem determining what to do with the money. He said that since the monies collected are meant for the Good Lord and myself His unworthy servant, I normally take the money to the altar on Sunday evening and, after prayers of thanksgiving for the generosity of our parishioners, I say to God: "This money has been collected by our flock. It is meant for You and me. Since you live in Heaven above and I on earth below, and since I do not know how much of it you need, I will just throw the money up. Whatever you wish to have, you can take, but whatever falls to the ground, I will take to be my own share."

The point here is not so much how Church money is used, but that money, like politics, has joined the club of those demonic aspects of our lives in which priests and, to some extent, Christians have been warned to keep clear of. We hear of the expression: Money is the root of all evil, and so, like politics which has been called a dirty game, we naturally have sought to draw a line between our Christian lives and its pursuit. Yet, like politics, money is everywhere, not in terms of availability, but one will be hard put to imagine anything that is now free. 'Money is power', 'Time is Money', 'No free lunches any more,' etc. Money, therefore has become partly the oxygen of our human interrelationships, without it, we atrophy into oblivion. This paper forms part of an effort by Christians to come to terms with one of the most invidious diseases that has now come to undermine the corporate existence of those who inhabit part of the southern hemisphere now known as the South or the Third World. The South is the geographical basket that holds together those threatened by starvation, famine, squalor and all the negatives of poverty. While the Third World tries to eke out a living, its collective output is wiped out by the ogre of debt which it owes to the First and Second Worlds¹. To deal with this problem, I have to subdivide the paper into four

parts.

Part 1 will trace the origins of the debt burden.

Part 2 will illustrate the Catholic Church's position on the matter, the main focus of the paper.

Part 3 will try to relate this question to the Nigerian scene.

Part 4, the paper's conclusion, will make some concrete suggestions.

I. ORIGINS OF THE DEBT BURDEN

It is interesting to note the reactions of Nigerians to anything that has to be compared with something else from elsewhere -- mainly Europe or the United States. Thus, when the plane does not depart/arrive on schedule, when the telephone fails to work, when a letter arrives late, it is always because "this is Nigeria: nothing works". The constant refrain of this tune has lulled us into the belief that truly, the problem is not with us, it is in our genes and that the white man is where he is today because of his superiority. Thus, the functional technology of the West, for which we plead daily and hope that one day it will be transferred to us. Their wealth and ability to stave off famine and hunger as we believe, are all manifestations of this superiority. So, we keep asking ourselves, when shall we ever catch up?

Perhaps, one way to deal with some of these questions is to even ask why, when we came to where we are now? What are the origins of our poverty? Was it God ordained or was it because something happened and we simply entered the wrong bus? Is it possible that we are just passing through a phase, and that, given the necessary time, patience, hard work and dedication, we shall also arrive at the point where the countries of Europe and America are? To fully understand our predicament, we need to take a cursory look at some aspect of history - not just of our own society, but others outside us, the factors which have determined our relationships. In analyzing the situation in Latin America, scholars have suggested that the dependency theory can be used to explain the origins of not just this relationship, but how all sides in the relationship got to be where they are.

Dos Santos argued that in Latin America, there were three phases of dependency. The first was between 1400 -1850. The guiding light here was the procurement of trade links. These traders, mainly referred to as conquerors, ravaged the land, subdued the people, befriended the local feudal Lords that were amenable to their ways and goals and extracted whatever they could find in terms of minerals or slaves. Phase two (1850-1940) saw Europe laying the foundation stone of its own industrial economy and using these same territories to provide the needed materials both for take off and execution.

The expansion of this industrial base was bound to alter the relationship in terms of the volume of traffic and demands made on the local population. A marginal interest in the products necessitated a peripheral and brittle linkage of these countries with their European traders. This incorporation, partial as it was, would only awaken the rapacious instincts of the new conquerors. The third phase (1945-Present Day) would gradually see the consolidation of this one sided relationship, an avalanche of representatives of both body and soul, Satan and God. Today, we hear talk of 'center-periphery', 'neo-colonialism' as metaphors for explaining the new relationship.

Colonialism therefore remains the key to understanding the nature of the economies of the Third World Countries. The ideology of the colonizers, as well as their Language, Art, Religion, etc., would all be reproduced in the patterns of the lives of the colonized. A look at the political, economic or cultural map of Africa will show that the levels of education of Economic advancement differed, depending on the benevolence of the Arab, Belgian, British, German, French or Portuguese colonist. Either way, since the interests of the colonized were peripheral to those of the colonizer, it is not surprising that the terms of trade favoured only the colonizing country--ditto those into whose hands the control of the political and economic handles were entrusted. Post-independence Africa has only tried to limit this damage.

It has been important to make this point because many Western scholars tend to manipulate history by arguing that our poverty derives from spurious factors like overpopulation, political turmoil, man-made and natural disasters, etc. ² Put the blame on over-population. Medical advancement, they believe, has made men and women live longer, but this in turn has added to the population. Although one would accept some of these explanations, it must be pointed out that they are in themselves inadequate for explaining poverty in the Third World. It seems to me that one of the

most direct and straight forward approaches which have exploded these myths have been the works of two outstanding women: Susan George and Susan Toto. A curative measure for them was found in selective aid and drastic population control measures. In fact, they saw in famine a golden chance for the expansion of American hegemony. Toto argues that for them "...famine will prove a rare opportunity for the United States to exert its influence in the world because of its strategic position in world food production. The United States is able to exert its influence in the world because of its strategic position in world food production. The United States can dominate in an era of power if it uses its resources wisely." ³

Susan George, in her seminal work, *How the Other Half Dies: The Real Reasons for World Hunger*, debunked some of the most fundamental of Western myths about Third World hunger, myths which had been framed by racism, prejudice and cultural arrogance. The West believed that the poor are what they are because of too many children, because they are ignorant of biology, they did not know better choices, they do not recreate, etc. She dismissed the smug attitude of the West to Third World problems and concluded: Instead of telling the other half how to live and how many babies to have, we in the West would be better advised to examine our own motives. Certainly we are afraid - afraid that increasing numbers in the Third World will one day demand from us their due, and lower our standard of living, fearful that the pressure of population may finally demonstrate that the only solution is revolution. Father does not necessarily know best, neither do their ex-colonial masters." ⁴

The next question of course relates to the helplessness by which we are compelled to believe that should the West take off its hands, we would be all finished. George offers ideas that really do sound drastic, for she says to experts from the West: Stay out of other people's affairs. Stop sending out your experts whose training suits them only for proposing Western - oriented "solution". Stop forcing your unadapted and usually unadaptable technology on radically different societies. Stop educating people to think that yours is the only road to "progress." Stop sending the kind of aid which will aid you, in the form of myriad commercial advantages, a hundred times more than it will help the poor. Put a leash on your corporations, your foundations, your universities, your bureaucracies and your banks. ⁵

It is on this assumption of the redemptive basis of aid that we have found ourselves in a cul-de-sac, never achieving the desired goals of "catching up", after so many decades of

"cooperation", "interdependence" etc. What has emerged so far is that on its own, aid is incapable of reversing the economic misfortunes of the Third World. This is not due to bad intentions, nor is it due to corruption. The reason is because by its nature, aid is part of the problem.

The structures around which the economic relations between the rich and poor nations are hinged, need to be replaced. Like the proverbial temple, it has to be destroyed and new structures put in place. Corruption is not a cause, it is an effect of this gargantuan structure.

In reviewing the problem of Aid to the South, the Willy Brandt Commission came to the conclusion that: To help conquer poverty and hunger and to create a more just and a more effective international economic system, fundamental structural changes must be made in the markets in which developing countries are suppliers - of commodities, of manufacturers, of labor - and in which they are customers - for capital and technology. Such changes are necessary in the mechanisms and institutions which generate and distribute international finance, investment and liquidity. The issue today is not only, or even mainly, one of aid. Rather it is the need for basic changes in the world economy to help developing countries pay their own way. The countries of the North, given their interdependence with the South, themselves need international economic reform to ensure their own future prosperity. ⁶

We shall now turn our attention to the efforts which the Catholic Church has made over the years in the process of resolving the economic crisis in the world in general and the Third World in particular. To do this, I shall review the various Encyclicals over the years that have specifically sought to address issues of the world economic order. Of immediate interest to us are 7 Encyclicals.

II. THE CATHOLIC POSITION ON THE WORLD ECONOMIC ORDER

It is now generally accepted by students of the Catholic Church's teachings on social issues that the most decisive point at which the Catholic Church's position on the economy of the world was best articulated, was when Pope Leo XIII issued the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum On the Rights and Duties of Capital and Labor* (1891). ⁷

This Encyclical sought to address the issues relating to a definition of the relations between labor, the human person and the two contending world systems: capitalism

and socialism. It will be recalled that prior to this, the world had been embroiled in wars, revolutions, etc. The Industrial Revolution had brought all kinds of changes to human relations, the publication of the *Communist Manifesto* spelt the birth pangs of the "dictatorship of the proletariat." The class war that emerged was the target of *Rerum Novarum*. The Pope's position was that, win or lose, neither of the two systems were capable of redeeming man, mainly because both systems submerged man's dignity to their class interests. The Pope accepted the fact that the poor had a right to demand justice to redress the imbalance of the system, but the state had a right to intervene to stave off confusion and disorder which may undermine the common good. According to the Pope, "Capital cannot do without Labor, nor Labor without Capital." ⁸

1. Quadragesimo Anno: The Reconstruction of a New Social Order (1931)

The capitalists in the West had announced *Rerum Novarum* as being "socialist". Hence, the Vatican felt a need not to defend itself, but to restate its position. The thrust here is the moral duty of the state to serve human society. Contrary to the two antagonistic systems, Pope Pius XI stated that:

Just as the unity of human society cannot be built upon "class" conflict, so the proper ordering of economic affairs cannot be left to the free play of rugged competition. From this course as from a polluted spring, have proceeded all the errors of the individualistic school.... Free competition however, though justified and quite useful within certain limits, cannot be adequate controlling principle in economic affairs...It is therefore necessary that economic affairs be once more subjected to and governed by a true and effective guiding principle. ⁹

The Pope saw the trend towards domination as a very dangerous trend indeed - one that was inimical both to personal/individual and national growth. He continued:

Unbridled ambition for domination has succeeded the desire for gain, the whole of the economic life has become cruel and relentless in a ghastly measure...As regards the relations of nations among themselves, a double stream has issued forth from this one fountain head; on the one hand, 'economic nationalism', or even

economic imperialism, on the other, a no less noxious and detestable "internationalism" or "international imperialism" in financial affairs, which holds that where a man's fortune is, there is his country. ¹⁰

2. Mater et Magistra: Mother and Teacher (1961)

This Encyclical, purported to be the greatest revolutionary publication of this century in the history of the Catholic Church, took a look at the gains and strides which the world had made between the wars. It saw the potential of human destruction in the rise in the weapons of death and argued that interdependence was a key to human survival. This was expounded by the principle of subsidiarity: why all parts of the human society are linked by means of this chain of interdependence. Pope John XXIII called on the nations of the world to take advantage of the interdependence instincts in humanity to build a better world based on justice and peace:

Today men are so intimately associated in all parts of the world that they feel, as it were, as if they are members of one and same household. Therefore, the nations that enjoy sufficiency may not overlook the plight of nations whose citizens come by poverty and hunger, and are not able to enjoy basic human rights. ¹¹

The issue of aid as a Christian duty was explained when the Holy Father called on Catholics to respond to the needs of the poor because they too were part of the Body of Christ. On the economic dimension, the Pope stated: "Moreover, economically developed countries should take particular care lest, in giving aid to poorer countries, they endeavor to turn the prevailing political situation to their own advantage, and seek to dominate them." ¹²

3. Pacem In Terris: Peace On Earth (1963)

Against a backdrop of events in the international scene, Pope John continued to dwell on this theme of Peace, reiterating that it was a basis for Justice and the realization of human rights by peoples and nations. It must be recalled that by this time the Berlin Wall was in place as a sore reminder of the antagonism of the super powers. The Cuban Missile crisis (1962) had demonstrated the ease with which humanity could indeed come to the brink. The rise in armament purchases, rather than guaranteeing peace,

was more likely to wipe out the world. The Pope believed in the God-given potential of man to be good. Said he:

Since men are social by nature, they are meant to live with others and to work for one another's welfare. Hence, a well ordered human society requires that man recognize and observe their mutual rights and duties. It also demands that each contribute generously to the establishment of a civic order in which rights and duties are progressively more sincerely and effectively acknowledged and fulfilled. ¹³

4. Gaudium et Spes: Message to Humanity (1965)

The climax of these aspirations and developments within the world order and the Catholic Church's efforts to be a light for progress was with the convening of the Second Vatican Council by Pope John, who had by now come to be known by all as the "Good Pope." To a world divided by ideology and material pursuit, the opening paragraph of this important document says: "The joys and hope, the grief and anguish of men of our time, especially those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well." ¹⁴ This document takes note of society's self-consuming drive manifested in: "...murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia, all violations of the integrity of the human person." It highlighted some areas in life where violations of the sanctity of the human person are exhibited such as in

...offenses against human dignity, subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children, degrading working conditions where men are treated as mere tools for profit rather than free and responsible persons. ¹⁵

5. Evangelii Nuntiandi: On Evangelisation (1974)

Although, because of its controversial nature, Pope Paul VI is more famous for *Humane Vitae* (On the Regulation of Birth), one of his more important Encyclicals is *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, which took on the theme of Evangelisation. It warned that "Evangelisation loses much of its force and effectiveness if it does not take into consideration the actual

people to whom it is addressed, if it does not use their language, their signs and symbols, if it does not answer the questions they ask, and if it does not have an impact on their concrete life.”¹⁶

It can be argued that the economic conditions under which the evangelized live are as important as any other.

6. *Dives Misericordia*: Rich In Mercy (1980) and *Laborem Exercens*: On Human Work (1981).

These two Encyclicals were some of the earliest land-marks of the Polish Pope, a man who had been through the thick and thin of labor and understood its dignity and its degradation. Both documents, but especially *Dives Misericordia*, dwell on the dignity of the human person as a child of God, pointing out that the pursuit of wealth runs the risk of undermining the special place of man.

Laborem was meant to mark the ninetieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum* and bears all the marks of that document. The key words used are secularization, desacralisation and dehumanization - all of which enslave man. The Pope propounded the theory of what he called: "the civilization of love."¹⁷

In 1987, the Pope took a major step by proposing concrete approaches to the problem of international debt. To this we now turn.

7. At the Service of the Human Community: Ethical Approach to the International Debt Question (1987).

To really appreciate the timely nature of this document, we need to cast our minds back to the rise and fall of the global economy and its attendant impact on the economic fortunes of the developing countries.

The seventies saw the rise of the oil kingdoms, the climax being the setting up of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). The visible index of the fortunes that lay ahead was the pattern of investment, the direction of the cash flow, the emergence of experts, witnessed by the criss-crossing of international businessmen from all sides of the Atlantic and the cooption of local lackeys from the developing nations. The mission of these experts was the transformation of the economies of these countries, the machinery to be serviced by the ubiquitous petro dollar. The developing

nations caved in to this seduction and, ignorant of the rules of the game, they believed that oil had earned them a permanent seat on the negotiating table of international finance. This was not to be. A conspiracy of the protectionist measures of the Northern countries, manipulation of tariffs, interest rates that fluctuated constantly and the remote control mechanism applied to the sale of oil, soon brought this boom to a burst. Nations like Nigeria whose theme song had become "Money is not the problem, how to spend it is", now found themselves in the quandary of debt servicing. But by its very nature, debt servicing is inherently injurious to an economy because it only deepens the hole in which one has sunk. To service their debts, debtors must raise more money from the lending nations. Nations like Brazil, which had been polished and presented as the exemplary doll, showed that this trick had failed. And so, nations like Cuba and others began to raise questions as to whether a conspiracy to reject debt repayments may not be one way out for poor nations.

This position began to gain currency and in the mid eighties, there were speculations that this line of thought may be pursued. The service, put together by the Vatican Commission on Justice and Peace, sought to initiate a moral angle, spelling out the moral obligations of both debtor and creditor. In the introduction, the President of the Commission, Roger Cardinal Etchegarary, stated, "Debt servicing cannot be met at the price of asphyxiation of a country's economy, and no government can morally demand of its people privations incompatible with human dignity." ¹⁸ On the place of the Church in all this, Cardinal Etchegaray continues: "The Church once again invites all parties involved to examine the ethical implications of the question of external debt of developing countries, in order to arrive at just solutions that respect the dignity of those who would be most affected by its consequences". He further points out that Church's aim is to "...enlighten the moral conscience of the decision makers whose choices cannot disregard ethical principles, but she does so without proposing action programmes which would be outside her field of competence." ¹⁹ The implication here is that the Catholic Church wishes to continue to play the role of mother and guide, not taking side of one against the other. The strength of this position is that it expands the scope of the value of the suggestions to include all sides, all of humanity.

Among the principles enunciated which we cannot go into for lack of space are:

- A. Solidarity:** The idea in the document is to create enough awareness among all parties to accept full responsibilities for the

causes and solutions to the problem of debt. "Acknowledgement of the sharing of responsibility of the causes, "the document argues," will make possible a dialogue which will seek a joint means of solution." ²⁰

B. Emergency Action: As a spin off from solidarity, emergency action is a coordinated response to this global problem by all nations to avoid unilateral breaches from either side. The document recalls that: "In numerous cases, however, the IMF's decisions have been ill received by the leaders and the general public of countries in difficulty." ²¹

8. Joint Responsibility for the Future

An undue emphasis on 'economic power' creates a false image of strength because countries may be strong financially but weak in other areas. The future of the world depends on building bridges of interdependence as a means of guaranteeing the stability of the earth from where these resources are generated. Thus, the document goes on to remind us that "Each country occupies a position of weakness or strength, power or dependence which in turn, is also subject to change" ²². In the light of the fact that the whole debt question has been marred by name calling, blame-shifting and denunciations such as "It's colonialism," "The third world is corrupt," etc., the document argues that an inward, soul searching method can be helpful. It says: "The denunciation of the injustices of others, be they either committed or tolerated, will fall on deaf ears unless, at the same time, one is willing to explain one's own actions". ²³

Finally, the document presents a few points worthy of deep reflection by all sides:

An examination of the loan conditions of the IMF so as to "integrate the human factor." Remember Rtd. Gen. Obasanjo's 1988 call on the Federal Government to give a "human face" to SAP.

- encouragement of new investment opportunities for public and private finances.

- arranging support mechanisms to cope with catastrophes and emergencies as the monsoons in Bangladesh and earthquakes in Iran.

- arranging methods for better coordination and conditions of monetary policies favorable to developing nations.
- training and utilisation of man power. ²⁴

From the above, it is clear that the Catholic Church's position on the issue is based on the belief that neither the rich nor the poor can take unilateral action to resolve the crisis. Should debtor nations refuse to pay as a means of "getting even" with lenders, they should remember the proverb "The child who vows that its mother will not sleep must realize that it will know no sleep itself."

III. CONCLUSION

It is evident that in discussing this topic, we will have some semantic problems. Is Aid the same as Debt? If the labels differ, do the intentions really differ? Do aid and debt aim for the soul of the recipient? Both concepts underscore the predicament of the one who carries the bowl begging. The question therefore arises: How long will it take for the bowl to be full? How long will it take for the full bowl to become empty again? And if it becomes empty, how long will it take for the donors to come to your turn, since there are millions of others who are waiting for their own turns?

These questions have become more urgent because it has become clear where the priorities of donor countries lie. The question arises as to whether ideological differences or national contiguity are stronger variables for altering the priority scales of the donors. For the winds which brought down the Berlin Wall and ushered in democracy have become the monsoons which have destroyed the bridges by which Aid flowed from the North to the South. The aftermath is that the donor countries have caught a bad virus and suffer what *Newsweek Magazine* referred to as "Disaster Fatigue" ²⁵.

It is evident that we can label the diversion of aid by the Western countries to their "brothers and sisters" as selfishness and as unchristian. I believe, however, that even if these events had not taken place, it would only have been a matter of time before another excuse would have emerged. The question therefore is not so much how long we can continue to lament, but what the Aid has done to us so far. Has it made us dependent or has it opened new vistas of independence for us?

I wish to list some tentative suggestions concerning what can and needs to be done in

order to radically transform the structures for the benefit of both sides. The points being made here are tentative and far from being exhaustive. The nature of the crisis itself has to be understood. We may be forgiven for seeing it in economic terms. Its final solution does not lie in reversing the Growth National Product (GNP) as much as in overhauling the entire socio-political cosmology of the Christian. Thus, the debt crisis is a crisis of our salvation, not in some spiritually superfluous manner, but here and now." Neither is the debt crisis a crisis of the material satisfaction of the needs of the nation. Rather, we need to examine the pattern of beliefs which led the nation to this situation.

Most Catholics, be they in the IMF or World Bank, do not tend to relate their experiences to their religious beliefs. This falls within the fallacy of separation of identities. Why should the bank manager who is a member of the Christian community and presides over huge sums of money, be unable to make himself even relevant to the economic programmes of his local community? The beginning of the Wisdom of even seeking ways and means of dealing with the problem must be inculcated in the minds of Christians so that they understand the dynamics of the debts the nation gets into. One way of doing this is through seminars on these themes for Church leaders. This will lead to involvement of our people in such areas as community banking, cooperatives, etc. ²⁶ In this way, they can acquire basic skills of what money management, investment, etc., mean.

1. Is Small Beautiful?

As a corollary to the above, Schumacher's ideal of "Small is Beautiful" needs a closer examination. ²⁷ From the on-set the point must be made: small is beautiful, but it is still small, and therefore not an end. But it can provide a takeoff point. Although the financial policies we are dealing with affect over 90% of our population negatively, the latter do not have the faintest idea how they can evolve structures of communal independence in order to chart their own course. There is just too much dependence on government to do this. The task of government is to service as a facilitator, not as an executor, a point underscored by the new Local Government Financial policies. ²⁸

2. Seek First the Economic Kingdom?

There is need for us to address the issue of external debt with far greater urgency as part of the overall structural overhaul needed to evolve a cohesive nation. Economy is just one propelling force. "Seeking first the economic kingdom" can easily become a

mere illusion. Here the issue of the moral content of the whole question becomes crucial.

When Professor Pius Okigbo delivered a lecture on the Nigerian Economy, I raised the issue of morality in the call for debt cancellation. My question was: If we have no machinery to help bring those who use these loans to feather their own nests, what moral right do we have to seek debt relief? He said he did not think the issue of morality arose since the external partners were as much to blame as the local experts in their exploitation of the loopholes within the economic arrangement. It surely did not answer the question, but it was for me an indicator of the amoral stance that has dominated the issue. ²⁹

3. The End of History?

With the collapse of Communism, Western scholars and governments believe that liberal democracy has won the day and that Capitalism is the ultimate goal of all nations. ³⁰ This has been followed by suggestions from people like the former British Prime Minister, Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, that Aid now has to be tied to the apron strings of democracy. This means any Third World rulers who wish to enjoy this Aid, must shape up, clean up their human rights mess or be dumped. It is no wonder that implementations of IMF or World Bank policies have been precursors to instability which has threatened many governments in Africa. But to think that the stick of Aid has to be used to force African leaders to respect the human rights of their fellow countrymen and women is pathetic. It remains to be seen whether the Catholic Church can, in collaboration with other Christians, defy the ogre of injustice and enthrone a just, moral society. We have the role of the Church in Poland, the Philippians, South Africa, and Haiti to reflect on.

4. Can Christians Cast the First Stone?

The question that arises naturally is if the Churches even possess the moral courage to face this challenge. The old habits of some missionaries have refused to die and political turmoil which were initiated by Christianity's shameful role in African colonialism, have refused to go away. After over one hundred years of Christianity, we still have to face the shame that today, many Churches spend time heaping abuses on fellow Christians, charging them with theological or moral "sins" that are non-existent. Many Christians are fighting a war that they have no moral right to fight, using Muslims

as a red herring. The issue of the struggle for justice is too serious for us to have time for all these internal squabbles. Indigenous clerics of all persuasions must take up this challenge.

5. Politics: Actors or Spectators?

There is the added problem of how we can change the structures which we do not even control. If we do not have a handle on the machines of power, how can we direct its course. Thus, our political programme must be guided by our determination to become major actors on the political scene. So far, there is no doubt that on a denomination-by-denomination basis, the Catholics, despite their numerical strength, remain the marginalised Christian group in the quest for political power ³¹. One way to deal with this is to become active, but not in the context we have today. Politics is far too sophisticated to be fought with anger and vengeance.

6. Military Rules Okay?

This nation must decide what to do with military rule. While we squabble as to whether the military class is North or South, Christian or Muslim, we miss the real argument: should the military be where they are in the first place?

Their arbitrary rule by Decrees has always been arbitrary and repressive. The Banks love the military because their tough no-nonsense positions can be seen as guarantee for fiscal stability as opposed to the rule by popular participation in which "we, the people" tend to be seen as financial ignoramus!

7. Does Anyone Owe Us a Living?

After over one hundred years of capitalist adventurism, we have neither become fully capitalist nor has the Aid that we have continued to receive fed us well. Nigerian scholars have come to the conclusion that the colonial arrangement was meant to keep us in economic suspended animation. It is therefore time to face up to the fact that no one owes us a living, no one is bound to live with our hunger in his/her conscience. Recently, the outgoing OAU chairman, President Yoweri Museveni, speaking on the Economy in Africa, noted: while we blame the IMF and World Bank for the mistakes they have made in Africa, we should not make them scapegoats. We go in for the loans ill-prepared, so ignorant ourselves that we don't enrich what they have to give". ³²

8. Is Christianity a Godfather to Capitalism?

There seems to have always been a conscious effort to behave as if capitalism is a Christian virtue. A Christian scholar, Dr. Mike Kwanashie, concludes:

Economic development has eluded a large segment of the world population despite the rapid advances of science and technology. Irrespective of what the historical evidence is in the correlation between Christian ethics and the enhancement of material condition, it is quite clear that one is not a condition for the other..Christianity does not define any particular mode of production. Neither does it prescribe a specific social relationship in the productive process. It provides general principles, codes, ethics to ensure that individuals conform with the new covenant which Christians entered into with God in the coming of Jesus Christ". ³³

9. Money at All Cost?

The feverish pitch of the financial markets, from Tokyo, Paris to New York, is as much a cry of victory as one of defeat. The money market may be the barometer for gauging the power of money, but it also represents the center of man's weakness in trusting money which is here today, gone tomorrow. More money has bred more insecurity for investors, and insecurity leads to a search for permanent indices of trust. Enter what is now called "Social morality." In Margaret Thatcher's Britain, wealth seems to have produced a society whose moral fabric was now in danger. When Christian economists got together in Oxfordshire in 1988, their findings were shocking. In both America and Europe, the rise in material wealth had coincided with a sharp decline in traditional values, thus ushering in social anarchy shown in the rise of violence across these countries. ³⁴

10. Can We Drink from Our Own Wells?

One major issue which must now be tackled is the way the Church sees itself and its role in shaping society. One of the tasks an indigenous church must face is the daily reality of the events that shape the nation. So far, Seminary training has had little or no interest in systems of African thought, politics, economics etc. This is partly a vestige of missionary understanding of universalism, the mistaken motion that Europe is the

center of the world. If the church is to be relevant, its priests must grasp the dynamics of its society.

Christian leaders must organize seminars or workshops based on relevant themes that are dominant in the society. It is one way we can become more informed. Armed with sufficient information about what is and what is not, what can and can not be done, we can begin a gradual process of reshaping a nation in which Justice is supreme, a process that will help us, in gustavo Gutierrez's words, "To drink from our own wells" ³⁵

The way forward is not for us to stand at the crossroads of history and continue to twinge and cringe about what might have been. Dreams have been shattered, promises made and broken, but whatever may be the case, the economy is only one facet of human existence. True, Aid has had a debilitating impact on our lives. After millions of dollars in debt, we still are far from achieving self-sufficiency.

Of late, the Federal Government's efforts in mobilizing its citizens have been through MAMSER, DFRRRI, Peoples' Bank, Community Banks, etc. ³⁶ They may be sneered at by our confirmed cynics. But to my mind, they remain a life line by which we can alter our self image, transform our lethargy to energy, and cynicism to optimism. In that way, we can instill enough pride in our children and avoid the shame of the man who said: "Son, what will you want to be when you grow up? The child says: Daddy, I wish to be a white man."

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FOOTNOTES

1. One of the most interesting aspects of the Debt crisis remains the lack of exact data as to what we owe. In the case of Nigeria, for example, we hear that we owe nearly \$30b.
2. William & Paul Paddock: *Famine, 1975. America's Decision: Who Will Survive?* (Boston: Little Brown, 1967).
3. Susan Toto: *World Hunger: The Responsibility of Christian Education.* (New York: Orbis, 1982), p. 7.
4. Susan George: *How the Other Half Dies: The Real Reasons for World*

Hunger. (London: Penguin, 1976), p. 67.

5. Susan George: *How the Other Half Dies*, *op cit.* p. 271.

6. *North-South: A Programme For Survival*: Report of the Independent Commission for International Development. Issued Under the Chairmanship of Willy Brandt (London: Pan World Affairs, 1980), p. 32-33.

7. The approximate translation of this Encyclical is: "On the Condition of Labor." An Encyclical is a Papal Document issued by the Holy Father on any particular topic. It is the official position of the Catholic Church on any given issue and carries the stamp of the authority of the Holy Father.

8. *Rerum Novarum*. (The Vatican. May 15th, 1891), R.N. 16.

9. Quoted in Susan Toto, *World Hunger*, *op cit.* p. 103.

10. *Ibid.* 11. *Ibid.* 12. *Ibid.* 13. *Ibid.*

14. See *Gaudium et Spes* (The Constitution of the Church in the Modern World) in: Austin Flannery: *Vatican II Documents*. (1988 Revised Edition, 2 Vols.), G&S, No.42.

15. *Ibid*, No.27.

16. *Evangelii Nuntiandii* (The Vatican. 1974), *E.N.* No 63.

17. *Dives Misericordia* (The Vatican. 1981), *D. M.* No 15.

18. Etchegarary, At the Service of the Human Community.... 19. *Ibid*, "Introduction."

20. *Ibid.*, 1 (1). 21. *Ibid.*, 2 (2). 22. *Ibid.*, 3 (1) 23. *Ibid.*, 3 (2). 24. *Ibid.*, 3 (4).

25. "Disaster Fatigue. Too Many Victims, Too Little Help." (Newsweek, 20/5/91), pp. 10-21.

26. For some details, see Footnote 36 below.

27. Shumacher's work, *Small Is Beautiful* was based on the economic sense of "cutting your coat according to your size."

28. Local Government always had rather frosty relations with State Government through whom they had to get their subventions from the Federal Government.

29. The details of this excellent lecture are in: Pius Okigbo: "Nigeria in Search of Tomorrow" (N.I.I.A. Distinguished Lecture Series), May, 1991.
30. In the wake of the fall of Communism, an American Political theoretician published an explosive essay, "The End of History," which triggered off debates on this theme. For details, *The Independent*, London, 20 & 21 September, 1989.
31. For details, Matthew Hassan Kukah: 'The Catholic Church And Human Development in Nigeria: A Sociopolitical Assessment and Critique' (Paper Presented at the 6th National Theological Association of Nigeria (CATHANO, 2-5 April, 1991).
32. *Daily Times*, 16/5/91, p. 5.
33. George Kwanahie, "The Christian Outlook on Economic Development" CATHAN Conference, Owerri.
34. This theme has been dealt with in very interesting details in *The Tablet*, London, November 12,19,26 & December 3. The series is titled 'A Moral Agenda for Business.'
35. This is the title of one of Gustavo Gutierrez books. Among his other works is the seminal *A Theology of Liberation*, the work by which the tone of Liberation Theology was set.
36. In 1987, the Federal Government set up programmes in pursuit of some of the populist recommendations of the Political Bureau it had set up. MAMSER, led by Professor Jerry Gana, set out to sensitize the populace to their sociopolitical duties and responsibilities. DFRRI, (the Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures), set out to link up the local areas of the country by a net work of roads and electricity. The Peoples' Bank, headed by Dr. Solarin, is responsible to the poor people to help them have access to the bank through loans without the encumbrances of collaterals and paperwork. The idea of Community Banks was aimed not to compete with the Peoples' Bank, but to help communities who have the wherewithal to set up their own banks with as much as 250,000 for a start. Mrs. Maryam Babangida, the President's wife, has on her own decided to cater for the welfare of women through the program of "Better Life For Rural Women."