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DISSERTATION

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„Poverty and Violence in Post-Colonial Africa South of
the Sahara: Ethical Implications for the Dignity of the
Human Person“

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	i
Abbreviations	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
General Introduction	1

Part One: Poverty and Violence as Global Social Phenomena.

CHAPTER ONE

TOWARDS A DEFINITION AND HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION OF POVERTY	9
1.0 Introduction	9
1.1 Definitions of Poverty	9
1.1.1 Absolute Poverty	10
1.1.2 Relative Poverty	12
1.2 Dimensions of Poverty	14
1.2.1 The socio-economic dimension of poverty	14
1.2.2 The theological dimension of poverty	23
1.2.2.1 The Holy Scriptures and the early Christian community	24
(a) Old Testament and the faith community	24
(b) New Testament (Gospels and Epistles) and the early Christian community	30
1.2.2.2 The Fathers of the Church and the theology of poverty	36
1.2.2.3 The Reformation and the Catholic response to the problem of poverty	46
1.2.3 The anthropological dimension of poverty	59
1.3 The theory of basic human needs and the notion of poverty	62
1.4 Conclusion	66

CHAPTER TWO

THE ROOTS CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF POVERTY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA 68

2.0 Introduction	68
2.1 The root causes of poverty	68
2.1.1 Argument 1: Geographical and natural resources	68
2.1.2 Argument 2: Disease and over-population	70
2.1.3 Argument 3: Leadership and foreign policy	76
(a) Economic policies and debt-services	83
(b) Bretton Wood institutions (IMF & WB) and poverty alleviation	84
(c) Trade in Arms in Africa: An ethical challenge to economic Globalization	86
(d) NGOs and the politics of Entwicklungszusammenarbeit (EZA)	89
2.1.4 Argument 4: Inadequate Education and lack of technical know-how	90
2.2 The Consequences of Poverty for the human behaviour	93
2.2.1 The decline of social cohesion	94
2.2.2 Social exclusion and psychological stigmatization	96
2.2.3 Social insecurity and violent conflicts	100
2.3 The Feminization of Poverty	101
2.4 Conclusion	104

CHAPTER THREE

THE DYNAMICS OF VIOLENT CONFLICTS IN A MULTI-CULTURAL SOCIETY 105

3.0 Introduction	105
3.1 The meaning of violence and the nature-nurture controversy	106
3.2 The nature and forms of violence in Sub-Saharan Africa	110
3.2.1 Historico-cultural violence and its valorization	112
3.2.2 Ethnic conflicts and political violence	117
3.2.3 Socio-economic forms of violence	122
3.2.4 Violence against women and its relationship to economic power	129
3.3 The aetiology of violence: Its individual and social perspective	135
3.3.1 Innate factors argument	136

3.3.2 Socialization factors argument	137
3.3.3 Situational factors argument	139
3.3.4 Religio-cultural and ideological argument	140
3.4 Conclusion	146

Part Two: The Correlation between Poverty and Violence in Post-Colonial Africa, South of the Sahara

CHAPTER FOUR

A BACKGROUND TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF POVERTY AND VIOLENCE IN THE TRADITIONAL AFRICAN WORLD – VIEW

4.0 Introduction	148
4.1 The African concept of the human person	149
4.2 The African and the community life	154
4.3 The African and the relationship to the physical environment	159
4.4 The concept of work as promotion of group solidarity	162
4.5 African traditional religion and the economic life of the Africans	166
4.6 Conclusion	169

CHAPTER FIVE

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN AFRICA'S EARLY CONTACT WITH THE WEST AND THE NEAR EAST: ITS IMPACT ON THE AFRICAN CONDITION.

5.0 Introduction	172
5.1 The Pre-colonial era of African contact with the West	173
5.1.1 The era of myths and prejudices about Africa and Africans	173
5.1.2 Thinking through the atlantic slave trade (1440 – 1870)	176
5.2 The impact of colonization and the struggle for independence	180
5.3 Post-colonial Africa and the legacies of colonization	187
5.3.1 The politico-economical legacy: A critique	189
5.3.2 The legacy of socio-cultural contacts: An appraisal	193
5.3.3 Migration as a consequence of poverty and societal dysfunction	197

5.3.4 Post-independence Africa and the dialectics of foreign aid	199
5.4 Conclusion	200

Part Three: The problematic of the discourse on the dignity of the human person vis-a-vis the challenges of the social problems of poverty and violence in Africa today

CHAPTER SIX

A RE-APPRAISAL OF THE THEOLOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL ARGUMENTS FOR THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL QUESTIONS	203
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6.0 Introduction	203
6.1 The concept of the dignity of the human person as a dynamic reality	205
6.1.1 The judeo-christian foundations of the dignity of the human person	207
6.1.2 The philosophical arguments from reason and freedom	211
(a) John Locke (1632 – 1704)	216
(b) Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804)	217
6.2 The dignity of the human person and the social questions	219
6.2.1 Suffering and dignity: Lessons from Job	221
6.2.2 Human dignity and the social teaching of the church	225
6.2.3 Human dignity and the challenges of basic human rights	228
6.3 Conclusion	233

CHAPTER SEVEN

AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO THE PROBLEMS OF POVERTY AND VIOLENCE BASED ON AFRICAN WORLD-VIEW AND CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY	236
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7.0 Introduction	236
7.1 The African sense of community and the challenges of poverty	237
7.1.1 Traditional community model and its limitations	237
7.1.2 The christian community model as more inclusive	238
7.1.3 Contextual internal applications of the principles of community spirit	242

7.2 Sub-Saharan Africa in the context of the world community of persons	250
7.2.1 A critique of Africa's aid-dependence and the cost of debt services	250
7.2.2 The meaning of globalization for the African poverty condition	253
7.2.3 Environmental degradation/Exploitation of natural resources: Its impact on poverty alleviation and the prevention of violent conflicts	255
7.3 Conclusion	259
 GENERAL EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION	 262
I. Preamble	262
II. African condition and the search for identity	265
III. Is Globalization possible without global ethics?	268
IV. Conclusion	272
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 275

ABBREVIATIONS.

CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
CIC	Codex Iuris Canonici
LG	Lumen Gentium
GS	Gaudium et Spes
RN	Rerum Novarum
PP	Populorum Progressio
MM	Mater et Magistra
FR	Fides et Ratio
CA	Centesimus Annus
DC	Deus Caritas Est
SS	Spe Salvi
CV	Caritas in Veritate
NGOs	Non Governmental Organisations
WTO	World Trade Organisation
WEF	World Economic Forum
UNDP	United Nations Development Programm
UNICEF	United Nations International Children Education Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNAIDS	The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
IMF	International Monetary Fund
WB	World Bank
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
ERP	Economic Recovery Programm
IFAA	Institute for African Alternatives
GMO	Genetically Modified
EZA	Entwicklungszusammenarbeit
ILO	International Labour Organisation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
BCE	Before Christian Era
RSV	Revised Standard Edition
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development

Dedication:

This work is dedicated to the St. Patrick's Irish Missionaries who laboured tirelessly to bring the light of the Gospel to Sub-Saharan Africa, thereby helping to restore the dignity of man. May God grant eternal rest to those of them who have died and bless the living among them. Their efforts in Africa shall never be in vain.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

I. Background to the study

The region of the African continent commonly designated as 'tropical Africa', 'Sub-Saharan Africa' or 'the Sahel' has the notable characteristic of being predominantly occupied by black Africans. Thus, if the name of the continent is derived from the colour of the skin as some people would want us to believe, then this part of the continent can be described as the 'original' Africa, without intending to exclude our geographical brothers and sisters in the northern part of the continent. Another prominent feature of Sub-Saharan Africa, apart from the skin colour of the inhabitants, which has more or less the same effect on the lives of the people, is the widespread problem of poverty. The gravity of this problem led a group of British students in 1988 to conclude that "to think of Africa is to think of poverty". The Africa being referred to in this assertion is Sub-Saharan Africa. The species of poverty in the Sahel region of the continent appears to defy every attempt at eradication, to the extent that some economists have declared the case insoluble and some countries have given up hope on the improvement of the lot of Africans. At a time when the economies of other countries are growing, the situation in Africa is degenerating. The United Nations General Assembly organised a special session in 1986 with the sole aim of finding a solution to 'the critical economic situation in Africa'. Many years after this session, the effects are yet to be seen. Sub-Saharan Africa has the world's poorest countries, regardless of the criteria that are used to measure it. Consequent upon the material poverty are the problems of hunger, disease and illiteracy, which have deprived the majority of the people in this part of the continent of every claim to human dignity. The dearth of medical facilities and personnel has led to an escalated mortality rate for both children and adults. There is a high level of insecurity as jobless youths take to armed robbery and banditry; while young girls take to prostitution as a way of making ends meet. Similarly, many African young men and women lose their lives in an attempt to escape the difficult conditions by migrating to countries in the West. Instead of finding solutions to this social malaise, political leaders are preoccupied with how to perpetuate themselves in office and amass more wealth for themselves and their cronies. Present conditions effectively exclude the poor from the compact that otherwise binds society together. If we are to insist that the poor hold up their end of the social contract, then society as a whole must do the same. For without a realistic sense of a better future, there is neither

rime nor reason to conform to the mores and expectations of mainstream society; little or no reason to aspire to its benefits when the reality of one's existence precludes their attainment.

It is therefore not surprising that violent conflicts define the life of the people in their struggle to earn a living amidst scarce resources or as a way of demonstrating their dissatisfaction with the *status quo*. There is hardly any country in this region without a problem of tribal conflict and civil wars, always with the ugly balance of people killed in the thousands, and children drafted to fight as soldiers, who at the end of the war come back as social deviants and deeply traumatized. The traditional African family system is broken down as most *pater familias* desert their families to fight in inter-tribal clashes or move to distant places in search of food. The community structure with its respect for life and hospitality is disintegrated or rendered moribund in some places where some traces of it are seen. The battle line is difficult to define as the political-party and religious affiliations compete with the traditional ethnic affiliations thereby complicating the situation. Is it justified to attribute the social disquietude in the Sub-Saharan Africa today to material poverty alone? Can the cultural and spiritual values for which Africa is known stand the onslaught of the horrible effects of materialism? Is not the restoration of the dignity of the human person the precondition for the genuine efforts at poverty eradication and the prevention of violent conflicts?

II. Motivation for the study

This work was motivated by the fact that the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa are seriously confronted by abject poverty and violent conflicts despite the immense human and natural resources with which she is blessed. Many years after attaining independence from foreign administration, the region is facing a host of insurmountable problems from which we have singled out poverty and violence. Closely related to these is the problem of corrupt and irresponsible leadership. Having been disappointed by their leaders, most people no longer make reference to ethical or moral criteria in their decisions and actions. Of course, this manner of behaviour can only lead to the destruction of the society and its values. Hence the urgent need to call attention to factors that are indispensable for peaceful co-existence in any social setting, one of which is the protection of life and the just distribution of social amenities and opportunities.

First of all, it has to be stated that many countries of Sub-Saharan Africa are not poor, because they do not have resources, but because these are unjustly distributed. And there is no other

way peace can be restored than a just distribution of resources. If leaders can overcome a winner-takes-it-all mentality and work to see that resources are equitably distributed, such that each person is given what is basic for the sustenance of life, then there would be fewer violent conflicts. But we have to state pointedly that Africa's poverty goes beyond material poverty to include non-material forms of poverty like marginalization, which haunts most African countries on the international level, but which equally exists between individuals or group of individuals living in the same African country.

Besides, the awareness that the state is there for the welfare of all and not that of a few can engender national pride and the goodwill to contribute to state development in terms of infrastructure and ideas. This implies first and foremost the restoration of the respect for the human person based on his/her dignity. For there can be no real development without reference to those fundamental principles that guarantee the basic human rights founded on human dignity. Poverty anywhere anytime is a man-made problem and can be solved by same.

III. Objectives of the study

The purpose of the work at hand is not to catalogue individual cases of poverty and violence in tropical Africa, because they are simply legion. Apart from that, other disciplines like economics and sociology, and institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund have carried out or sponsored more detailed research in this regard. Our aim is rather to highlight the importance of moral values in the effort to overcome poverty and violence. The problem of poverty and violence is much more a problem of the neglect of these values and inasmuch as this neglect perdures, it will be impossible to eradicate poverty or prevent violence. It is simply futile to try to fill an open-sided sack without first of all sewing the bag together. The avarice of leaders and that of people needs to be checked.

As the countries of Africa enter the third millennium, intense effort has to be made to set the priorities of the continent right. This study intends equally to identify the causes of poverty and violence and make recommendations towards their reduction. We would like to focus our attention on the need to restore moral values as expressions of the dignity of the human person, the recognition of and respect for which are indispensable for social co-existence.

Furthermore, we would endeavour to establish to what extent poverty can lead to violence, and then question the importance of human freedom, as a basis of human dignity, in a

situation where one is constrained to act contrary to his/her free judgment. Following this, the research will try to establish the correlation between the causes of material poverty and anthropological poverty. It could be compared to the Freudian theory of the relationship between the conscious and the unconscious in the metaphor of the “tip of the iceberg”.

IV. Methodology

The method employed in the work at hand is mainly that of an interpretative and theoretical analysis of the concepts with a view to highlighting the implications of carrying on business as usual both for individual persons of Sub-Saharan Africa and the continent as a whole. In concrete terms the division of the work into three parts was principally informed by this motive as we shall see in the outline that follows.

The first part deals with the two major concepts of poverty and violence, placing them in a global, but also African context. It is divided into three chapters for the purpose of detailed study. The first chapter focuses on the definition or rather explanation of poverty with a clear distinction between relative and absolute poverty. We come to the conclusion that relative poverty is seen all over the world, but it is only in Africa and some other countries of the third world that absolute poverty is experienced. Next to this we distinguish between different dimensions of poverty, including first of all socio-economic poverty, which refers to material poverty and social exclusion and secondly theological poverty, where we narrate the historical development of the theological understanding of material poverty. Here we see how the historical context of each epoch gave rise to a different understanding of material possession vis-a-vis the goal of human life. We then introduce what we call anthropological poverty to designate any act of discrimination of person(s) which violates his/her basic human rights. As a conclusion to this chapter, we deal with the theory of basic human needs and what it means to be poor.

The second chapter analyses the internal and external causes and consequences of poverty in the region of the continent under consideration. Poverty is not caused by one factor, rather it is a culmination of different factors ranging from geographical, demographical to socio-political. A greater part of the blame for the persistence of absolute poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa since independence is to be attributed to corrupt and irresponsible leadership. In view of this scenario we discuss how the roles of some foreign institutions, especially the IMF & World Bank and international bodies could aid and abet poverty in the entire continent. The

neglect of such intervention would mean not only more difficult times for the populace but equally for the rest of the world in this time of globalization.

The most pronounced impact of material poverty on any society is the decline of social cohesion with its concomitant effect of social insecurity. This observation leads us logically to the third chapter that focuses on violence, but before then we singled out women for the purpose of emphasis as the most affected group in Sub-Saharan Africa. Any effort at the reduction of poverty in Africa that fails to acknowledge the role of women in the changing economic structure will end up in failure. This calls for rethinking the cultural status of women in most African countries, where they are denied the right to possess land or engage in limited forms of trade and only reduced to the role of house keepers.

In chapter three we dwell on the nature and forms of violence. One aspect of the project of objectively explaining the notion of violence that makes it difficult is that of cultural valorisation. Some practices which are violent in themselves are given cultural or religious interpretation like female circumcision or the mock fight. But even at that, it is indubitable that those who have to undergo such violent practices in the name of culture or religion would prefer an alternative, should there be any. These forms of violence that have their roots in religio-cultural practices are in any case not the outcome of material poverty. The major forms of violence predominant in the area of our study include ethnic and political violence, socio-economic, and religious violence (religious fundamentalism). As in the case of poverty, we see that women and children are the most vulnerable groups in any and every form of violence. Violence against women in particular is linked to economic power.

The second part of our research is divided into two chapters and considers the correlation between poverty and violence in post-colonial Africa south of the Sahara. The fourth chapter tries to provide a background to the understanding of poverty and violence by taking a look at the African world view. Inasmuch as it may be incorrect to deny violent practices in the traditional African society, we see that the values of community spirit, hospitality, respect for life and group work helped the individuals affected by poverty to cushion the otherwise painful experience of being in lack. This is opposed to the modern individualistic and self-centred society. The traditional African society was egalitarian in structure.

In chapter five, we take a survey of the first contact of the Africans with both the Western culture and that of the Near East served on the dishes of the Christian and Islamic religions. While the latter came to Sub-Saharan Africa first, the former seems to have had more influence on the people owing to the introduction of science and technology. However, before the appearance of these two religions on the continent, there was the misinformation from ethnologists about the Africans and Africa that helped to aid slavery and eventually colonialism. The stigma of these two historical experiences is yet to be wiped completely from the psyche of the Africans. We subject the legacies of colonization to an objective critique and find that even though the mission of civilizing the natives is generally regarded by most African scholars as a failure in terms of socio-economic upliftment, Africa had something to benefit from the colonial experience, namely, the languages, the art of writing and the message of the Gospel. On the other hand, we note that many years after independence, the African post-colonial leaders have not demonstrated their autonomy, especially in the areas of the economy and politics. Some of them are still repeating the mistakes made by the colonial authorities, that is, transporting alien policies to Africa without considering the cultural discrepancies. Of course, one does not need much time to come to the conclusion that the result of this is identity crisis. There is a socio-cultural hotch-potch which constitutes the basis for the greater part of the problems in that continent. The chapter ends with the dialectics of foreign aid, which is but a reflection of the relationship hitherto between the West and Africa, which is more or less that of mutual suspicion and uncertainty.

The third and last part of our research is devoted to the issue of the discourse on the dignity of the human person vis-a-vis the challenges of the social problems of poverty and violence in Africa today. The primary motive of this section is to explain the core elements that constitute the dignity of the human person and to uncover the reason(s) why some persons fail to acknowledge this in their dealings with others of their kind. For here lies the challenge for religious and cultural leaders in Africa and elsewhere to motivate their followers to meet others on the plane of reason and mutual respect, while remaining true to themselves and their own beliefs. The term “dignity” is not originally African (what actually is original?), but Western; hence we borrowed it to describe the practices peculiar to African culture which demonstrate the Africans’ respect for life and the human person. The sixth chapter of the work makes a re-appraisal of the term from the theological and philosophical perspectives, relating the arguments therefrom to concrete social questions. Two philosophers of the Enlightenment, John Locke and Immanuel Kant, were singled out and treated separately with

reference to their views on what constitutes the dignity of the human person according to the Judeo-Christian *Lehre* on the same subject. To talk of dignity does not imply speaking of a life without hardship or suffering. One could suffer in dignity. To buttress this point we look at the example of the Biblical Job. This dovetails into the key points of the social teaching of the Church. Since the Church is only a part of the larger society, we try to situate what the Church teaches in the wider society where other people who are not members of the Church live and work. This shift gives us another nuance, namely, the basic rights of the human person. On a deeper analysis we see that a person has rights, because he/she has dignity. Although there is no consensus opinion as to what the components of human dignity are, there is nonetheless a general view that the human person has a quality which is peculiar only to humanity and is not shared by any other creature.

The last chapter, chapter seven, takes a look at the problems of poverty and violence in the face of the African sense of community and Christianity anthropology. The African understanding of the community could be a step in the reduction of poverty and violence, but this model is limited by the fact that membership in the traditional community is traced to a common ancestor. In a multi-plural society, this form of grouping is obsolete. The Christian anthropology that considers everybody as a member of one family is proposed. One may contend that there are other people who do not share the Christian faith, however there are no people who are allergic to good deeds or kind words. Insofar as this is what Christianity stands for, it has more chance of reaching more people than the traditional community, even though both of them emphasize the principle of the mutual acknowledgment of the dignity inherent in the human person. It is equally on this acknowledgment that the human society as a communion of persons can thrive.

In view of this we try to situate Sub-Saharan Africa in the context of the world community of persons, paying attention to the efforts made to alleviate African poverty in the forms of aid, and the possible effects of globalization on the African condition. We survey the contribution of environmental degradation and resources management – as a kindred factor to the globalization process – to the issues of poverty and violence.

In the general conclusion, we try to mirror the image of Africa in the 21st century in the tension between hope and resignation. While some people have given their verdict on Africa as a forgotten continent, we want to state, on the contrary, that Africa has prospects in the

third millennium. But to make this a reality and not a delusion, the basic human values based on the dignity of the human person have to be restored in the socio-economic and political programmes of that continent. The recognition of the right of the human person based on the theory of the natural law is the bulwark against arbitrariness of power and the illusion of ideological manipulations. African leaders have to take this into consideration in their efforts to build the nation-states. The leaders have their own roles to play, but to leave the affairs of the entire continent or rather Sub-Saharan Africa in the hands of political leaders alone without the co-operation of other stakeholders and institutions is not sufficient. Africa needs a renaissance, which has to commence from within, because the major causes of the continent's problems are internal and not external.

Part one: Poverty and Violence as Global Social Phenomena

CHAPTER ONE

TOWARDS A DEFINITION AND HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION OF POVERTY

1.0 Introduction

In this chapter we shall endeavour to define the term “poverty” as it is to be applied in this work, not without taking into consideration the innumerable nuances the term has acquired in the course of studies on social development. Poverty as a social problem has its tentacles well rooted in the society and the changes that take place therein. As a result of this connection to the changes in the society, most definitions of poverty are limited to material conditions. While the material aspect cannot be ignored in the understanding of poverty, to limit the concept of poverty to the material context alone is tantamount to a partial knowledge of the human person, who is the subject of poverty. Hence, this chapter will also focus on the anthropological dimension of poverty, which is often neglected in the socio-economic researches on poverty. Closely related to the anthropological is the theological notion of poverty, also designated as evangelical poverty. A considerable portion of the work is dedicated to this last theme, with the historical development of the Church’s teaching on poverty being narrated with reference to scriptural texts, the Church Fathers and the influence of the protestant Reformers.

1.1 Definitions of Poverty

Defining poverty would, at first sight, seem to be a straightforward and simple task. Poverty is obviously understood to be the lack of something, a deficiency in necessary properties or desirable qualities. Common synonyms include paucity, scarcity, dearth, scantiness, destitution, want, privation, penury, indigence, insufficiency, and meagerness. To be poor is to be without.¹ Golomb defines poverty as “a continuous lack of the important means of life either for an individual or for a group; it is the sustenance of life on barest minimum

¹ Devine A. J. and Wright D. J., *The Greatest of Evils: Urban Poverty and the American Underclass*. New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1993. 2

resources.”² What is in question here is the material and economic basis required for the fulfillment of life purposes. To define poverty as a lack of material resources needed to live is perhaps suitable for unofficial usage and everyday language, but this remains inadequate for scientific use. To approach the issue of poverty scientifically requires spelling out exactly what the relevant material resources are, and how much of those resources one needs to enjoy a reasonably safe and comfortable existence. This demands in turn further explanation of what “reasonably safe and comfortable existence” means.

The official definition of poverty could be referred to as that which the Bureau of Census requires in order to produce its reports. Such definition of poverty is employed in all government reports and statistical series and also used by most non-governmental researchers working in the poverty area. Although it is designated as official, this definition contains numerous arbitrary elements making it therefore incomprehensive. In any case, we shall examine a few of those definitions with a view to the objective of this work, which is a theoretical rather than an empirical analysis of the concept of poverty. The difficulty involved in defining poverty, according to Townsend, is that it is a relational term and hence needs to be constantly redefined as situations change.³ This means that whatever is said of poverty varies immensely with reference to the spatio-temporal context. Such a definition as “man is a rational animal”, which is valid irrespective of space and time, cannot be applied to poverty. Perhaps, it is wiser to follow the counsel of Altimir, who, considering the different and changing faces of poverty, concluded that a definition as such was impossible, but asserted “we can manage no more than an explanation of each isolated symptom.”⁴ Subsequent to this advice, we shall now try to explain the term “poverty” along two generally accepted divisions namely, absolute and relative poverty.

1.1.1 Absolute Poverty.

In order to understand poverty as absolute, the first thing to consider is whether some truly basic (absolute) standard of existence can be defined such that any and all who fall below that standard are poor. Devine and Wright both argue that the major problem to be encountered in defining poverty as absolute is the question of how to set the standard amidst competing

² Golomb, A., Armut, in: Klose, A., Mantl, W., *Katholische Soziale Lexikon*, Innsbruck, Wien, München: Tyrolia, 1982. 142.

³ Cf. Townsend, P., *The International Analysis of Poverty*, Toronto, 3

⁴ Altimir, O., *The Extent of Poverty in Latin America*, World Bank Staff Working Papers, No. 522, Washington D. C. 1992, 5.

social factors and the difference in time associated with it.⁵ This problem notwithstanding, to regard poverty as absolute is one of the two ways in which poverty could be assessed and it refers to people whose means of material support is totally inadequate to meet their needs.⁶ Absolute poverty is a condition of acute physical want such as lack of food, clothing, shelter and the absence of medical services.⁷ It is a condition in which one survives on the barest minimum of material resources. An absolutely poor person does not know where the next food will come from. He/she depends entirely on the generosity of others, which is not always guaranteed.

Absolute poverty is also referred to as “primary poverty” and defined by Rowntree as a condition in which “total earnings are insufficient to obtain the minimum necessities for the maintenance of mere physical efficiency.”⁸ Rowntree distinguishes this from “secondary poverty” under which he classified the families whose earnings would be sufficient for the maintenance of mere physical efficiency, were it not that some portion of it is absorbed by other expenditure, either useful or wasteful.⁹ Absolute poverty is also called “indigence” or “destitution”.

The World Bank Report, “Voices Of The Poor: Can Anyone Hear Us?” based on research with over 20,000 poor people in 23 countries defines absolute (extreme) poverty as “living on less than \$1 per day and moderate poverty as less than \$2 per day estimating that in 2001, 1.1 billion people had consumption levels below \$1 a day and 2.7 billion lived on less than \$2 a day”.¹⁰ This presupposes, however, that the purchasing power of the dollar remains constant. Sometimes one meets wretched situations that defy verbal description of absolute poverty. Two examples will suffice here: The first is the reply of a poor man in Kenya to an interview team doing research on poor peoples assessment of their situation. To the question of what is poverty, the man retorted, “don’t ask me what poverty is because you have met it outside my house. Look at the house and count the number of holes. Look at my utensils and the clothes that I am wearing. Look at everything and write what you see. What you see is poverty.”¹¹

⁵ Cf. Devine, A. J. and Wright, D. J., Op. Cit. 3

⁶ Cf. Lourdino, A. Y., Mission in the Context of Endemic Poverty: Papers of a Consultation on Mission in the Context of Poverty and in Situations of Affluence, Philippines 1982, 19

⁷ Cf. Moynihan, D. P., On Understanding Poverty, New York 1989, 36

⁸ Rowntree, B. S., Poverty: A Study of Town Life, in: Hastings, J. (ed.), Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, vol. 10, 139

⁹ Ibid, 139

¹⁰ Narayan, D., Patel R. et al., Voices of the Poor : Can Anyone Hear Us? New York: Oxford University Press, Inc. 2000, 35

¹¹ Ibid, 30

The next is the mental picture painted by Leonardo Boff in the first chapter of his book, “Introducing Liberation Theology.” According to Boff, “a woman of forty, but who looked as old as seventy, went up to the priest after Mass and said sorrowfully: “Father, I went to communion without going to confession first”. “How come about, my daughter?” asked the priest. “Father,” she replied, “I arrived rather late, after you had begun the offertory. For three days I have had only water and nothing to eat; I’m dying of hunger. When I saw you handing out the hosts, those little pieces of white bread, I went to communion just out of hunger for that little bit of bread.”¹² Those two instances bear out to what extent absolute poverty can completely change the life and worldview of the person affected, rob him/her of his/her freedom and reduce the person’s capacity to reason. Contrary to the World Bank standard of less than \$1 per day, there are those who may not even see a single cent in three days, as in the case of the woman in the above example. Absolute poverty is peculiar to developing countries, both as lack of real income and as a lack of access to social services.¹³ Incidentally, the above examples are drawn from “third world” continents, Africa and Latin America. According to the World Bank Report of 1997, about 45 percent of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa live in absolute poverty.¹⁴ We shall discuss this form of poverty in greater depth later in this work; it is the question of the dignity of the absolute poor person to which this investigation is finally directed. Suffice it to say that absolute poverty is manifested in malnutrition, sickness, illiteracy and a standard of living which denies basic human dignity.¹⁵

1.1.2 Relative Poverty

Relative poverty views poverty as determined mainly by the society and dependent on the social context. It is the poverty of a person or group of persons relative to other people in a given society. It is vehemently argued that any realistic, workable definition of poverty must be relative to a society’s existing level of economic, social, and cultural development. Hence, no sensible definition of poverty can be indifferent to history, society, and culture. There is no single definition of poverty that can suffice for all times and places.¹⁶ Defining relative poverty is more problematic than defining absolute poverty, since different people lack

¹² Boff, L. and Boff, C., *Introducing Liberation Theology* (vol. 1) translated by Paul Burns, Britain: Burns and Oates 1987, 1

¹³ Cf. Ascher, H., *Natural Resources Policy making in Developing Countries*, Durham 1992, p. 32

¹⁴ Cf. World Bank Report, 1997, 21

¹⁵ Cf. Schönherr, S., *Armutsorientierte Entwicklungspolitik – Ansatzpunkte zur Verbindung von Wachstum und Armutsreduzierung durch Förderung kleinbäuerlicher Zielgruppen*, Volkswirtschaftliche Schriften, Heft 335, Berlin 1983, 24

¹⁶ Cf., Devine, A. J. and Wright, D. J., *Op. Cit.*, 3

different things in different places and according to the different circumstances in which they find themselves. This implies that “assessment of an individual’s or group’s situation depends largely on the standard of living enjoyed by the reference groups with which they are being compared.”¹⁷ One thing that is constant in the description of relative poverty is that the social, cultural and political factors that define it are continuously changing. Needs that are relative to a society as a whole are also relative to the set of social sub-systems to which the individuals belong.¹⁸ At the same time, extremely relativized conceptions of poverty are equally problematic. For instance, we could define poverty relative to a society’s given distribution of income, considering those in the bottom quintile of the distribution as poor regardless of the absolute level of their incomes. In this case, we are defining a poverty income relative to the average income. This approach implies by definition that no society can ever eliminate poverty, since in any empirical distribution of income, 20% must lie in the lowest income quintile. To maintain, following this analysis, that one-fifth of all people in all societies at all times and places are “poor” is neither a useful nor a satisfactory conclusion.¹⁹

Relative poverty could be understood as subjective deprivation relative to some pertinent reference group. This approach conceptualizes poverty as comparative disadvantage, but here the comparison is to other people or reference groups rather than to a statistical average. In this approach, people are poor if they think of themselves as poor or if they are thought of as poor by others. The latter is the situation prevailing between the third world countries and the first world (the West). This view of poverty as relative subjective deprivation calls attention to the psychological dimension of poverty and raises questions of how people come to define themselves or others as poor. And because in this view poverty is defined against some reference group or standard, the approach directs attention to broader income-distributional (or equity) issues. The problem with the relative deprivation approach in the definition of poverty is that everyone is deprived relative to someone else, excepting only the single richest person in the world.²⁰ Not even in Marxist utopian classless society is an absolute absence of deprivation obtainable. Care should however be taken that the discussion of relative poverty does not end in absurdum, whereby one falls into the conclusion that since everybody is relatively deprived, therefore everybody is poor. The way out of this danger will be seen in our treatment of the theory of basic needs later in this work. It is to be noted that a truly

¹⁷ Jones, C. and Novak, T., *Poverty, Welfare and Disciplinary State*, New York 1999, 24

¹⁸ Amin, A., *Globalisation and Regional Development: A Relational Perspective*. Magazine of Change and Competition 3 (1998) 1-2

¹⁹ Devine, A. J and Wright, D. J., *Op. Cit.*, 3

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 4

workable, satisfactory definition of poverty can be neither entirely absolute nor entirely relative. A balanced definition has to be sensitive to a given society's level of development and also show a demarcation of people truly in need according to some objective standard. It is with this in view that we need to explore the socio-economic aspect of poverty under the three different dimensions within which poverty is generally discussed.

1. 2. Dimensions of poverty

This section aims at considering poverty in its socio-economic, theological and anthropological dimensions. From these three main dimensions which incorporates all other forms of poverty, we shall be able to gain a comprehensive view which becomes a basis for assessing the impact of poverty on the dignity of the human person. We discuss each of these dimensions in turn below.

1. 2. 1. The socio-economic dimension of poverty

Human society as developed through history owes its structure to the interplay of economic, social, political and, of course, religious orders. The changes we note in the society are determined to a large extent by the changes in the social and economic spheres. The industrial revolution and Marxist economic theory of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, respectively, even though they may not be accepted in their entirety, buttress this thesis. Each society is structured and operates in certain ways which are necessitated by a number of objective conditions. These conditions include, inter alia, methods of production and distribution which in turn depend on raw materials, industrial techniques, climate, size of population, political and geographical factors, and cultural traditions.²¹ Against this backdrop, the average man or woman of today obtains his or her sense of identity from his/her belonging to the society rather from his/her being a human person. The loss of the sense of belonging is often described as being poor on the social level. Social poverty is therefore the socially poor standing of a person.²² Individuals, families and groups in a given society are designated as poor when they lack the means to participate in the activities and the living standards which are customary in the society to which they belong.²³ Maintaining the social cohesion may be

²¹ Cf. Fromm, E., *The Sane Society* (2nd. Ed.) London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1991, 77

²² Cf. Morris, C., *The Welfare State: Putting the Records Straight*, London, 1994, 33

²³ Cf. Lewis, S., *Social and Economic Effects of Poverty*, London 1993, 46

what the poor need most, sometimes even more than material things. The inability to generate this social capital²⁴ can lead to the loss of respect within the social group. And when this situation persists one can quickly lose his/her identity and be forgotten. Social poverty can exist as either absolute or relative poverty.

The discussion of social poverty is inextricably bound to economic poverty. There cannot be any true research into social poverty without reference to economic conditions and vice versa. This means that focusing on economic poverty in this work is a continuation of the discussion of social poverty as the two overlap profoundly. Economic poverty is what is generally understood when we talk of poverty, because poverty is commonly considered as material in nature.²⁵ Although economic poverty has material lack as its basis, it can be manifested in other forms like relative shortage of goods and services.²⁶ According to Mariz, “the poor are those who do not earn enough to survive physically, or those who spend their entire income to obtain only the basic needs.”²⁷ In South Africa, the poor are characterized as “those who do not have secure jobs”, and poor communities are characterized by widespread absence of formal employment. Furthermore, the poor have “numerous small, often dangerous jobs, rather than one job.”²⁸ The consequences of the foregoing is the fact of “economic inferiority”²⁹ on the part of the poor and the subsequent stratification in the society. With reference to this, Moynihan, in his study of poverty in the United States, defines the poor as “those able-bodied persons and their dependents whose lack of income and wealth places them at the bottom-most layer of the society and whose sources of income lie in either welfare payments or in unskilled and poorly paid occupations.”³⁰ The poor who find themselves in this category are regarded as the “underclass” in some societies. The term entered the vocabulary of public debate in the early 1980s and has since been appropriated by various authors who use the term in different and sometimes inconsistent ways. In general, the underclass comprises those persons who are at the bottom of the economic and social barrel, but most would include the urban criminal and drug-dealing elements within the underclass

²⁴ The idea of social capital is employed to explain such factors as norms, values, and informal networks, as well as in local organizations such as farmers groups, burial societies, informal lending associations, neighbourhood support networks, and other associations. It is believed that these mechanisms can be relied on to lift poor individuals and communities out of their poverty. (cf. *Voices of the Poor.... World Bank Poverty Report*, 2000, 130).

²⁵ Narayan, D., *Voices of the Poor*, 37

²⁶ Secombe, D. P., *Possessions and the Poor in Luke-Acts*, Linz-Austria, 1982, 30

²⁷ Mariz, C. L., *Coping with Poverty, Pentecostal and Christian Base Communities in Brazil*, Philadelphia, 1994, 31

²⁸ Narayan, D., *Op. Cit.*, 37

²⁹ Marris, D., *The Nature of Poverty*, Oxford 1993, 21

³⁰ Moynihan, D. P., *On Understanding Poverty*, New York, 1989, 36

even though their incomes are frequently substantial.³¹ Further distinction of the poor is made along socio-economic lines between the “deserving” and the “undeserving” poor. While the former refers to victims of circumstances and unfavourable economic trends who deserve sympathy and assistance, the latter describes the lazy and shiftless who could “do better” for themselves if they wanted and who therefore merit contempt.³² A society that has a high percentage of the undeserving poor can be anything but a stable society. The corollary to this group are those who have taken from the society more than they have contributed as individuals or as institutions. The latter condition refers to such government policies on poverty that are not influenced by the findings of research or intellectual debate, but by wider political, ideological and economic considerations and sometimes by individual self interest.³³ Faced with such a situation whereby politicians enrich themselves more by organising programmes on the theme of poverty without concrete steps towards its reduction, we can appreciate the contribution of Clemens Sedmak, who challenges us to reflect upon an ethics of thinking about poverty. According to him, “such an ethics will concentrate on commitments implied in the thorough analysis of poverty. There are epistemic commitments implied in the analysis of poverty. These epistemic commitments include the acceptance that we cannot adequately analyze poverty if we take poverty to be a ‘phenomenon’ out there, ‘far away’”.³⁴ In contrast to this attitude, poverty is to be looked as a problem of human persons like ourselves. Not until this sensitivity is awakened can there be a concrete programme towards the reduction of economic poverty. It is important to note that we are not talking about a problem in the kitchen sink when we talk about poverty, we are talking about people. And these people are primarily persons, who happen to live under poverty conditions, they are not primarily poor.³⁵ As a result of this neglect from the policy makers in the society, Sedmak understands poverty basically as “a situation where people experience the fact that both individual people and institutional structures have not entered into adequate commitments towards these people (commitments deprivation)”.³⁶ What this implies is that the institutions, be it at the national or international level, have to demonstrate their commitments in the society by making basic provisions which can enable people to do something for themselves. Jeffrey Sachs captures this vividly:

³¹ Devine, A. J. and Wright, D. J., *Op. Cit.*, 77

³² *Ibid.*, 78

³³ Vic, G., *Wealth, Poverty and Starvation: A World Perspective*, England 1988, p. 87

³⁴ Holztrattner, M. and Sedmak, C. (Eds.), *Humanities and Option for the Poor*, vol. 1, Wien: LIT Verlag, 2005, 9

³⁵ *Op. cit.*, 10

³⁶ *Op. cit.*, 11

When the preconditions of basic infrastructure (roads, power, and ports) and human capital (health and education) are in place, markets are powerful engines of development. Without those preconditions, markets can cruelly bypass large parts of the world, leaving them impoverished and suffering without respite. Collective action, through effective government provision of health, education, infrastructure, as well as foreign assistance when needed, underpins economic success.³⁷

But while Sach's position may be regarded as a necessary condition for the alleviation of poverty, it is not to be understood also as a sufficient condition. The political will to put the basic things in place and formulate just economic policies is imperative. This lack has continued to exist in the many years of partnership between the developed and the underdeveloped countries, and even between the rich and the poor in any given country. What is responsible for this imbalance? Sachs supplies an answer, which even though it may be contested, cannot be denied entirely. According to him, "progress is hard enough to achieve in the world without being perceived as a danger. One of the ironies of the recent success of India and China is the fear that has engulfed the United States that success in these two countries comes at the expense of the United States. These fears are fundamentally wrong and, even worse, dangerous. They are wrong, because the world is not a zero-sum struggle in which one country's gain is another's loss, but is rather a positive-sum opportunity in which improving technologies and skills can raise living standards around the world."³⁸ This disposition can affect commitments on the part of the rich to assist the poor within a country or even influence the support from the developed countries to the developing ones. Economic relationships are almost entirely profit-oriented and every businessman prefers monopoly to competition. To maintain this gap there is a lot of production on the part of the rich countries as a way of increasing wealth; and since wealth entails not only consumption but also waste, not only production, but also destruction, the space we live in is constantly threatened.³⁹ The possible way of check-mating this trend would be to reconsider the criteria for measuring poverty and to endeavour to re-unite economic and normative ethics. In discussing economic poverty and its social effects, two factors have to be taken into consideration. The first of these factors is the problem of finding a reliable method of measuring poverty. The other factor is the nature of liberal capitalism as the prevailing economic system of our time.

³⁷ Sachs, J., *The End of Poverty: How we can make it happen in our time*, England: Penguin Books, 2005, 3

³⁸ Sachs, J., *Op. Cit.*, 16

³⁹ Landes, D. S., *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why some are so rich and some so poor*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1999, xx

Socio-economic poverty is a multidimensional and complex human phenomenon that cannot be forced into a particular framework of measurement, owing to the constantly changing conditions of the society and the economy. The difficulty associated with the measurement of poverty hinges mainly on how to define the “minimum” necessary to live on.⁴⁰ It is with reference to this difficulty in the measurement of poverty that Dörings advocates for different forms of poverty measurement for different nations and people who for a short period suffer poverty, ie., a passing poverty or distinguish between them from those of permanent poverty.⁴¹

As much as this view may be accepted, one still has to contend with the influence of cultural and political assumptions of researchers. Principally, poverty measurement is politically organised and sponsored to enable the government in question to formulate policies, the goal of which is to be informed for action. Where poverty is extensive it will be the focus of concern, and policies need to be developed to remove or ameliorate it.⁴² But even at this level of policy formulation, there are factors that significantly affect the reports of researchers, like their class, culture and political power vis-a-vis the people being studied.⁴³ All these and similar factors notwithstanding, there are some theories of poverty measurement which are scientifically accepted. We shall briefly consider two of these theories in this work, because of their particular relevance. These include the quantitative and the qualitative measurements of poverty.

Most researchers on poverty employ the instrument of quantitative measurement of poverty. This is owing to the fact that economics as an independent discipline deals with verifiable data on the one hand; and on the other hand the formulation of policies by the government needs statistics based on empirical findings. In the words of Townseed, “quantitative measurement of poverty is a method which is primarily based on existing statistical information gathered by government or other agencies for different purposes.”⁴⁴ Highlighting the advantage of this method, Alcock states that, “a statistical survey, if it is large enough and if the sample of respondents providing the data is carefully chosen, can provide an objective

⁴⁰ Cf. Marris, R., *Ending Poverty: Prospects for Tomorrow*, Britain 1999, 2

⁴¹ Cf. Hemmer, H. R. and Kötter, H., *Armutsorientierte kirchliche Entwicklungsarbeit: Eine sozio-ökonomische Analyse*, Miseror Dialog, Aachen 1990, 32

⁴² Cf. Lipton, M., *Poverty, Undernutrition, and Hunger*, World Bank Staff Working Papers, no. 597, Washington D. C. 1983, 4

⁴³ Alcock, P., *Understanding Poverty* (2nd Ed.), London 1997, 23

⁴⁴ Townseed, P., *op. cit.*, 92

and arguably scientific picture of the broader group or society from which it has been selected.”⁴⁵ Furthermore, Murrey also considers that “the major advantages of the government statistics are their accessibility and authenticity. They are usually free and carry the authority of the official status.”⁴⁶ There is no doubt that the quantitative measurement of poverty has tremendous advantages, but the problem with its predominance in poverty research reflects the reification (*Kant: Verdinglichung*) of the target group of this science, the poor. Poverty remains an end in itself as long as poverty research does not focus on local-level qualitative research that brings the people concerned to the centre of attention and gives them a voice. This practice has, unfortunately, been followed in many approaches over time.⁴⁷ The personal touch, which quantitative measurement lacks, is supplied by the qualitative measurement of poverty, which treats the poor as ethical subjects with autonomy. Qualitative measurement of poverty therefore involves:

A focus on the people concerned, their environment and local peculiarities is important for the interpretation of their situation. Therefore, poor people now are seen as experts with the highest amount of knowledge about their situation, surroundings, problems, and fears. Simultaneously, endowing poor people with autonomy in the poverty research process is the first step towards sustainable poverty reduction. Poverty research processes which contradict this principle are counter-productive and unethical.⁴⁸

This may have some disadvantages, but it suffices to say that the involvement of the poor in the study about them goes a long way to helping them assert themselves, though there are cases where the poor shy away from confronting their reality. But where this has been overcome, the feeling of self-worth amplified through mutual interaction can work as an elixir in the lives of the poor. With the qualitative theory, the poor instead of being talked about are talked to. As in the case of the quantitative measurement, the qualitative method of poverty measurement has, as stated its deficiencies. In the first place, the scale of coverage is generally very limited. As a result of this, “the description these measurements offer, in most

⁴⁵ Alcock, P., op. cit., 116

⁴⁶ Murrey, G., *Disability, Household Income and Expenditure*, Oxford 1994, 61

⁴⁷ Cf., Böhler, T. and Sedmak, C., *Armutsforschung und Armutsminderung: Eine Bestandsaufnahme aus einem ethischen Blickwinkel*, Facing Poverty 7, Universität Salzburg, 2004, 56

⁴⁸ Böhler, T., *The Preferential Option for the Poor and Amartya Sen's Capability Approach: Two Attempts to Link Economics with the Interdisciplinary Field of Poverty Research and Reduction*, in: Holztrattner, M. & Sedmak, C. (Eds.), op. cit., 212

cases, cannot represent poverty in any scientific manner.”⁴⁹ This is a big minus for the qualitative measurement of poverty, despite its persuasive power, because they can be easily dismissed by critical academics or unsympathetic politicians as being, without a scientific basis.⁵⁰ There is, in fact, no standard means of evaluation with regard to the qualitative measurement of poverty.

The above discussion shows that both the quantitative and the qualitative measurements of poverty are needed in any research that intends to address comprehensively the reality of poverty in the society. The two approaches as we have mentioned above represent the economic and ethical study of poverty respectively. Both should be viewed in the light of attempts to integrate the economic and ethical aspects of human life. And we notice that, “as soon as economics is integrated into an interdisciplinary approach in the analysis of poverty, ethical considerations come into play. Originally, ethics and economics emerged from the same scientific goal: economics wanted to understand preferences and choices of all people who are participating in the market place. It valued factors of production (land, labour, capital goods, know-how). (Normative) ethics came up with moral codes and with a theory of value that judged certain things as intrinsically good.”⁵¹ Amartya Sen argues in this regard that economics, as it has developed, can be made more productive by paying greater and more explicit attention to the ethical considerations that shape human behaviour and judgement. In the Royer Lectures at the University of California, Berkeley in 1986, Sen stated, inter alia:

The methodology of so-called ‘positive economics’ has not only shunned normative analysis in economics, it has also had the effect of ignoring a variety of complex ethical considerations which affect actual human behaviour and which, from the point of view of the economists studying such behaviour, are primarily matters of fact rather than of normative judgement. If one examines the balance of emphases in the publications in modern economics, it is hard not to notice the eschewal of deep normative analysis, and the neglect of the influence of ethical considerations in the characterization of actual human behaviour.⁵²

Sen proposes the method of “Capability Approach” as a way of arresting this situation from further degeneration. This method, according to him, is “based on a broader concept of

⁴⁹ Rowntom, O., *Measurement of Poverty*, London 1996, 21

⁵⁰ Cf., Alcock, P., *op. cit.*, 127

⁵¹ Böhler, T., *op. cit.*, 213

⁵² Sen, A., *On Ethics and Economics*, United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing Co. 1987, 7

poverty since it focuses on the overall quality of life and the standard of living (and not only economic well-being). Its goal is to create an alternative way of accessing non-economic categories of the standard of living by illuminating individual choices in the economy beyond utility theory.”⁵³ The major goal of Sen’s theory is to “overcome the separation of economics and ethics in an applied manner.”⁵⁴ Sen views incomes and commodities as the wrong indicators for a good life, but elaborates instead three theoretical frameworks that include three basic indicators – resources, functionings, and capabilities – and emphasises the freedom of choice of the individual as the basis for the definition of poverty.⁵⁵ It is the overemphasis on these wrong indicators for good living that has given rise to modern man’s poverty in the midst of plenty. This we shall see briefly below in the ineluctable force of liberal capitalism which is the second crucial factor to be considered in our discussion of socio-economic poverty.

The collapse of the feudal system and the rise of a new societal form carried with it chaos and disorder. The turbulence created brought with it different concepts of society based on various socio-politico-economic systems. Till this time the concept of society and citizenship was rooted in a strict theological world picture which, without doubt, understood God as the “causa finalis” of all that exists. The scholastic tradition prevalent at this time had little to offer as far as the empirical knowledge of man and the world was concerned. Working within the walls of the monastery on texts handed over to them, the theologians paid no attention to what happened in the day-to-day lives of the people. The citizens, challenged by the practical work on which their lives depended, could no longer rely entirely on the teachings of the scholastics, but thought of new approaches to life. The result was the replacement of scholastic thought by the new science (*neuzeitliche Wissenschaft*), which was based on empirical orientation and no longer on gray theological theory (*die Theorie ist grau*). This new pattern of thought was now managed by another group of thinkers who were not clerics.⁵⁶ It was against this background that the industrial revolution was born, an event which brought a fundamental change in the social structure and economic life. Machines replaced humans in the process of production. The man who had more machines (capital) had more production. Thus was born the form of economic system that emphasised the accumulation of capital. Commenting on the early periods of capitalism, Fromm writes:

⁵³Cf. Böhler, T., op. cit., 213

⁵⁴ Ibid., 213

⁵⁵ Ibid., 214

⁵⁶ Schüle, J. A. and Brunner, K. M., *Soziologische Theorien, Eine Einführung für Amateure* (zweite Auflage), Wien: Springer-Verlag 2001, 61

Speaking of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, two aspects must be mentioned which characterize this early period of Capitalism. First, that technique and industry were in the beginning compared with the development in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and second that at the same time the practices and ideas of medieval culture still had a considerable influence on the economic practices of this period. Thus it was supposed to be unchristian and unethical for one merchant to try to lure customers from another by force of lower prices or any other inducements.⁵⁷

The introduction of machines as *ersatz* for human labour was not welcomed with joy *ab initio*. Reason for the cold feet reception was the medieval ethics in which the good of man had primacy of place over other things. Explaining the situation further, Fromm documents:

It is well known how skeptical people were in that period toward new machines, inasmuch as they threatened to take away work from man. Colbert called them “the enemy of labour,” and Montesquieu says that machines which diminish the numbers of workers are “pernicious.” The various attitudes just mentioned are based on principles which had determined the life of man for many centuries. Most important of all was the principle that society and economy exist for man, and not man for them. No economic progress was supposed to be healthy if it hurt any group within the society; needless to say this concept was closely related to traditionalist thought in so much as the traditional social balance was to be preserved, and any disturbance was believed to be harmful.⁵⁸

This condition was not to last long, as the improvement in the economic system was an irresistible attraction for machine owners. The desire to acquire more increased, *amor habendi habendo crescit* (the love of having increases by having), and of course the attitude to human values was pushed to second class. “The living human being with his desires and woes, loses more and more his place in the system, and this place is occupied by business and production. Man ceases to be ‘*homo omnia mensura*’ (the measure of all things) in economic production.”⁵⁹ With the increased interest in production and accumulation of capital, workers are exploited, with the result that many go hungry. We shall take a look at this later under the

⁵⁷ Fromm, E., op. cit., 82

⁵⁸ Ibid., 83

⁵⁹ Ibid., 83

causes of poverty. It suffices to conclude this section by stating that the proper function of the economy should be one of service.⁶⁰ And it is in this ambience that we talk of moral evaluations in the field of economics. There is a growing awareness and demand among individuals and groups, and not least among the very exponents of economics, that this sphere of human activity stands in need of an ethical orientation today more than ever.⁶¹ The current economic crisis which has torn the world asunder has its root in a moral/ethical crisis.

We have dwelt extensively on the socio-economic dimension of poverty, because of the fundamental role which economic activity plays in the material existence of the human person, the absence of which can constitute misery for him/her. But the human person has other needs which are not material, such as spiritual yearnings which cannot be satisfied by tangible realities. What has been the relationship between the material and the spiritual aspects of man in the history of Christianity? To answer this question we shall now turn to the theological dimension of poverty.

1. 2. 2. The biblico-theological dimension of poverty

The understanding of poverty in the Judeo-Christian tradition has not followed a uniform and constant trend. On the contrary, it has been one of complex and at times contradictory perception, not uninfluenced in any case by the political atmosphere prevalent at the time. Viewed sometimes as a curse and at other times as virtue, poverty has continued to remain not only a social problem, but also a religious one. This section takes a look at the evolution of the concept of poverty from the first (old) Testament through the second (new) Testament to the patristic period, the teaching of the Church as presented in the Papal encyclicals and the quasi-political approach in the “fundamental option for the poor” as espoused by the liberation theologians.

⁶⁰ Peschke, K. H., *Christian Ethics: Moral Theology in the Light of Vatican 11* (vol. 2), Bangalore, India 1992, 715

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 715

1. 2. 2. 1. The Holy Scriptures and the Faith Community.

(a) The Old Testament.

The Old (first) Testament is not to be seen as a book, but a compilation of many books which tells us about the history of a people God chose for himself.⁶² In the early stages of their existence, the age of the patriarchs, circa 2000 to 1700 BC, Abraham and his successors were semi-nomads who led their people from Mesopotamia to Canaan. Emigrating to Egypt under the leadership of Israel in a time of famine, they so flourished there that their hosts, fearful of them, oppressed them until, in about 1300 BC, Moses received the command from God to free them from their bondage and to form them into a nation, leading them through the desert for forty years.⁶³ Both their lives in Egypt and their wandering in the desert brought the Israelites in direct contact with poverty in its various forms. Consequent upon this experience is the “large vocabulary for describing the poor man and his situation”⁶⁴ There are various terms employed in the Old Testament to describe the poor man/woman in his/her poverty conditions or the hope which awaits him/her. Americo recounts that the word “poor” appears over 245 times in the Old Testament and is expressed in different Hebrew words. Some of these include, *ani*, *anaw*, *anawim*, *dal*, *ebyon*, and *rash*.⁶⁵ These terms have both cultural and exegetical connotation, the analysis of which we will not undertake in this work since this task belongs to the biblical scholars. However, it suffices to note that all of them basically refer to the poor in the purely economic sense.⁶⁶ The lack of material possession, or rather, the means for minimum existence makes them “victims of humiliation, abuse, and all kinds of injustice.”⁶⁷ The “*anawim Jahweh*” is an expression that appears frequently in Old Testament studies and refers to the relationship between God and the poor. Because the *anawim* are trapped in great misery that makes them depend heavily on others, bringing them humiliations, and deprived of any means of defence, they rely entirely on God, hence they are described as “the poor of Jahweh” or “Jahweh’s own poor.”⁶⁸ This term had no religious meaning originally; it acquired its religious sense after the Exile when it was used for the “pious” and “faithful” of Israel.⁶⁹ The reference to the period of Exile makes it imperative for us to take a

⁶² Cf. Anderson, B. W., *Understanding the Old Testament*, Prentice Hall, 1986, 135

⁶³ Cf. Rodger, C., *Christian Social Witness and Teaching: The Catholic Tradition from Genesis to Centesimus Annus*, vol. 1, Leominster: Gracewing Fowler Wright Books, 1998, 11

⁶⁴ Boerma, C., *Rich Man, Poor Man and the Bible*, London 1979, 7

⁶⁵ Americo, R. A., *The Concept of the Poor in the Context of the Ecclesiology of Liberation Theology*, Michigan 1989, 342

⁶⁶ Cf. Boerma, C., *Rich Man, Poor Man and the Bible*, London 1979, 11

⁶⁷ Barreiro, S. J., *Basic Ecclesial Communities: The Evangelisation of the Poor*, New York 1992, 14

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 14

⁶⁹ Aguigwo, G. M., *The Problem of Poverty in Nigeria and the Role of the Church: A Socio-Pastoral Approach*,

cursory look at the socio-cultural milieu from which the books of the Old Testament arose and which documented the major experiences that shaped the lives of the Israelites.

The basis of the economy of the people of Israel was land, and so it was the ethics of land distribution and use which was at the heart of their economic ethic.⁷⁰ Right from the beginning of the book of Genesis, it is emphasised that land is a gift of God, providing from its agricultural and other riches the means needed for man's support. It was understood as a gift for all mankind.⁷¹ The Lord God planted a garden and brought man into it.⁷² He was to fill the earth and conquer it,⁷³ having been given all the plants⁷⁴ and animals for food⁷⁵; a gift which he was nonetheless required to account for. With this provision made, there were to be no poor among the people of God.⁷⁶ Every family had its own share of land so that there was no economically oppressed class per se. The extended family, the clan, the tribe with its endowment of land provided for all. The unfortunate ones (the widows and orphans, and the strangers with no family connections which would give them a claim on land), were to be taken care of through other means.⁷⁷ The third-year tithe was for them⁷⁸ and the gleanings of harvests.⁷⁹ The same law permitted the poor to pick from the growing crops what was necessary to eat provided nothing was to be carried away.⁸⁰ In addition to these provisions, the poor (mostly widows and orphans) had free access to whatever grew untended in the field during the sabbatical year, i.e, every seventh year.⁸¹ Furthermore, all were to be released from their debts in the sabbatical years and all Israelite slaves let free.⁸² Workers were entitled to prompt wages, and the taking of articles in pledge was not to lead to injustice or deprivation, nor to the humiliation of those pledging them.⁸³ This was the simple social order of Israel as a nomadic people, which gave everybody a right to individual property. The difference in individual wealth was attributed to hard work. The Covenant between God and his people also implied the obligation to work. Idleness is sinful, as well as preventing others from working,

Aachen: Shaker Verlag 2002, 66

⁷⁰ Cf., Rodger, C., op. cit., 18

⁷¹ Ibid.,

⁷² Gen. 1: 8, 15 RSV.

⁷³ Gen. 1: 28

⁷⁴ Gen. 1: 29

⁷⁵ Gen. 1: 30

⁷⁶ Deut. 15: 4

⁷⁷ Rodger, C., 19

⁷⁸ Deut. 14: 28

⁷⁹ Lev. 19: 9-10

⁸⁰ Deut. 23: 24-25

⁸¹ Ex. 23: 10-11

⁸² Deut. 15: 1, 12

⁸³ Deut. 24: 6, 10, 10-13, 17

because such an attitude goes against the original injunction of Genesis to till the earth and make it fruitful. The social idea given by the Law was that every man should live under his own vine and under his own fig tree.⁸⁴

The establishment of the monarchy, however, changed the hitherto prevalent socio-economic order. The ordinary people had to support their king, his court, his officials and his army. What this meant in concrete terms was that they were to work for the king on his large estates.⁸⁵ Gradually this brought about a structurally unjust political and socio-economic order. Israel began to emulate the neighbouring kingdoms, for instance the Canaanites, where the king owned all the land and the people held it as his tenants. This contact with the neighbours also brought an increase in trade, which also meant that the small land owners who were unable to pay their debts surrendered their land to the rich, thereby reducing the former to mere hired labourers at the mercy of the rich property owners.⁸⁶ The emerging social condition implied that the Law of Jahweh was no longer observed and the class structure widened the gap between the rich and the poor. Not only the individuals, but group farmers were involved in this problem.⁸⁷ This was to provide the background for the mission of the prophets.

The history of Israel would be incomplete without the roles played by the prophets in the social, political and economic lives of the people. These “inspired” speakers were always sent by God to mediate in times of crises occasioned by social injustices or natural catastrophies. The social injustices, however, were always understood as responsible for the natural catastrophies. Prophecy as a socio-religious institution in Israel was not immune from abuse and misuse. Although there were even false prophets who claimed also to have been sent by God, they were, nevertheless, regarded as prophets, *nabi* the “one who is called” or the “one who proclaims.” The prophets were known as the bearers and interpreters of the word of God. This word found its meaning when it addressed the living conditions of the people. The most common target of the prophetic message was the gap between the rich and the poor, caused by the former’s exploitation of the latter, as already noted above. In their condemnation of such

⁸⁴ Rodger, C., op. cit., 20

⁸⁵ Dorr, D., *Spirituality and Justice*, New York 1993, 89

⁸⁶ Ibid., 89

⁸⁷ Füssel, K. and Segbers, F., „... So lernen die Völker des Erdkreises Gerechtigkeit“: Ein Arbeitsbuch zu Bibel und Ökonomie, Salzburg 1995, 78

situations, the prophets never minced words about the rich.⁸⁸ Of course, the prophets referred to in this context were the true ones and not the false prophets who were paid by the kings, and who had to stand by them and tell them pleasant things, since ‘he who calls the piper dictates the tune’. For the real prophets, the rich were “godless, haters of justice, persecutors, men of violence, plunderers, usurers. They fight the poor, lay in wait for them, catch them in a net, seize them in claws, traps or nets. They are like lions, snakes, adders; they are arrogant, full of curses.”⁸⁹ The picture painted helps to make it clear that the relationship between the rich and the poor was not a friendly one. The ugly situation is captured better by the individual prophets in their condemnations of social injustices. The prophet Isaiah scolds those who manipulate the laws to their own advantages at the detriment of the poor thus, “Shame on you! You who make unjust laws and publish burdensome decrees, depriving the poor of justice, robbing the weakest of my people of their rights, despoiling the widow and plundering the orphan.”⁹⁰ These two groups of people (the widows and orphans) are those generally referred to as poor in the time of the prophets. The meaning of the two terms “widow” and “orphan” may be taken not only literally, but are used also for those who have no refuge except in the Lord, hence Jahweh is the friend and protector of the poor.⁹¹ In a more direct diatribe against the kings, priests and false prophets, the prophet Jeremiah laments, “There is blood on the corners of your robe, the life-blood of the innocent poor.”⁹² He does not see it as a single individual act, but structural, “for among my people there are wicked men. Their houses is full of fraud, as a cage is full of birds. They grow rich and grand, bloated and rancorous; their thoughts are all of evil and they refuse to do justice, the claims of the orphan they do not put right nor do they grant justice to the poor.”⁹³ The prophet Jeremiah mentions a particular point in the above quotation which Amos takes up, as we shall see below, and which underlines the whole prophetic mission in the religious tradition of Israel. The expression “to grant justice to the poor” means that the poor have a right to the wealth of the rich, at least to a certain degree. This claim goes back to the creation account where God planted a garden and put man in it, not as a master, but as a steward, to administer the goods of the earth.

⁸⁸ Cf., Dorr, D., op. cit., 6

⁸⁹ Boerma, C., op. cit., 36

⁹⁰ Is. 10: 1-2

⁹¹ Ps. 10, 14, 17; cf., Job 5: 15

⁹² Jer. 2: 34

⁹³ Jer. 5: 26-28

The prophet Amos in powerful pictorial language denounces the ostentatious life of the rich and their oppression of the poor. The incontrollable avarice for wealth and commercial fraudulence make the rich “sell the innocent for silver and the destitute for a pair of shoes. They grind the heads of the poor into the earth and thrust the humble out of their way.”⁹⁴ The prophet knew very well that the craze for wealth is the source of injustice in any society and did not grow tired in condemning it: “You that turn justice upside down and bring righteousness to the ground by levying taxes on the poor and extorting a tribute of grain from them. You who persecute the guiltless, hold to ransom and thrust the destitute out of court.”⁹⁵ The rich and powerful at the time of Amos did not escape his sharp criticism. He says, “Listen, you who grind and plunder the humble”⁹⁶ or one would say the humiliated. The abuse of human rights and hence the violation of human dignity is always the spillover of excessive accumulation of wealth. This was already a serious problem in the society in which Amos lived circa 760 BC. A true son of the countryside, rough, direct, proud, his language rich in the imagery of country-dwellers, Amos condemned corrupt city life, social injustice and the deceitful consolations of insincere ceremonial.⁹⁷ There was no place in the house of God for those who, “sell the righteous for money and the needy for a pair of shoes; they trample the heads of the poor and turn away the afflicted.”⁹⁸ The identification of the poor with the righteous is to be remarked on as this would play a vital role in the understanding of the poor in later Judaism, a perspective which was taken up by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. To describe the poor as righteous meant that they were acceptable in the sight of God. With reference to this, Yuzon writes: “It is as though the righteous God of Israel were showing a curious bias towards all who are weak and oppressed, towards the down-trodden who cannot help themselves, the fatherless and the widow, the deaf and the blind, the stranger and the poor.”⁹⁹ It was expected that the people of Israel as a nation chosen by God should imitate the righteousness of God in dealing with one another irrespective of social status or possession. The reign of justice and righteousness would be a confirmation that the people still retain their status as God’s chosen people. The prophets are to make sure that this is realised. Amos tracing the reign of justice to the throne of God declares: “Let justice roll down like water and righteousness like an ever flowing stream.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ Amos 8: 6b, 7a

⁹⁵ Amos 5: 7, 11, 12b

⁹⁶ Cf. Amos 8: 4

⁹⁷ Cf. Amos 5: 21-22

⁹⁸ Amos 2: 6

⁹⁹ Yuzon, L. A., *Mission in the Context of Endemic Poverty: Papers of a Consultation on Mission in the Context of Poverty and in Situations of Affluence*, Singapore 1983, 7

¹⁰⁰ Amos 5: 24

There were other prophets who prophesied against the social injustices occasioned by material possessions in Israel, but we have chosen the three above to represent the others, for though they lived at different times, their message was the same, namely that poverty was caused by greed and exploitation.

The understanding of poverty as the consequence of one's own sin¹⁰¹ or fate¹⁰² was a later development in the history of Israel. It is this understanding of poverty as punishment in the face of life-experience that would become a religious problem, and this became stronger in Israel as the belief spread that there was a possibility of balancing up everything in another world in the future. As a result of this development, there was a shift in the assessment of the poor after the Captivity. The circumstances in which Israel found itself contributed greatly to this. Israel was very poor and oppressed during the Exile. The poor became closely associated to God¹⁰³ to the extent that the term "poor" (*ares*) became a religious concept whose meaning shifted to 'humility'.¹⁰⁴ Poverty was thus conceived of as a thing of the mind instead of a physical condition.¹⁰⁵ To be poor and to be pious came to be identified with each other.¹⁰⁶ The poor became the pious as opposed to the godless rich people.¹⁰⁷ Even though this notion of the poor being pious continued till later Judaism, the trauma associated with poverty was not removed. This fact is buttressed by one of the most frequent rabbinical utterances that there was nothing as difficult in the world as poverty, for it is the most difficult among all the sufferings of the world (*Es gibt nichts schwereres in der Welt als Armut; denn sie ist das schwerste unter allen Leiden der Welt*).¹⁰⁸ Be that as it may, wealth was not seen from the point of view of material possession only. A man may be wealthy materially, but without knowledge of the law he is considered to be poor. In the strict sense, no one is poor apart from him/her who is poor in knowledge of Torah (*Es gibt keinen Armen außer dem, der arm ist an Wissen an Tora – Kenntnis*). Poverty in another guise, i.e. poverty as ascetic practice is not known in later Judaism nor in the entire Old Testament.¹⁰⁹ This aspect was introduced in the New Testament and was taken up by the early Church and the church fathers

¹⁰¹ Cf. Prov. 6: 9-11; 24: 33

¹⁰² Cf. I Kg. 17; 2 Kg. 6: 28

¹⁰³ Is. 41: 17; 49: 13; Pss. 9-10; 35; 37; 109; 140; 22: 27

¹⁰⁴ Schmid, J., „Armut“ in : Lexikon der Theologie und Kirche (Band 1), Freiburg: Herder Verlag 1967, 878-883.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Ps. 18: 28; Zach. 9: 9; Prov. 3: 34

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Ps. 70: 6

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Ps. 37

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Schmid, J., op. cit., 878

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 878

probably as a way of checking against greed; and also as an anticipation of the end time (*parousia*).

(b) The New Testament (the Gospels and Epistles)

The New Testament does not deal extensively with social questions as does the Old Testament. The reason for this is not that social ethics was no longer an issue at the time of Jesus. On the contrary, the social milieu of Palestine at the time of Jesus was one in which power and wealth were in the hands of a religious aristocracy comprising the families of priests, and a secular aristocracy which was made up of the merchants and land-owners.¹¹⁰ There were people of various social groups who were economically disadvantaged and hence socially marginalised. The ownership of large property was in the hands of a few people, while the greater majority were paid labourers who were often without fixed employment¹¹¹ Constrained by this situation, the poor from time to time banded together and waylaid the rich in order to wrest something from them to sustain their lives.¹¹² There was an uneasy calm between the rich and the poor. This was the atmosphere within which Jesus carried out his mission. Even though there is no definite teaching of Jesus on the social problem of poverty, he exhorted the rich to share with the poor and praised the poor (in spirit) as blessed. The kingdom of God that Jesus preached was concerned primarily with the personal spiritual and moral life of man, the way to holiness for members, but paradoxically it is this orientation which in the long run has the most profound implications for social life. Man is communitarian by nature, being a social animal, and the moral law provides guidance for social life, too. Elements of a social ethic, and those which are to be regarded as fundamental, are therefore to be found in the teachings of Jesus.¹¹³ One may not find a treatise by Jesus on poverty, but the whole of his teaching is replete with the way the poor are to be treated. But as we have already pointed out above, Jesus was much more concerned with how people could enter his kingdom which was not of this world. This did not exclude material well-being in this world, nevertheless cannot be guaranteed by it. The Gospels present us with many instances in Jesus' ministry where attention is focused on the poor. It is more appropriate to assert that the mission of Jesus was directed to the poor, here understood as those who were in lack, be that of health, food, clothing, shelter etc. It is, however, to be noted that Jesus refused

¹¹⁰ Cf. Gutierrez, G., *The Power of the Poor in History* 1993, 7

¹¹¹ Scroggs, R., *The Earliest Christian Communities as Sectarian Movement*. In: Neusner, J. (ed.), *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults*; Leiden 1975, 9

¹¹² Cf. Boerma, C., *op. cit.*, 46

¹¹³ Cf. Schnackenburg, R., *The Moral Teaching of the New Testament*, London 1964, 110

to make this a political issue, he rejected being crowned a king according to the people's wish, since his kingdom was not of this world.

At the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus declares: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, therefore, he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind and freedom to prisoners, to announce a year of favour from the Lord."¹¹⁴ Jesus' promise to satisfy the poor and the hungry goes back to the messianic expectation in Jewish tradition, which the prophet Isaiah captures very well in the second song of the servant, the "*ebed Jahweh*". The promise of Jesus revealed that the God of the poor spoken of in the Old Testament had come in his person.¹¹⁵ He was an embodiment of that which he preached; born in a manger, because there was no room in the Inn,¹¹⁶ had no place to lay his head during his ministry,¹¹⁷ he knew the meaning of deprivation. The evangelist Luke announces the seven characteristics of the Messianic age, which are; the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, the prisoners are freed, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.¹¹⁸

It is rather the Sermon on the Mount which is often referred to when the relationship of Jesus to the poor is talked about. This famous teaching of Jesus is recorded by two evangelists, Matthew and Luke. It forms the basis for Christian social teaching. The Sermon on the Mount, also known as the "Beatitudes" from the latin "beatus", rendered in Greek as "makarios"(meaning happy or blessed), is generally to be understood as a proper internal disposition rather than a legalistic attitude to morality. The kingdom which Jesus preached is promised the humble and good people who suffered for their goodness.¹¹⁹ The Sermon on the Mount was an announcement of God's decisive intervention in favour of radical change.¹²⁰ The quality of the prophetic proclamation of the Good News was the dominant element in the beatitudes, with little or no emphasis on poverty as a spiritual response.¹²¹

¹¹⁴ Lk. 4: 18-20, Is. 61: 1

¹¹⁵ Cf. Bockmann, K. What Does the New Testament Say About the Church's Attitude to the Poor? The Poor and the Church, Concilium, vol. 104, New York 1977, 37

¹¹⁶ Cf. Lk. 2: 7

¹¹⁷ Cf. Mtt. 8: 20

¹¹⁸ Cf. Lk. 7: 22

¹¹⁹ Cf. Mtt. 5-7

¹²⁰ Cf. Descrochers, P. A., A Moralising Interest and Luke's Gospel, London 1991, 69

¹²¹ Cf. Nissen, J., Poverty and Mission, New Testament Perspectives on a Contemporary Theme, Interuniversity Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research (IIMO), Netherland 1984, 136

The evangelist Matthew spiritualised the poverty concept. The addition “in spirit” excludes all the more the material and social interpretations of poverty. What the expression “poor in spirit” stands for is not identical with the stance of the humble, who considers himself a beggar before God.¹²² This and similar phrases found in the Sermon on the Mount constitute a great hermeneutic problem for the proper understanding of the message of the text as it concerns social problems. Both in the theoretical conception and practical application, there has been no unanimous acceptance of the text as a social paradigm. Can it, for instance, provide moral guidance for those in public life as well as private? As we shall see when we look at Christ’s own attitude to the defence of what is right and just, he does not deny the right of resistance where justice is concerned – and those who deal with matters of public order must pursue justice. But they must endeavour always to temper justice with mercy, lest it become hard and destructive.¹²³ In the event of personal interest, I must not be aggressive or combative, but be prepared to concede even where right is on my side rather than cause futile confrontation or nurse bitterness if justice cannot be done; and when it can I must pursue personal interest with justice, not vengeance, in mind.¹²⁴ The problem in the understanding of the Beatitudes is not only with the nature of the text, but also with the timing of the message. Is one to understand the message as applicable to the poor *hic et nunc* or is it something in the future? Does that imply that the poor are to live completely detached from the things of this world so as to gain the things promised them in the world after? What is the connection between the present world order and the world to come? Segundo Galilea does not see the Beatitudes as something that lies completely in the future. According to him, “...the beatitudes are a promise whose fulfilment begins right here and now, and any postponement and relegation to somewhere in ‘heaven’ voids them of their historical content, deprives them of their significance for today’s preaching of the gospel.”¹²⁵ For Nissen, “the poor are blessed because the kingdom of God will put an end to their poverty by creating a new world of justice and fellowship. And this kingdom takes its beginning in the person of Jesus.”¹²⁶ The gospel of Jesus is about hope; it is the good news of an ‘alternative economic order’ in which no one suffers lack, not necessarily because Jesus will establish factories to produce sufficient material goods for the people, rather because those who receive the message of Jesus will be prepared to share what they have with their brothers and sisters.¹²⁷ The Gospel, which united

¹²² Cf. Schmid, J., Op. Cit., 880

¹²³ Cf. Rodgers, C., OP. Cit., 29

¹²⁴ Ibid. 29

¹²⁵ Galilea, S., The Beatitudes: To Evangelise as Jesus Did, trans. Robert Barr, New York 1984, p. 14

¹²⁶ Cf. Nissen, J., Op. Cit., 10

¹²⁷ Cf. Acts 2: 44 – 46; 4: 32ff

man to his/her God, therefore was also a Gospel of solidarity and brotherhood. But over and above the spirit of sharing which the message of Jesus introduces, the poor will be satisfied in the sense that they will no longer be treated like inferiors on account of their material lack, but will be fully recognised as human beings. Commenting on this, Nolan states that the poor are not promised status or prestige but full recognition of their dignity as human beings.¹²⁸

Of special importance is the fact that Jesus demands from all those he had called to follow him a readiness (willingness) to freely give up all they possess.¹²⁹ Whoever is called to an intimate followership of Jesus must sacrifice earthly goods, because they are of little or no significance for salvation, instead constitute an obstacle for the true following of Jesus, who himself was poor, though not destitute, from birth to death. However, the qualification for being a follower of his was not economic or social; the rich as well as the poor were among them; the essential requirement was to be humble of heart, charitable and just.¹³⁰ The value of the poverty or lack of possession which Jesus demanded is not to be understood in the context of asceticism, but in that of the freedom and undivided dedication to the work for the kingdom of God. Before his public ministry, Jesus lived a life supported not by the luxuries of wealth but by manual labour which was common to the social stratum to which he belonged. He grew up among those who supported themselves and their families by manual work; and it was from this same calibre of people that he chose the majority of his Apostles. Jesus was therefore born of, lived, and found his largest following among the ordinary people. Yet he did not despise or cut himself off from the wealthy – they were among his followers, too. For example, Nicodemus was a leading Jew¹³¹ and Zaccheus was a wealthy tax collector,¹³² who on conversion donated half of his property to the poor and vowed to compensate four-fold all whom he had cheated.¹³³ There were others like Joseph of Arimathea,¹³⁴ who pleaded to take the body of Jesus after the crucifixion, and in whose tomb Jesus was buried; Mary Magdalene, Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward, Susanna and several others who provided for Jesus and his followers from their resources.¹³⁵ Jesus did not teach a fundamental detestation for or the complete rejection of wealth as is seen in Buddhism or as was practised by the Greek Cynics and Stoics. The salvation which Jesus brought was for both the rich and the poor. However,

¹²⁸ Cf. Nolan, P., *Jesus Before Christianity: The Gospel of Liberation*, London 1987, 57

¹²⁹ Cf. Mtt. 8: 20; Lk. 9: 58; Mk. 10: 21, 28 – 30

¹³⁰ Cf. Rodgers, C., *op. cit.*, 40

¹³¹ Cf. Jn. 3: 1

¹³² Cf. Lk. 19: 1

¹³³ Cf. Rodgers, C., *cp. cit.*, 41

¹³⁴ Cf. Mtt. 27: 57

¹³⁵ Cf. Lk. 8: 3

he warned against the corrupting effect of riches which were very strongly described in the Old Testament, as we saw above. The riches in themselves are not evil, but they all too easily tempt us to think they are an end in themselves: possessing them, it is too easy to forget God, goodness, justice and mercy, in the illusion of total self-sufficiency.¹³⁶ This was the problem of the rich young man of Matthew's Gospel who asked Jesus what he could do in order to attain eternal life.¹³⁷ And when he was told to go and sell all he had and give the money to the poor, he went away sad. His reaction made Jesus say that it would be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

St. Paul's concept of poverty is to be deduced from his teaching on the nature of work. He stressed the importance of manual work as a title for livelihood, using himself as an example. He worked with his hands as a tent maker in order to earn his living and not be a burden to others. The community in Thessalonica was instructed by Paul, "not to let anyone have any food if he refused to do any work."¹³⁸ Paul was of the view that having some useful work to do enables a Christian to have the means to help others and it also reforms thieves.¹³⁹ Poverty which was the result of laziness attracted no sympathy in the theology of St. Paul. The Christian who works to sustain himself and others under his/her care fulfills God's injunction in the book of Genesis that man should subdue the earth.¹⁴⁰ But the apostle to the Gentiles did not fail to warn against the problem caused by the discrepancy between the rich and the poor in the Corinthian community, where the rich discriminated against the poor by refusing to share the food they brought to the Lord's Supper.¹⁴¹ He appealed to the rich in the Corinthian community to show their generosity in aid of the poor of the church of Jerusalem, pointing out that those in Macedonia had already done the same. This help for other churches became a mark of Christian practice.¹⁴² St. Paul had no doctrine that presented material possessions as evil, but like Jesus warned against the danger of avarice and undue accumulation of wealth. Boff observed that, "although St. Paul warned against riches and their distractions, he did not

¹³⁶ Cf. Rodgers, C., p. 41

¹³⁷ Mtt. 19: 16ff. The story of this rich young man formed the first chapter of the Encyclical „Veritatis Splendor" of Pope John Paul II, a story which has received many interpretations as to who the proper audience is. For some theologians the demand that the rich young man should go and sell all that he has and give the money to the poor was for those who wanted to serve God in a special way like the religious. Some understand it as the requirement for all Christians as a basic attitude to wealth. Neither the first nor the second position may be accepted as a final interpretation as Jesus never gave any direct teaching against wealth, but only warned against its danger.

¹³⁸ 2 Thess. 3: 7 – 12

¹³⁹ Cf. Eph. 4: 28

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Gen. 1: 28

¹⁴¹ Cf. 1 Cor. 11: 21

¹⁴² Cf. 1 Cor. 16: 2

recommend total lack of possessions.”¹⁴³ He instructed Timothy to warn the people not to set their hearts on money (*radix maliorum est cupiditas*), because “those who want to be rich fall into the temptations, snares and many foolish desires which plunge human beings into ruin and perdition. There are people who in craving for wealth have wandered from the faith and spiked themselves on many a thorny grief.”¹⁴⁴ The obligation to share material possessions and the prudent use of wealth can be said to be at the center of St. Paul’s teaching about earthly goods. But it is also to be noted that all were called to build up the community; therefore, to refuse to work and only depend on the effort of others, where one is not impaired, is contrary to the spirit of the Gospel.

St. James in a more radical way rebukes the rich for their insolent behaviour towards the poor. He warns the poor against the tendency to be over-respectful of the rich because of their wealth. A rich man can only merit respect not because of what he/she has, but because of the way he/she has used his/her wealth to help the less privileged. Besides, St. James knew that the acquisition of wealth is never devoid of social injustice, hence he scolds the rich in the following words:

Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. Behold, the wages of the labourers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of Hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned and have killed the righteous man; he does not resist you.¹⁴⁵

St. James could be said to have done for the New Testament what the prophet Amos did for the Old Testament. The Law which demanded that we should love our neighbours as ourselves does not leave room for making distinctions at all. As soon as one makes distinctions between classes of people on any basis, except on the basis of wealth, one is already convicted of breaking the Law.¹⁴⁶ Faith in God, St. James points out, is of little or no use if it is not

¹⁴³ Boff, C. and Pixley, J., *Die Option für die Armen: Gottes Erfahrung und Gerechtigkeit*, Düsseldorf 1987, 103

¹⁴⁴ 1 Tim. 6: 9 – 10

¹⁴⁵ James 5: 1 – 6

¹⁴⁶ Cf., James 2: 1 – 9

demonstrated in works of charity. If one of the brothers is in need and help is not given to him, what good is that?¹⁴⁷ There is therefore no separation of faith from works of charity according to St. James. The issue of poverty has a prime position in the letter of St. James.¹⁴⁸ But according to Marynard-Reid, St. James dealt with the literal poor and not strictly with the religious nuance as is widely advocated.¹⁴⁹ The teaching of St. James helped immensely in the formation of the early Christian community where all who possessed land sold it and brought the proceeds to the common purse so that each person's material and social need was met.¹⁵⁰ In this way the members of the early church lived within the small Christian family without experiencing absolute poverty. The fact that they faced a common enemy and were fighting a common battle held them together, thereby making it easier to bear with whatever lack would have posed a great problem for them. This solidarity was the secret of their success.

1.2.2.2 The Fathers of the Church and the Theology of Poverty

We have seen how the early church following the example of the Master, Jesus Christ lived as a family, providing with love for those members who were in need. This was made possible by their small number and the fact that the church was not yet confronted with the wider world and its challenges. But the situation was not to remain so. The church had to grow and spread to other parts of the world with time. This meant that the egalitarian way of life peculiar to the early church had to be reconciled to the changes in the wider society and the cultural differences of other people who were to embrace the faith. The theology of the Fathers, therefore, was developed to meet the challenges to which the Gospel was increasingly being exposed as it was preached more widely; hence the formulation of the faith was the main concern, not social issues.¹⁵¹ What we have from this period on the theme of poverty came in the form of homilies and not as treatises. Most of the writings in this era were on cultivating the right attitude to wealth and private property - which, in any case, addressed poverty indirectly - like St. Clement's homily on Mark 10: 17 -31 "Who is the rich man that shall be saved?" (*Quis dives salvetur?*).¹⁵² However, there were a few exceptions to the documents that treated the theme of poverty, though not in a systematic way. To these we shall now turn our attention briefly.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. James 2: 12

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Frings, P. et al., Armen haben keine Lobby: Caritas-Report zur Armut, Freiburg 1987, p. 38

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Marynard-Reid, P. U., Poverty and Wealth in James, New York 1987, 62

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Acts 4: 34 – 35

¹⁵¹ Cf. Rodgers, C., Op. Cit., 75

¹⁵² Cf. Harnack, A., The Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries, vol. 1, London 1904, 261

The common characteristic of the documents to be considered below is their unanimity on the issue of wealth as something that is good. All agree that wealth is a gift from God but has to be used responsibly, since the rich will have to account for the use they made of their wealth. One of the oldest documents known as the “*Pastor of Hermas*” (‘the Shepherd’ by Hermas) which dates as early as 170 AD, recounts the importance of solidarity between the rich and the poor, examined in the light of the parable of the vine and the branches. “The rich man has much wealth, but is poor in matters relating to the Lord, because he is distracted about his riches; and he offers very few confessions and intercessions to the Lord, ...but the poor man is rich in intercession and confession, and his intercession has great power with God – then the rich man helps the poor in all things without hesitation; and the poor man, being helped by the rich, intercedes for him, giving thanks to God for him who bestows gifts upon him.”¹⁵³

Clement of Alexandria, one of the disciples and later head of the Catechetical School of Alexandria, addressing the problems of the ownership and use of wealth, stresses the Christian duty of being ready to share. According to Clement, the attitude of a Christian to wealth should be, “I have something, why should I not share it with those in need?” And not the contrary, “I have more than enough, why should I not enjoy it? God has given us power to use our possessions.”¹⁵⁴ Writing in his already mentioned famous document, ‘*Who is the rich Man that shall be Saved?*’ Clement states, “Riches, which benefit our neighbours, are not to be thrown away. For they are possessions, inasmuch as they are possessed, and goods, inasmuch as they are useful and provided by God for the use of men; and they lie in our hand, and are put under our power, as material and instruments which are for good use to those who know the instrument.”¹⁵⁵ The knowledge of the instrument which Clement refers to is the fact that, “God made human beings for the life of sharing with one another. It is therefore absurd for a person to live in luxury while many suffer from poverty.”¹⁵⁶ The urgent interventions of Clement and other Church Fathers of this era are better appreciated when we consider the Roman property law prevalent at this period, which centred on the concept of absolute ownership and which bestowed on the owner of property the right to do with it as he pleases. What chance, then, did the poor peasants have in the society? Describing the ordeals of the

¹⁵³ Roberts, A. and Donaldson, J., (eds.), *Ante-Nicene Fathers: Fathers of the Second Century* (Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria) vol. 2, Boston: Hendrickson Publishers Inc. 2004, 32

¹⁵⁴ The Tutor, 2. 12. 120 Phan, quoted in Rodgers, C., op. cit., 86

¹⁵⁵ Clement of Alexandria, *Who Is the Rich Man That Shall be Saved?* Trans. by William Wilson, in : Roberts, A. and Donaldson, J., Op. Cit., 595

¹⁵⁶ Grant, K., *Early Christianity*, New York 1996, 108

peasants, Jones writes that “they were exploited by the tax collector if they were freeholders, by the landlord’s agents if they were tenants. On the failure of the harvest they were still expected to pay their rent in kind; the tax collector and the agents compelled them to surrender their dues, even if this left them with nothing to feed their families.”¹⁵⁷ For Tertullian, the life of our Lord Jesus Christ is a shining example for all Christians: Though rich, he emptied himself to share human nature.¹⁵⁸

St. Basil of Caesarea was one of the Church Fathers who not only preached against the obvious injustices suffered by the poor at the hands of the rich, but demonstrated practically his love for the poor. St. Basil was a rich landowner, who later decided on religious life, sold his property, gave the proceeds to the poor and entered the monastery. He was consecrated Bishop of Caesarea in 370, an office he used fully in helping the poor. In his famous Homily, *In illud Luce* (on Luke 12: 18, “I will pull down my barns”), Basil explains that the rich man in question had received God’s bounty. It was God’s land, sun and showers, seed and oxen, which had made it possible for ‘covetous hands that tilled it’ to prosper. ‘And what is the reaction of the beneficiary?’ he asks. Selfishness: He had no thought of distributing his surplus to those in need, only in storing this wealth.¹⁵⁹ St. Basil outlined the effects of the undue accumulation of wealth on the social cohesion: “Because of wealth, relatives and brothers look at each other with eyes of enemies and criminals; for the sake of wealth, the deserts breed robbers, and the seas breed pirates. Whoever gives in to the temptation of wealth shares in a system of oppression.”¹⁶⁰ The theology of wealth which Basil proposed was that which centred on the just distribution of material possessions, but, cognizant of the fact that a greedy man can never be satisfied, he observed, “if each person were content with what is necessary and left the rest to the needy, we could have neither rich nor poor.”¹⁶¹ What is meant here is probably absolute and not relative poverty. Basil believed like St. John Chrysostom, whose teaching we shall consider later, that the excess of the rich was the right of the poor. However, one of the objections raised against Basil’s position is that he concentrated on the just distribution of wealth, paying little or no attention to the means of production. This criticism may be relevant in our time considering the sophisticated laws of

¹⁵⁷ Jones, A., *Later Roman Empire*, Vol. 2, 811 ; Avila, *Ownership*, 29ff

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Phil. 2: 7

¹⁵⁹ Homily on I will pull down my barns 1. Phan, *Social Thought*, 114

¹⁶⁰ Santa Ana, J. De, *Towards the Church of the Poor*, The Work of an Ecumenical Group on the Church and the Poor, WCC, Geneva 1979, 69

¹⁶¹ St Basil, *Homilies*, V17, MPG. T XXXI 276 – 7, 68 – 9

economics. It is nonetheless anachronistic to judge St. Basil who wrote in the fourth century by the economic laws of the twenty-first century.

St. John Chrysostom is another outstanding personality of the patristic period. Chrysostom (the golden mouth, a name he earned for himself as a renowned preacher) ‘stands alone among the great ecclesiastics of the later Empire in that his supreme interest lay not in controversial theology but in practical ethics.’¹⁶² In the language of modernity, one could refer to him as a social critic, who condemned the social inequalities of his time even to the point of stirring up the poor against the rich, without intending that. His open condemnation of social injustices brought him into conflict with the Empress Eudoxia, which eventually led to his banishment for four years, which ended with his death. In his homily on the parable of Dives and Lazarus,¹⁶³ he asserted that Dives had not robbed Lazarus by depriving him of what was his, but, by refusing him some of his own possession when Lazarus was in need, Dives was guilty of a species of robbery.¹⁶⁴ Addressing the rich, St. John Chrysostom states, “the bread in your cupboard belongs to the hungry man, the coat hanging unused in your closet belongs to the man who needs it, the shoes rotting in your closet belong to the poor.”¹⁶⁵ It is to be noted that most of the rich people at the time of Chrysostom became rich through hard work. In other words, their wealth was acquired in a just way more or less. What could have been his position in our contemporary society where some rich people become rich through the exploitation of the poor? It is remarkable that St. John Chrysostom did not only preach against the rich, he equally addressed the poor in a hard and firm language concerning their misdemeanor under the pretext of being destitute: “Enough of stealing what is not yours, both rich and poor, for now I speak not only to the rich but also to the poor. For the poor also rob those who are poorer than they; the richer and stronger craftsmen exploit the more needy and less well-off, the tradesman exploits other tradesmen and those who sell in the market.... An unjust act is not measured according to the amount defrauded or stolen, but the intention of the one who robbed or defrauded.”¹⁶⁶ The last sentence highlights one of the essential elements of human acts as far as moral judgement is concerned. Material things are good and they are meant to be shared; and it is hardly possible to become rich without injustice is the summary of Chrysostom’s teaching. He asks, “when we see possessors of good things guilty of fraud and robbery, shall we call them good? Clearly not, for if so, the greedier a man is, the

¹⁶² Bury, *Later Roman Empire*, Vol. 1, 139

¹⁶³ Cf. Lk. 16: 19ff

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Homily II.4 ‘On Lazarus’. Phan, *Social Thought*, 137

¹⁶⁵ Cf. St. John Chrysostom, *Homilia X Sobre Tealonicenses*, MP. G. T. LXII, 61462, 70-71

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 70-71

better must he be. But is this not plainly a contradiction?”¹⁶⁷ It is only justly acquired wealth that can be called good. Like St. Basil, Chrysostom was criticised for not referring at all to the means of production of wealth, rather dwelling only on the proper means of its distribution.

There were other theologians of the patristic period who commented on the issue of wealth and the rich-poor relationship, like St. Ambrose of Milan and St. Gregory of Nazianzus. A few of the Fathers have been selected to represent the others, because of their significant roles in the social problems of the time. It suffices here to summarise the teachings of these last two without going into detail as that would amount to repetition, since all of them taught the same thing. St. Ambrose had to distribute his wealth to the poor on his being consecrated a bishop. This singular action set a platform for his entire episcopate. He recapitulated his stand on the social problem of poverty and the attendant oppression of the poor by the rich in his *De Nabuthae* (On Naboth), which is a commentary on the First Book of Kings, in which the story of Naboth's vineyard and King Ahab is recounted. The lesson is that this ancient problem is also a very modern one. Daily the rich and prosperous covet other people's goods; they steal from the humble, robbing the poor of their possessions.¹⁶⁸ Ambrose argued that the earth at its beginning was meant for rich and poor alike, and questions the right of the rich to monopolize the soil. It was for the common use of men, rich and poor that the earth was created.¹⁶⁹ St. Gregory advised the rich to feed and clothe the poor, since by doing so they would be received in the eternal storehouses by the Lord, whom they fed and clothed in the needy.¹⁷⁰

The efforts of the Fathers of the Church to solve the problem of poverty in the early centuries of the Church's life were immense, but their proposals and recommendations needed to be backed up with the corresponding political will. The same problem persists in our contemporary society in spite of many social advancements. It is, however, unimaginable to think of a single solution to the problem of poverty in any society. As a way of providing lasting solutions, there was a gradual shift from poverty to the ownership of property. There were different views on the issue of ownership of property among the Fathers. What was common to the Fathers in their treatment of economic issues was their concern that economic life should reflect solidarity, brotherhood/sisterhood, so that everyone could claim the means, or have access to the means to support life properly.¹⁷¹ Clement of Alexandria was clearly

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Homily XII.3. Phan, *Social Thought*, 158

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Rodgers, C., *Op. Cit.*, 90

¹⁶⁹ Cf. *De Nabuthae*, 1, 2, 11, 53, 55. Ep. 2. 11. Phan, *Social Thought*, 167ff

¹⁷⁰ Cf. St. Gregory Nazianzus; *Sobre al Amor a loss Probrress*, in: Julio de Santa Ana, 75

¹⁷¹ Cf. Giordani, I., *The Social Message of the Early Church Fathers*, New Jersey: Paterson 1944, 245

not convinced that property could or should be denounced by all; the important thing was to see that it was used responsibly. St. Ambrose was of the view that ‘nature produced a common right for all, but greed has made it a right for a few.’¹⁷² “Since avarice and greed have produced private property”, he continued, “it is only right that those who own property should accept the responsibility for the poor, because property was given in the first place to all in common so that all might have enough to live on.”¹⁷³ Both Augustine and Jerome, following the Platonic tradition, favoured the common ownership of property; however, the former, writing against the Manicheans, modified his position by stating that it is not wrong to have possessions; it is only wrong to love them inordinately so that we put them before the love of God and neighbour.¹⁷⁴ Replying to the anonymous author of the Pelagian treatise *De divitiis*, who argued that the inequality that exists with respect to wealth is due not to divine favour but to human wickedness, hence wealth does not come from God, Augustine explains that wealth is distributed in apparently indiscriminate fashion to good and bad alike – to the good to console them on their journey through life, but not to the good alone, lest the wicked think that God should be worshipped in order to acquire wealth; and to the wicked to show the good how insignificant wealth is and to teach them to desire other things, but not to the wicked alone, lest the good who are weak hesitate to be converted for fear that they will lose their earthly possessions. But both good and bad are afflicted with poverty as well – the good for the sake of trial and purification, and the wicked so that the good who are hesitant might be moved the more quickly to conversion.¹⁷⁵ Augustine was convinced that God’s hand is present, albeit invisibly, in all the details of human existence, even at times in the disparity between the rich and the poor. He believed that the ideal way of observing the counsel of voluntary poverty was in the form of a community established along apostolic lines, in which property would consist in the basics and be held in common. This position held by Augustine and other Fathers led to the accusation that the church at this time was socialist. It is better to talk of the church being solidaristic in her vision instead of socialistic. The controversy between communal and individual ownership of property was to continue in the Middle Ages and even beyond. Since the emergence of modern society owes a great deal to the Church, it has been argued that the debate on property gave rise to the two economic systems of capitalism and communism. How far this is true is yet to be established on a scholarly basis.

¹⁷² St. Ambrose, *De Nabuthe* ii, Hom. 8.22, *De Off.* i. 28. Phan, *Social Thought*, pp. 162f.

¹⁷³ St. Ambrose, *Commentary on Psalm cxviii.* 8, 22

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Avila, C., *Ownership: Early Christian Teaching*, New York: Maryknoll 1983, 135

¹⁷⁵ Cf. St. Augustine, *civ. Dei* 1.8; *Sermo* 85

The Middle Ages developed systematic studies in the area of moral theology which made clear distinction between socially conditioned poverty and religiously conditioned or freely chosen poverty. All men are called to reduce or overcome the socially conditioned poverty in proportion to their economic possibilities as a duty to the common good and social justice. Economic theory as it is known today, was to emerge in the beginning of the fifteenth century. The model of economic life prior to this time was basically domestic; the word economy itself is taken from the Greek *oikonomia* (*oikos* – house; *nomos* – rule or order) which means the art of household management; it was the art practiced by the prudent head of the household, managing the income and expenditure for the whole family and the work by which the family's needs are met.¹⁷⁶ The canonists and theologians were concerned with economic morality only; the determination of the economic structures of society and their operation were for society to decide. At the same time, since these structures and policies of the State had important effects on the daily life of the individual, and in particular raised many moral questions concerning means and ends, dealing with them was very much the Church's concern. The duty of adjudicating in such matters as Markets and profits, just price, usury and interest¹⁷⁷ was the major theme in the moral teachings of the theologians and canonists on economic life. The aim of these teachings was to safeguard the interest of the poor and guide the conscience of the merchants; to safeguard the former from exploitation by the latter and to guide the latter in situations where their trade conflicted with the faith.

Apart from their teachings on socially conditioned poverty, the medieval theologians dwelt extensively on spiritual or religious poverty. Around the 13th century, there was a renewal of interest in the life of the early Christians which led to the development of the practical activities in the religious orders, both male and female. There was a carry-over from the Patristic era as some people “wished to lead a religious life after the manner of the apostles

¹⁷⁶ Rodger, C., op. cit., 195

¹⁷⁷ By interest is meant a certain percentage on capital payable by way of compensation for the use of the capital. This required a verbal contract of stipulatio by which one promises to pay another an agreed sum in interest for given duration of time. This question of usury, taking interest (from Latin *interesse*, to “be between”) on a money loan, was a central moral problem in the Middle ages. The idea that a rich man had the obligation to lend without charge to the poor who were in desperate need was taken from the Old Testament tradition. It was considered a basic obligation of human solidarity. This practice progressed, because of the limited investment opportunities for the wealthy. There was the real danger, not a matter of imagination, that the poor fell into the hands of the usurers, the men who took interest, at penal rates on loans from those pressed by absolute necessity to borrow. The overwhelming need therefore was to prevent such abuses, and one of the great services that the church's teaching on usury performed for the poor was to condemn outright the practice as unjust. Whatever was borrowed for use or for consumption, whether it be goods or money was to be returned in the same value with nothing additional (Duby, G., *Early Growth of the European Economy*, London 1974, p. 109

and based their ideas on the principles of the early Church.”¹⁷⁸ The arguments of those who held tenaciously to the apostolic form of poverty was based on the Beatitudes, in which Jesus called the poor blessed. The theologians and the faithful of the Middle Ages had some difficulty interpreting this idea of poverty vis-a-vis the social setting in which they found themselves. A freely chosen poverty as it is practised in religious life was understood as a basic sign of the eschatological behaviour of the church and the expression of Christian hope. The ascetic dimension is meant to remove the obstacle that can arise from the attachment to earthly goods.¹⁷⁹ In spite of the differences in the practice of poverty among religious congregations, there were some elements common to all of them, such as the individual renunciation of earthly possessions, but the community was permitted to own property. The second variant is that which demands from the individual *and* the community the renunciation of possession of earthly goods; for example, the begging congregation.¹⁸⁰ Poverty was accepted as something to be lived with, and the poor clustered along the major roads waiting for alms from passing mendicant friars.¹⁸¹ The majority of the poor who depended on charity for their sustenance were comprised of the jobless, the disabled, the sick, the orphans, the widows, the aged and prostitutes.¹⁸² It was commonly believed by the monks that the external signs of poverty, like lack of money, scarcity of food, lack of clothing, poor health and sickness, when accepted in good faith were a special sign of their discipleship.¹⁸³ This led to the development of the idea of the ‘pauper Christi’ – being poor for the sake of Christ. This concept was to condition the life of the monks since they believed that this kind of poverty was the best and surest means to come closer to God.¹⁸⁴ This does not mean that they were to work; on the contrary they were to be engaged in hard work, but none had any claim on anything as his own. It was for the good of the community and to be used to do the works of charity. Most of the rich who had the monks as their spiritual directors were soon influenced by this pattern of life. Besides, the theologians stressed that the Lord will bless the giver in all he or she does.¹⁸⁵ That means that whatever the rich do for the poor comes back to them. The poor therefore played an important role in the spiritual life of the rich.¹⁸⁶ It was held that it would be difficult for the rich to enter paradise if the poor did not come to them for help. This view was not to be upheld for long because of the problems that came with it. In the first

¹⁷⁸ Flood, D., *Poverty in the Middle Ages*, Germany 1985, 71

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Hardick, L., *Moraltheologische Armut*, in: *Lexikon der Theologie und Kirche*, 881

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 881

¹⁸¹ Flood, D., *op. cit.*, 9

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 22

¹⁸³ Kramer, R., *Umgang mit der Armut*, Berlin 1990, 21

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 23

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Deut. 15: 10

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Kramer, R., *op. cit.*, 25

instance, the monks who were seen as poor because of their individual renunciation of possessions became very rich as a community, receiving as they did alms from the rich and sometimes the entire property of the rich on their demise, where there were no heirs to inherit it. The rich, on the other hand, abused their charity inasmuch as they thought that giving money to the poor was sufficient to buy themselves salvation without corresponding repentance.¹⁸⁷ This situation led to the radical poverty of St. Francis of Assisi and his friars. The first attempt to practice permanent poverty came much earlier from Justin, the Martyr (2nd century) who asserted that the behaviour of an ascetic is irreconcilable with wealth. As a sign of the rejection of the world, one has to give up possession of earthly goods.¹⁸⁸ The radical poverty of the individual started with the congregation reform of Pachomios who founded the *Koinbion* – a form of monastery where monks had a common room as opposed to the *Laura*, which comprised individual cells. Under this reform the community saw to the provision of necessary materials. The word ‘mine’ as an entitlement to personal property was put out of use. This form of poverty was not restricted to the monasteries, but was taken to the other faithful as an ideal form of religious life.¹⁸⁹

The unique example of St. Francis of Assisi with his “Beggars Congregation” in the 13th century was a decisive break-through in the new forms of poverty. St. Francis, the son of a wealthy merchant in Assisi¹⁹⁰, grew to manhood at a time when the gap between the rich and the poor was not to be overlooked.¹⁹¹ St. Francis saw how the people lived in misery and how some others who could not put up with the situation resorted to crime, whereas others organised themselves, protesting against the unjust structures that gave rise to the extreme hardship. Neither the religious nor the social institutions were immune from the chaotic situation. Under this circumstance, St. Francis had a dream in which God asked him to go and put his house (the Church) in order, an experience which brought a radical change in him.¹⁹² St. Francis held that material poverty expresses a much deeper and inner poverty.¹⁹³ This means that abject material poverty affects the whole personality. However, he distinguished between three forms of poverty namely poverty in material things (*pauper rebus*), poverty in human relationship and poverty in relationship to God. With reference to material poverty, St. Francis admonished his friars not to regard the wages from their work as a right, but as

¹⁸⁷ Flood, D., 60

¹⁸⁸ Hardick, L., op. cit., 882

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 882

¹⁹⁰ Marxer, F., *Christliche Armut heute*, Aschaffenburg 1980, 73

¹⁹¹ Flood, D., op. cit., 50

¹⁹² Marxer, F., op. cit., 74

¹⁹³ Flood, D., op. cit., 70

receiving what is necessary to sustain life.¹⁹⁴ And when the payment for work was not given, the friars took refuge at the table of the Lord, by begging for alms from door to door.¹⁹⁵ Poverty in human relationship meant for Francis the elimination of drive and power, which takes a person as he or she is, acknowledging the dignity of the person and not seeking to have or use a person as an object. It is the way to genuine fraternity.¹⁹⁶ This form of poverty involves also the readiness to enter into real human relationship without expecting to gain something. Hence people should not always look for personal gain in human relationships but should see their actions as a contribution to the good of others.¹⁹⁷ The reason for this disposition, according to Francis, is that everyone is a begger before God. Thus, Poverty in man's relationship to God should eliminate jealousy and vainglory.¹⁹⁸ St. Francis' attitude to wealth is encapsulated in the statement that, whoever understands that he or she receives everything from God should not try to own anything.¹⁹⁹ The deepening of religious life, which St. Francis and his friars championed, gave rise to poverty movements at this time. The *Vita Apostolica* was produced under the Gregorian Reform as a guideline for the monks at the time.

The immense contribution of St. Francis to the understanding of poverty notwithstanding, there was not a unanimous acceptance of his teachings and practices within the religious orders in particular and the Church in general. Suffice it to mention the dispute between the Franciscans and the Dominicans on the issue of the right interpretation of evangelical poverty. The Dominican Johann of Belna (1321) rejected the view that Christ and the Apostles had either common or private property. The Franciscans opposed to this view appealed to Pope John XXII, who in his *Ad Conditorem*, 1322, and *Cum inter Nonnullos*, 1323, stated that for people to speak of poverty of Christ was heretical. The attitude to poverty outside the Catholic Church was essentially influenced by the respective teaching of different adherents to various philosophical systems regarding the faith. The Gnostics and the Manicheans, for instance, rejected every form of possession, because they believed that all material things were evil. This teaching had tremendous effects on the Manichean groups like the Albigensians, the Cathars and the Waldensians, who presented poverty as the distinguishing sign of the true Church. Joachim of Fiore, protested against the wealth of the Church and proclaimed that this

¹⁹⁴ Testamentum 5, non bullata 7

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.,

¹⁹⁶ Flood, D., op. cit., 71

¹⁹⁷ Regula non bullata, 7

¹⁹⁸ Cf., Lk. 6: 29 – 30

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Matt. 5: 3, Admonitiones 14

form of poverty was essential for the coming spiritual Church.²⁰⁰ Somewhat earlier, St. Bernard of Clairvaux had formulated the guiding rules on the question of poverty as it concerned the religious life. St. Bernard stated that men and women who had taken the vow of poverty should be separated in different monasteries in order to maintain their good names and to enable them to fulfill their vows. For him, whoever refused to adhere to this was a heretic.²⁰¹ This view of Bernard was long held in the Church and it helped to regulate much as far as the religious life in particular and spirituality in general were concerned.

1.2.2.3 The Reformation and the Catholic Response to the Problem of Poverty

The Protestant Reformation of the 16th century brought a contrary interpretation of poverty. It rejected all forms of poverty in the way the congregations lived it and only upheld “poverty in spirit.”²⁰² The Reformation referred to here is that initiated by Martin Luther and John Calvin, which led to the development of Protestantism. This religious revolution took place in the western Church in the 16th century, bringing with it political, economic and social changes.²⁰³ The understanding of poverty in the era of the Reformation is contained in the theology of reform²⁰⁴ as expounded by Marthin Luther.²⁰⁵

Unlike Luther who taught that poverty was the consequence of sin, John Calvin believed that both wealth and poverty come from the hand of God and need to be accepted as such.²⁰⁶ The

²⁰⁰ Cf. Hardick, L., op. cit., 882

²⁰¹ Cf. PL 183, 1101f

²⁰² Hardick, L., op. cit., 882

²⁰³ Cf. Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15th ed. Vol. 9, Chicago 1994, 995

²⁰⁴ Cf. Klöcker, M. and Tworuschka, U., *Besitz und Armut*. München 1987, 54

²⁰⁵ The young Augustinian Monk discontented with the practices in the Roman Catholic Church developed his ninety-five theses in the university of Württemberg, condemning, inter alia, the Church's attitude to wealth and the means of raising fund, which involved the sale of the Sacraments. Luther broke away from the spiritual ideal of poverty as practised by the monks of the Middle Ages. He taught that God cannot take delight in poverty, and that voluntary poverty cannot be taken as a guarantee for salvation (cf. Kramer, R., p. 25). He went further to state categorically that no degree of poverty can purchase the grace of God (Klöcker, M. and Tworuschka, U., p. 55). Poverty, according to Luther is a dangerous consequence of sin which has to be removed from the society. It is not from God and it is neither an honour nor a virtue. Spiritual poverty can only be understood as referring to the attitude of people to wealth and things of this world. Luther did not see wealth as something bad in itself; riches are sent by God for the love of one's neighbour. The Christian should endeavour to acquire wealth, but if he succeeds, he should not focus all his mind and life on it (Melancthon Apologie, XXVII, 45). The care for the poor was therefore a fundamental *christliche Pflicht* for Luther, who drew his argument from the Fifth Book of Moses where it states, “no one should beg” (Deut., 15: 4)

²⁰⁶ This view of Calvin may be interpreted as predestination, in which some people are destined from birth to be rich while the others must languish in poverty and its attendant humiliation and social exclusion. This position, of course, is incongruent with the social realities that cause poverty. Besides, it is common knowledge that the poor today could become rich tomorrow and vice versa. To adhere to Calvin's teaching that poverty comes from God is rather apologetic and could lead to laziness and resignation on the part of

greatest contribution of Calvin to Protestant theology is to be seen in his efforts at reconciling ethics and the demands of labour as vocation. Whereas the monks sought the perfection of Christian life in the monasteries, escaping from the world as it were, Calvin and his followers imposed a strict religious discipline on worldly activities and, in particular, in the area of economic ventures like work, use of possessions and money, and the proper relationship between production and exchange.²⁰⁷ Calvin accepted the market economy of his time and considered the development of economic enterprises as a divine blessing.²⁰⁸ It is in this regard that Max Weber remarked that the great ethical innovation of the Reformation consisted in transferring the Christian asceticism of the Middle Ages to the secular domain.²⁰⁹ Weber was deeply convinced that it was this inner-worldly asceticism from Protestantism which encouraged the development of capitalism at the beginning of industrialisation.²¹⁰ Like his contemporary, Calvin affirmed that man is only an administrator of the riches that God places at his disposal. Wealth is not condemned, but its use has to be regulated.²¹¹

The doctrine(s) of Luther and Calvin with regard to wealth, ownership of property and assistance to the poor brought some changes in post-Reformation society which also affected the Catholic Church. The role of the Church as dispenser of charitable aid continued during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries though it was only a partial remedy when compared with the overall problems of the poor. In her education of priests in seminaries, the Church focused her attention on the task of rebuilding the Church unity shattered by the Reformation and its consequences; the aspect that attracted much attention was the question of the social order in general and the problems posed by poverty in particular. Challenged by the Reformation on the one hand, and the Industrial Revolution on the other hand, there was the need to make an official statement on the prevailing circumstances. There were most importantly the social encyclicals issued by the Popes, which provided the background to the discussion on social problems during the Vatican Council II and thereafter. In the following we shall present an overview of the documents of the Council that focused on poverty and then of the encyclicals.

the poor. In his criticism of Catholicism, which is usually the terminus a quo of Protestantism, Calvin, however stated that the presence of those who are the objects of Catholic charity namely the poor, is regarded as a sign of that human disorder which is an outrage to the glory of God. This latter position contradicts his initial stance that both wealth and poverty come from God and should be accepted as such.

²⁰⁷ Cf. Barreiro, J. A., *Separation Without Hope?* Geneva 1986, 89

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 91

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 95

²¹⁰ Cf. Weber, M., *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus*, in: Kramer, R., 32

²¹¹ Cf. Barreiro, J., et. al., 98

Vatican Council II was convoked principally to redefine the mission of the Church in the face of existential social problems. The ecclesiological formulations of the Council showed a complete break away from the traditional Tridentine understanding of the Church as one that had nothing to do with the outside world.²¹² Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Pope John XXIII convened the ecumenical Council to discuss the manner and method of beginning a dialogue with the modern world (*aggiornamento*). The Council fathers saw the need for the Church to study “the signs of the times”²¹³ and to share in the agonies of modern man so as to make the gospel credible and relevant, especially to the poor and the suffering.²¹⁴ The Council was to awaken new sensitivity to the human and evangelical problems of poverty. Right from the onset, the Council was faced with the enormous problem of whether and how the Church could become the ‘Church of the poor’.²¹⁵ Two of the conciliar constitutions, *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes* dedicated attention to the human problems of poverty, while *Perfectae Caritatis* concerned itself with the proper understanding of evangelical poverty in the contemporary renewal of the religious life. This last document did not have much impact as those addressed were limited only to priests and other religious.

Lumen Gentium takes off from the Christological dimension of the nature and mission of the Church. The document challenges the Church to emulate the poverty of Christ, her Founder and Head.²¹⁶ According to the Council fathers, “Just as Christ himself carried out the work of redemption in poverty and oppression, so is the Church called upon to follow the same path if she is to communicate the fruits of salvation to men.”²¹⁷ St. Paul articulates this theology very succinctly in his second letter to the Corinthians: “You are well aware of the generosity which our Lord Jesus Christ had, although he was rich, he became poor for our sake, so that you

²¹² Cf., McBrien, D., *The Ecclesiology of Vatican II*, Chicago 1990, 11

²¹³ *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 1

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 1

²¹⁵ During the first session of the Council, a study group was formed with the name, ‘the Church of the poor group’ and was led by Cardinal Lercaro, Archbishop of Bologna, who argued that the Council would not really explain the mystery of the Church, the ‘Sacrament of Christ’, without bringing up the ‘mystery of Christ among the poor.’ This small and persuasive group developed the notion that the Church is ‘servant of the poor’, at the service of the poor and even the concept of the ‘Church of the poor.’ (Cf. Comlin, D., *The Church in Latin America after Vatican II*, LADOC 7: 7: 14 (Jan/Feb. 1987): 6. Having won the sympathy of some of the members of other groups from the First world countries, the bishops of the poor countries of the Third World had become increasingly active working, both to reinforce the vision of the ‘Church of the Poor’ and to outline the practical demands that should follow it. This move was not realised, but helped to create more awareness in the drafting of the final documents of the Council especially the two documents, *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*. It is also speculated that arguments of the group led to the writing of the encyclical, *Populorum Progressio* of Paul VI (Cf. Chenu, M. D., *Nature, Man and Society in the Twelfth Century*, Chicago 1984, 61)

²¹⁶ *Lumen Gentium*, no. 8

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 8

should become rich through his poverty.”²¹⁸ The Christological basis for giving preference to the poor is to be found in the example of Jesus Christ, whose mission was to bring the Good News to the poor.²¹⁹ In line with this, the Church should embrace with love all those afflicted with human misery; and do all in her power to address their need.²²⁰ Equipped in this manner, the Church will be able to accomplish her mission to the people of all nations.

Gaudium et Spes, building on the christological basis of *Lumen Gentium*, spells out what the Church is and can be for all people in the larger society, a concrete sign of joy and hope. In the opening sentences of the document, the Council fathers, on behalf of the rest of the faithful, summarised their message of solidarity with all of humanity in the following words:

The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the men of our time, especially of 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. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of men, of men, who united in Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit, press onward towards the Kingdom of the Father and are bearers of a message of salvation intended for all men. That is why Christians cherish a feeling of deep solidarity with the human race and its history.²²¹

Gaudium et Spes, more than any other document of the Council, showed a deep concern for the problem of the global rate of poverty, especially in the underdeveloped countries, although some scholars are of the opinion that in proffering solutions to this problem, it adopted only the Western model of economy as the solution.²²² The reason for this view was that the poor themselves were not involved in matters concerning them. The Council, as it were, spoke more ‘about’ the poor than ‘to’ the poor.²²³ In fact, there was no perception that the poor themselves have anything to say about the problem of their poverty and the methods with which to combat them.²²⁴ According to Miguez, “the sharp dichotomy between theology and social teaching remained, and for this reason, the poor knocked on the Council’s door, but only got a glimpse inside.”²²⁵ But this notwithstanding, the document is popular for

²¹⁸ 2 Cor. 8: 9 (JB).

²¹⁹ Montalba, R. C., *Evangelisation and Liberation of the Poor: Theology and Praxis*, Philippines 1997, 46

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 46

²²¹ *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 1

²²² Cf. GS., nos. 65, 66, 67

²²³ Cf. Bühlmann, W., *The Coming of the Third Church*, New York 1988, 120

²²⁴ Cf. Miguez, G., *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation*, Philadelphia 1994, 138

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 138

envisaging a new international economic order in which the poor countries would have a more equal share not merely of goods but also of power. By making this suggestion, the Council brings out the intrinsic connection between politics and the economy.²²⁶ *Gaudium et Spes* was not only concerned with principles, but made concrete proposals that could help combat poverty especially in situations where it is occasioned by undue appropriation by the rich to the detriment of the poor: “In several economically retarded areas, there exist large and sometimes very extensive rural estates which are slightly cultivated or not cultivated at all for the sake of profit, while the majority of the population have no land or possess only very small holdings and the need to increase agricultural production is pressing and evident to all. This practice deserves to be revisited if the problem of poverty is to be solved.”²²⁷

Futhermore, the document cautioned against the exploitation of the labourers: “Not infrequently, those who are hired as labourers or who till a portion of the land as tenants receive a wage or income unworthy of the human being; they are deprived of decent living conditions and are exploited by middlemen. They lack all sense of security and live in such a state of personal dependence that almost all the chances of exercising initiative and responsibility are closed to them.”²²⁸ What is then to be done? The Council fathers unanimously accepted that a reform was imperative, whereby “income must have to be raised, working conditions improved, security in employment assured, and personal incentives to work encouraged.”²²⁹ The Council fathers knew that for good advice to be effective, it must be accompanied by a good example, and challenged the Church to relinquish her privileges if necessary in order to make its witness sincere and effective. *Ipsissima verba*: “The Church does not rest its hope on privileges offered to it by civil authorities; indeed it will even give up the exercise of certain legitimately acquired rights in situations where it has been established that their use calls in question the sincerity of its witness or where new circumstances require a different arrangement.”²³⁰ The realisation of this is what Breuning describes as the “culmination of *Gaudium et Spes* and a major challenge to the Church.”²³¹ Of course, it is to be noted that such realisation is, to be understood as a process that demands time and patience; more important is the awareness that the Church leads by example in her dealings with people and countries socially disadvantaged. Expressing this hope in his address to the Council

²²⁶ Cf. GS. nos. 84, 85, and 86

²²⁷ GS. no. 71

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 71

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 71

²³⁰ GS. no. 71

²³¹ Vorgrimmler, H., (ed.), *Commentary of the Documents of Vatican II*, Vol. 5, London 1989, 326 – 327

fathers on 11th September, 1963, Pope John XXIII stated: “With respect to the underdeveloped countries, the Church appears as it is and wants to be, the Church of the people and, in particular, the Church of the poor.”²³² For Barreiro, this remark from John XXIII is to be regarded more accurately as a ‘*de jure*’ affirmation than as a ‘*de facto*’ confirmation.²³³ Thus he concludes: “Concerning the present Church, both sociologically and as a whole, one would be inclined to say that it is the Church of everyone, but especially of the rich.”²³⁴ The facts of history show that the Church had not had it easy with issues that pertain to social questions in the course of time. It is either that the poor team up and accuse the Church of taking sides with the rich or the rich point fingers at the Church for encouraging class struggle. However, this is not to say that there is no *via media* which can be of help to the poor without hurting the rich. To demonstrate the middle way was the motif of the forty bishops from all over the world who gathered in the Domitilla Catacomb outside Rome on the 16th of November, 1965. These bishops, just a few days before the end of the Council, vowed to change fundamentally their life style and their pastoral activities, especially with regard to the poor when they returned to their respective dioceses.²³⁵

Vatican Council II remains the peak of Catholic social teaching. The pre-conciliar papal encyclicals served as *preparatio* to the Council, while the post-conciliar encyclicals could be described as enormously enriched from the resolutions of the Council. We shall now look at the encyclicals briefly under these two perspectives and in that order.

The history of Catholic social teaching began with the epoch-making encyclical of Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (1891). To be able to appreciate the contributions of this encyclical to the teachings of the Church on social issues as far as the structures responsible for their existence are concerned, we need to take a look at the circumstances surrounding its emergence. The nineteenth century started and ended with animosities toward the hierarchical structure of the Church. Against the background of the emerging ideology of nationalism, there was an unrestrained anti-clericalism which led to conflicts between the Church and the state in many countries. For instance the Papal States were lost in 1870 to Italy as a result of such conflicts.²³⁶ The main problem which the Church faced as a result of this was how to

²³² AAS (Acta Apostolicae Sedis) 1968, 682

²³³ Cf. Barreiro, A., 4

²³⁴ Ibid., 70

²³⁵ Elmar, K., Betreuungspastoral, Mitgliederpastoral oder Sozialpastoral : <http://www.phil.uni-sb.de/projekte/imprimatur/1998/imp980303.html>

²³⁶ Cf., O’Brien, J. and Shannon, T. A., *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, New York: Orbis

understand the reality of a secular state, which was, in theory, neutral to all religions. But such neutrality was not always practical, a fact that is reminiscent of the German *Kulturkampf* (1871 – 1878) – used to describe the controversy between the Catholic Church under Pius IX, and the kingdom of Prussia under Otto von Bismarck. Then there were the ideologies of Marxism and Darwinism, which gave rise to various revolutionary movements with their dramatic social impacts. Thirdly, there was the Industrial Revolution, which commenced in the factories of Britain and later spread throughout Western Europe and beyond. This revolution, unlike the first two mentioned above was very significant for the lower classes, though its effects left no one untouched. There were basic trends which characterised the industrial revolution, such as the shift from the countryside to the cities, which caused massive social dislocation compounded by a lack of housing, and which left millions unemployed.²³⁷

It was in the afore-described social atmosphere that the Pope wrote the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, whose goal was to restore order and authority, and which aimed to preclude class preference and labour militancy. This was not to be an easy task, as the Church was perceived by some groups as already allied with the rich. Leo XIII categorically condemned both liberal capitalism, which released the individual from social and moral constraints, and socialism, which subordinated individual liberty to social well-being without respect for human rights or religious welfare.²³⁸ He attempted to counteract socialist efforts to usurp personal freedom. The socialist system demanded the transfer of responsibility for human productivity to the state in the name of protecting the poor. The aim of the Pope was to make it clear that economic life, like political life, should reflect the dualistic nature of the human person, providing for the physical needs as well as facilitating the quest for salvation.²³⁹ The consequence of the dual nature is that both aspects must be taken into consideration in any venture involving man (the term “*man*” is used in the generic sense), because to emphasize one aspect while neglecting the other is to have a partial knowledge of the human person. The individual is dependent on the society, beginning with the family, for his/her upbringing and development needs a conducive atmosphere. This exigency is well presented by Pope Leo thus: “If the citizens of a State, that is to say, the families, on entering into association and fellowship, experience at the hands of the State hindrance instead of help, and found their

Books, 1992, 12

²³⁷ Ibid., 12

²³⁸ Ibid., 13

²³⁹ Ibid., 13

rights attacked instead of being protected, such associations were rather to be repudiated than sought after.”²⁴⁰ Both the family and the state owe the individual the protection and safeguarding of the basic rights, crucial among which is the right to life and its sustenance. The common role of enhancing the good of the individual, and of course the common good, is to be played by both institutions in the right proportion. This means that, “if a family finds itself in great difficulty, utterly friendless, and without prospect for help, it is right that extreme necessity be met by public aid; for each family is a part of the commonwealth. In like manner, if within the walls of the household there occurs grave disturbance of mutual rights, the public power must interfere to force each party to give the other what is due; for this is not to rob citizens of their rights, but justly and properly to safeguard and strengthen them.”²⁴¹ But it happens often that the rights of citizens are abused and robbed by the state which should protect them. This takes various forms, among which is the use of human beings as mere instruments for financial gain by grinding them down with excessive labour so as to stupefy their minds and wear out their bodies. Generally, a workman and an employer should make free agreements, and in particular should freely agree as to wages; the encyclical observes that “if through necessity or fear of a worse evil, the workman accepts harder conditions because an employer or contractor will give him no better, he is the victim of force and injustice.”²⁴² The encyclical underscored the fact that a greater number of people are made poor through this means than through any other means and hence advocated the formation of associations of working men, but observed at the same time that these so called societies are unfortunately in the “hands of invisible leaders”.²⁴³ The only way out of this quagmire would be for Christians to form their own associations which would be guided by Christian principles.

Forty years after the appearance of *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Pius XI published the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), which recapitulated the main themes of *Rerum Novarum*. Confronted by the problems arising from the Great Depression, the Pope called for the use of capital to expand employment opportunities and for a just wage that would allow for the eventual accumulation of wealth by the average working person.²⁴⁴ The conflicts between political freedom and economic security; between the economic elite and the working class; between economic expansion and moral values; and between the state and the individual, the Pope argued, could be solved if men and women turned to God, to Christ and to the church. It

²⁴⁰ *Rerum Novarum* (RN), Nr. 10

²⁴¹ RN, Nr. 11

²⁴² RN, Nr. 34

²⁴³ RN, Nr. 40

²⁴⁴ Cf. Catholic Encyclopaedia Vol. 10

is the sharing of this faith that would lead to the experience of unity, on the basis of which order and authority could be restored without losing “true” freedom.²⁴⁵ When these conflicts are resolved, social justice (an expression which the encyclical introduced), which demands the recognition of the common good²⁴⁶, would prevail. Common good (*bonus Commune*) is here to be understood as a good which included and did not contradict the authentic good of each and every person. It is in this regard that Archbishop Chaput holds that the common good is more than a political slogan.²⁴⁷ It is the prerequisite condition for the existence in a human community, where the fulfillment of personality is achieved through knowledge and love of other persons. The sheer expansion of economic goods, which does not take into consideration individual well-being cannot be described as promotion of the common good.

²⁴⁵ Cf. O’Brien J. D. and Shannon T. A., op. cit., 40

²⁴⁶ The notion of common good is central to our discussion on the theological understanding of poverty and the consequent development of the social teaching of the church. The church understands the expression, “common good” in two ways. The first interpretation is based on the belief that humans were created by God not for a life in isolation but for the formation of social unity (GS 32). What this means is that the communitarian character of human existence is such that the good of each person is bound up with the good of the community. In other words, no human individual can realise his goal outside the society or community of other human beings. What this implies is that each member of the human community has the obligation to promote the common good, from which he or she derives his or her own good. The contribution and participation required of each individual has to be in proportion to his or her capabilities and needs. The second understanding conceives the common good as “the sum total of conditions of social living, whereby persons are enabled more fully and readily to achieve their own perfection” (*Mater et Magistra* 65; cf. GS 26). This is further explained by Pope Leo XIII as guaranteed when personal rights and duties are maintained. In summary, the church believes strongly and teaches that the duty to promote the common good entails the duty to protect the human rights of all. For what does it mean to talk of common good without talking of the good of humans? And what does it imply to talk of the good of humans without referring to the human rights and duties. The historical antecedents to the present discussion of the common good dates back to the ancient Greek philosophers. Aristotle described the human person as by nature a social and political being (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1097b, 1. 10), whose happiness is achieved in the exercise of the public virtues of citizenship. Elaborating further, he stated that these virtues go beyond the minimal cooperation needed to keep society functioning materially to a richer form of fellowship where the higher goods of self-government, wisdom, and contemplation of the truth can be achieved. He therefore concluded that the state exists for the sake of a good life, and not for life only. The problem with the classical views of the common good is that the state (*polis*, i.e., the city-state) was regarded as the domain of final human fulfillment. This view was challenged by St. Augustine, who presented a treatise on another domain, the city of God, as the ultimate good of every person. This position was later corroborated by the angelic doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas, who asserted that “God’s own goodness...is the good of the whole universe” (ST I, II, q. 19, art. 10, 1.). With this radical change, the state was desacralized and with it the ruler who hitherto claimed divine prerogative. If little attention is paid to the issue of common good and its transcendental character in our time, it is because of the error of modern secularism and the concomitant radical liberalism. The modern neither adopts the classical view of the common good as the minimal cooperation which is needed to keep the society functioning, because it is primitive, nor the theocentric definition of the human good, because our society has become very pluralistic. How do we understand common good in our time or is this notion overtaken by the legacy of individual freedom and autonomy?

²⁴⁷ In a lecture presented on the 21st of April 2007 by Archbishop Charles Chaput of Denver at the conference “Promoting and Protecting the Common Good” organized by the John Cardinal Krol Chair of Moral Theology held at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Wynnewood, the bishop stated that “the common good is more than a political slogan. It is more than what most people think they want right now. It is not a matter of popular consensus or majority opinion.... The common good is what best serves human happiness in the light of what is real and true” (<http://www.zenit.org/english>), published April 28, 2007.

There are a number of other encyclicals that addressed the social problems of man which include the two outstanding encyclicals of Pope John XXIII: *Mater et Magister*(1961) und *Pacem in Terris*(1963). In the first encyclical, the bishop of Rome attempted to apply standards of social justice to the post-war world, where the social question had changed from one primarily related to the struggle of labour against capital to one which featured a complex effort to achieve balanced economic growth, providing sufficient profit to stimulate investment while insuring just remuneration for all the factors of production and providing a social balance among rural and urban, agricultural and industrial sectors of both the national and the international economy²⁴⁸. Unlike previous and later papal encyclicals *Mater et Magister* contains a lengthy section devoted solely to agriculture.²⁴⁹

Pacem in Terris, the ‘peace’ encyclical, is generally believed to have appeared at the time the world needed it most. With the dangers of nuclear war, more apparent than ever before, the encyclical was widely received by the whole world, Catholics and non-Catholics alike. Shortly before this time, the world had been “to the brink” twice – over Berlin and over Cuba.²⁵⁰ The encyclical treats four major themes, which include the rights proper to each individual, the relationship between authority and conscience, disarmament, and the development of the common good.²⁵¹ The issues which John XXIII raised in these two encyclicals were taken up in Vatican II Council, which he personally convened, although he did not live to see its conclusion.

Two years after the Council, Paul VI published his famous encyclical, *Populorum Progressio*(1967), which placed the social question in world-wide perspective. The Pope proffered an economic interpretation of the sources of war and argued for economic justice as the surest road to peace. Like many of his predecessors, he rejected unequivocally many of the basic precepts of capitalism, including unrestricted private property, the profit motive, and reliance on free trade in a world economy.²⁵² More than forty years after Paul VI’s warning, the world faces an economic and hunger crisis, whose causes can only be linked to an unheeded appeal. By making profit the only motive for economic venture, the human person both as subject and object of economic planning is depersonalized and treated as a mere

²⁴⁸ Cf. O’Brien, D. J. & Shannon, T. A.(eds.), *Renewing the Earth: Catholic Documents on Peace, Justice and Liberation*, New York: Image Books, 1977, 45

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 48

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 118

²⁵¹ O’Brien, D. J. & Shannon, T. A. (eds.), *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage* op. cit., 129

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 238.

number without life or feeling. But since the human person is neither a number nor a machine, he or she is bound to react, and such reactions can carry with them disastrous consequences. As a measure to avert such ugly outcome at the national and international levels, the Pope emphasized the rights in justice, of the poorer nations to the aid of the wealthier nations and suggested quite explicitly that, in an extremely difficult situation, the poor retain the right to a violent solution to their problems.²⁵³ This is, however, not to be understood as justifying violence or revolution, hence the text further clarifies, “A revolutionary uprising, save where there is manifest, long-standing tyranny which would do great damage to fundamental human rights and dangerous harm to the common good of the country, produces new injustices, throws more elements out of balance and brings in some new disaster. A real evil should not be fought against at the cost of greater misery.”²⁵⁴ The proportion of the means applied has to be commensurate with the good at stake.

The encyclical, which is dedicated to the development of peoples, makes a clear analysis of the meaning of development, which does not come from increased possessions or technical advances but from a new humanism, allowing individuals to renew themselves by embracing higher values. True and integral human development aimed at liberating man from the chains of poverty consists principally of the following qualities: the acquisition of knowledge, culture, and the necessities of life; the desire for cooperation and peace, with a corresponding recognition of human dignity. Since human persons live in the context of social institutions, the encyclical argues that any development which is to have impact on human lives has to begin at the level of social institutions. Against this backdrop, the Pope traces the root of social problems to social institutions and regrets that these problems become worldwide.²⁵⁵ He alludes to the effects of colonialism²⁵⁶ and the imbalance of power between nations, resulting in injustice in trade relations between them²⁵⁷ as responsible for miserable conditions in the underdeveloped nations. He recognised the contributions of such bodies as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Caritas Internationalis²⁵⁸ but remarked that, “it is not just a matter of eliminating hunger, or even of reducing poverty.... It is a question, rather, of building a world where every man, no matter what his race, religion, or nationality, can live a fully human life, freed from servitude imposed on him by other men or

²⁵³ Cf. *Populorum Progressio* (PP), n. 30

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, n. 30

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, n. 3

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, n. 7

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, n. 56

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, n. 46

by natural forces over which he has no sufficient control; a world where freedom is not an empty word and where the poor man Lazarus can sit down at the same table with the rich man.”²⁵⁹ The motif highlighted in this section of the encyclical which goes beyond material support to acceptance of the other as a human person with dignity, is essential for the entire work, hence we shall revisit it in the subsequent development of the themes of poverty and violence. Solidarity²⁶⁰, both at the individual and international levels, is the way out of this socio-economic quagmire, the encyclical cautioned. Insofar as this is not done, the world will continue to languish in its illness, which Paul VI diagnosed as consisting less in the unproductive monopolization of resources by a small number of men than in the lack of brotherhood among individuals and peoples.²⁶¹ To this end, he appealed for the establishment of a world fund made up of money formerly budgeted for arms but now used to relieve world poverty.²⁶² The question of solidarity as a solution to the world’s problem of poverty and hunger was taken up by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*.

The encyclical, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (the concern for social matters), was issued in December, 1987 by John Paul II to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of *Populorum Progressio*. It was, published in February, 1988. The encyclical take up the theme of solidarity, as its central message. It has six major parts. Following the introduction, the encyclical makes a review of *Populorum Progressio*, focusing particularly on the concept of development. Then there is a survey of the contemporary world, which highlights what the Pope views as significant failures. Next are a presentation of authentic human development; a theological interpretation of modern problems; and a concluding section, which makes recommendations on the road to follow in treating social matters.²⁶³ The encyclical attributed the problem of global lack of development to the East-West polemics. While the Eastern bloc

²⁵⁹ Ibid., n. 47

²⁶⁰ The term was adopted from labour-union movements by Catholic social theorists like H. Pesch, G. Gundlach, O. Nell-Breuning to differentiate Catholic social theory from the modern theories of liberalism and communism. Liberal capitalism stressed individualism so strongly that it dehumanised individuals, exalting individual choice and interests over our common humanity with responsibility for others. Collectivism on the other hand tends to depersonalize by completely subordinating individuals to “the collective will”, leaving no room for individual free choice and interests. Solidarity steers a middle course between these extremes by the God-given dignity of the human person, the importance of subsidiarity to encourage individual and communal initiatives, and the orientation of governmental and economic orders toward the service of the transcendent values of persons (cf. Matthew Lamb, “Solidarity”, In: *The New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought*, Minnesota 1994, edited by Dwyer, A. J.).

²⁶¹ PP., n. 66

²⁶² Ibid., n. 51

²⁶³ O’Brien, J. D. & Shannon, A. T., op. cit., 393.

is characterised by Marxist collectivism, the Western bloc is predominantly based on liberal capitalism; and both are combined with industrialization.²⁶⁴ The consequences of such a system, the Pope asserts, are the stagnation of developing countries, unacceptably exaggerated concerns for security, arms trade, and the arms race. The encyclical does not leave us in despair, rather proposing a remedy which is to be found in authentic human development, focusing on the transcendence of the human being; and proposing as well a framework of freedom and solidarity based on the dignity of the human person. This is the path to peace and to authentic development.²⁶⁵ Development can be a solution to poverty only when this is directed to the well-being of the human person and not limited to material progress at the expense of the former. The encyclical makes a very crucial remark by referring to development as a matter of culture, and of a culture that promotes initiatives.²⁶⁶ Hence John Paul II emphasised education and easy access to information as among the most positive means of achieving development. The poor “by taking their future into their own hands through a determined will for progress, even if they do not achieve the final goal, will authentically manifest their own personalization.”²⁶⁷ The Pope condemned outright the conflict between East and West, because it has inter alia diverted resources to excessive armament that could have been used for development in the third world countries.

The most significant feature of the encyclical *sollicitudo Rei Socialis* is the very broad range of meaning it gives to the concept of development. Development is, of course, economic and social in its modalities, manifestations, and results, but it is above all a process within the human being; it is the expression of a moral dynamic. Thus the moral concept of development occupies a greater portion of the Pope’s reflection. John Paul II understands this not only from the point of view of the miseries of *underdevelopment*, which is unacceptable, but also as *superdevelopment*, which consists in an excessive availability of every kind of material goods for the benefit of certain social groups that easily makes people slaves of “possession” and of immediate gratification.²⁶⁸ The issue of poverty is not directly addressed in the encyclical, rather was subsumed under the broader theme of underdevelopment. But even with the question of underdevelopment, John Paul II, reiterating the arguments of his predecessor, Paul VI, stressed that the Church does not have technical solutions to offer for the problem of

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 393

²⁶⁵ Cf. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (SRS), n. 39

²⁶⁶ Cf. Calvez, J., „*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*“, In: *The New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought*. op. cit., 913.

²⁶⁷ *Justice in the World* (Synod of Bishops, 1971), n. 1.

²⁶⁸ Cf. SRS., n. 28

underdevelopment.²⁶⁹ The Church as an ‘expert in humanity’ can only make proposals, which help her to extend her religious mission to the various fields in which men and women expend their efforts in search of the always relative happiness which is possible in this world, in line with their dignity as persons.²⁷⁰ The suitable instrument that the Church employs for attaining this goal is her social doctrine, which, according to John Paul II, is not a ‘third way’ between *liberal capitalism* and *Marxist collectivism*, nor even a possible alternative to other solutions less radically opposed to one another: rather, it constitutes a category of its own.²⁷¹ He further clarifies that the social doctrine of the Church is not a matter of ideology but of theology and particularly of moral theology.²⁷² What this means is that the motivating concern for the poor must be translated at all levels into concrete actions, until it decisively attains a series of necessary reforms.²⁷³ By narrowing the social doctrine of the Church to the field of moral theology, it logically follows that attempts be made to reappraise the moral status of the human person and show how the neglect or radical denial of it can lead to what we would like to designate in this work as the *anthropological dimension of poverty*. For as we shall later see, if the dignity of the human person could be essentially described as consisting in rationality and freedom, then it follows that to freely choose to be poor for religious reasons does not violate a person’s dignity, rather enhances it. But for one to be coerced into poverty by circumstances or other persons is a breach of this freedom and therefore a violation of one’s dignity.

1. 2. 3 The Anthropological Dimension of Poverty

Rowland Williams’(1817-1970) assertion that the ‘poor person is first a person’ expresses clearly what we intend to explore in this section, the anthropological dimension of poverty. It is the third dimension under which we intend to further our discussion of poverty in this work. It is, unfortunately, the least talked or written about. Most of the discussions on the theme of poverty focus entirely on the material deprivation of man, paying scarcely any attention to the human person as subject. Two errors are therefore perpetuated by this practice: One is that the poor person is treated as object; in which case a lot is said *about* him/her without hearing *from* him/her. In other words, participation is denied the poor in an affair which concerns them. The second is that all attention is directed only to the material aspect of the human person.

²⁶⁹ Cf. SRS., n. 41

²⁷⁰ Ibid., n. 41.

²⁷¹ Ibid., n. 41.

²⁷² Ibid., n. 41.

²⁷³ Ibid., n. 43.

Human values are therefore reduced to material values. We must accept the obvious facts, just as David Jenkins said long ago in *The Glory of Man*, “I assume that our concern is with persons. If it is not, then I assert that our concern ought to be with persons. To refuse or ignore this concern is a failure to face up to what is involved in being a human being.”²⁷⁴ Anthropological poverty is the complete or partial rejection of the value and significance of human beings. The worth of a person is therefore measured by what he/she has, instead of by the very fact that he/she is. The outcome of this is the tendency to classify persons according to material possessions and consequently treat them as ‘more human’ beings if they have more material possessions. It is at this level that the foundation for the future problem of the society is laid, when people find themselves stratified into social groups of ‘the haves’ and ‘the have nots’ and the latter treated with disrespect. Here begins the anthropological poverty, with its attendant exclusion. The designation of a group as so-called ‘underclass’ by social anthropologists is a *casus classicus*, of anthropological poverty of which Wright writes:

...there is no single dimension that will serve to identify the underclass. In most applications, the term apparently refers to the intersection of a number of characteristics – some structural, some behavioural, some attitudinal, and some ecological. Furthermore, no subset of these characteristics is either a necessary or a sufficient condition for membership in the class. In general, the underclass comprises those persons who are at the bottom of the economic and social barrel, but most would include the urban criminal and drug-dealing elements within the underclass even though their incomes are frequently substantial.²⁷⁵

The allusion to behavioural and attitudinal factors in the above passage calls our attention to the issue of the norms of human action. Are there norms of human behaviour valid for all peoples everywhere and always? Or is every individual left to his/her discretion in matters concerning behaviour? If the latter position is affirmed, what then defines the existence of the human society? For this reason, Wright went further to differentiate between the undeserving poor and the underclass, pointing out that our attitude to the former is that of ridicule and disdain, while to the latter it is one of fear or even hatred.²⁷⁶ The so-called underclass constitute the group of people whose overall social value is negative, those whose activities

²⁷⁴ Jenkins, D., *The Glory of Man*, In: Bampton Lectures for 1966, London: SCM Press, 2-3

²⁷⁵ Devine, A. J. & Wright D. J., op. cit., 77

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 78

threaten the very fabric of social life.²⁷⁷ At any time, when the worth of the individual as such no longer counts either in the individual himself/herself or in the other person, we are confronted with anthropological poverty. What we find shocking in Albert Camus's novel *L'Étranger* is not even that the hero has killed his mother, which seems here more pointless and incomprehensible than wicked, but that the only conclusion is his cry, 'Nothing matters'.²⁷⁸ Oppenheimer's remark to this incident is sharp and clear: "To be unable to mind is pathological."²⁷⁹ What happened to Camus' hero on the individual level could take place among a group of people. When the values of a people are denied authenticity and treated with contempt, because of their non-correspondence to another set of values, mankind is left with nothing but relativism, the consequences of which are the indelible scars on the psyche and corpus of humanity in the history of civilization. As in the case of Camus' hero, neither the people nor their values matter any more. This leads logically to oppression, which Sue- Ellen Jacobs describes as attempts to prevent some people from having control or decision-making powers over their current and future lives, as well as measures used to prevent people from developing natural human resources. Oppression involves keeping people in or putting people into positions of inferiority physically, mentally, or spiritually.²⁸⁰ In most cases, the victims of oppression are told that they do not count, that their ways of living are inferior, that they should either live according to ways dictated by others or expect recriminations.²⁸¹ Jacobs went further to distinguish the different forms which oppression can take, as 'overt' or 'covert'. It is overt when it involves exclusion from, withdrawal of or denial of resources, provision of inferior services or goods, and whatever else might keep a people from achieving their potential or having a voice in their own destiny. On the other hand, it is covert when it has to do with the manipulation of information about a people.²⁸² Commenting on such manipulation of information which leads to derogatory treatment, Argyrou blames cultural anthropologists and ethnographers, because most of the time what ethnographers say about other people is not how they actually are – in themselves – but as they appear to be from the ethnographer's perspective. Besides, the knowledge gained in this manner, which is historically contingent, relative and incomplete, is made absolute.²⁸³ This scenario which Argyrou depicts is reminiscent of the situation in the colonial era. However, it is erroneous to

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 78

²⁷⁸ Oppenheimer H., „Mattering“ In: Studies in Christian Ethics, (vol. 8, n. 1) 1995, 66

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 66

²⁸⁰ Ellen Jacobs cited in : Hoebel, E. A. et. al. (eds.), Crisis in Anthropology : View from Spring Hill, 1980, 380

²⁸¹ Ibid., 380

²⁸² Ibid., 381

²⁸³ Cf. Argyrou, V., Anthropology and the Will to Meaning: A Postcolonial Critique, London: Pluto Press, 2002, 10

limit it to that particular period or to a particular people. The reason is that even after many years of colonization, peoples of particular cultural groupings or ethnicities are still caught up in the same web of derogating and manipulating other targeted groups. And as already pointed out, it can have more drastic effects than material poverty. It is therefore not an overstatement to assert that the sense of human worth takes precedence over every other need, and that people of whatever race or religion will go to any lengths in defending their worth as human persons whenever it is infringed upon.

It is an aim of this work to try to establish, based on the material and human dimensions of poverty already treated above, those things which are so basic to human existence without which the human person could be described as being poor. However, we pointed out that even those things which could be said to be basic to human existence may be rejected by a person for personal reasons, in which case such a person may not be categorised as poor. This exercise leads us to the explanation of the theory of basic human needs, in order to delimit what could be referred to as a poverty-stricken condition with reference to the dignity of the human person.

1. 3 The theory of Basic Human Needs and the Notion of Poverty

There is unanimity among researchers that the goal of every poverty reduction programme whether it is carried out by the government or private persons is to enable the poor meet basic needs. But there is no generally accepted definition of what constitutes the basic human needs. The difficulty in establishing a common criterion that would be accepted everywhere is attributable to cultural plurality. But be that as it may, there are still certain elements which are understood as fundamental for all persons irrespective of cultural differences. For instance, food as a basic need is valid for all human persons everywhere, regardless of whether it comes in the form of the African pounded yam (*fufu*), the Indian *japadi*, the Japanese *rice*, the German potato or the Italian *pasta*, to name but a few. As universal as this and other basic needs may be, we still have the problem of quantity and quality. The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development²⁸⁴ describes absolute poverty as “a condition characterised by severe

²⁸⁴ The World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen, September 2000 that launched a new commitment to social development in the member countries and introduced a new era of international cooperation between governments and peoples based on a spirit of partnership that puts the needs, rights and aspirations of people at the centre. This Summit envisaged a political, economic, ethical and spiritual vision for social development that is based on human dignity, human rights, equality, respect, peace, democracy and mutual responsibility; and full respect for the various religious and cultural backgrounds

deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information.”²⁸⁵ In line with this clarification, the World Bank in its annual report of 1997 went further to employ monetary value as a measurement and identifies “extreme poverty” as the condition of people who live on less than \$1 a day, whereas “poverty” refers to the condition of those who live on less than \$2 a day. This standard for evaluating extreme poverty, that is, the inability to meet basic needs, and ordinary poverty understood as merely satisfying the most basic needs, does not justify the realities of everyday life. Judging by this standard, 21% of the world’s population was in extreme poverty, and more than half the world’s population were poor in 2001.²⁸⁶ The problem that arises from the above standard is that it cannot be applied to all people in all places and at all times. In other words, this standard cannot be absolutized. Besides, the worth of one US dollar is not stable, rather it fluctuates alongside other international currencies. Furthermore, this view fails to take into consideration immaterial needs of the human person, such as mutual respect.

The views of two famous psychologists, Abraham Maslow and Henry Murray, on the theory of needs will be useful in our endeavour to understand what basic human needs are about. Let us begin with Maslow. In his paper, “A Theory of Human Motivation” published in the *Psychological Review* almost seventy years ago, Maslow outlined what he called the “hierarchy of needs”. According to him, every human person has five essential needs hierarchically ordered which he or she strives to satisfy. These include physiological needs, safety, love/belonging, esteem and self-actualization. These needs are arranged in a form of a pyramid with the physiological needs occupying the base of the pyramid. Maslow identified the basic human needs with the basic physiological needs and enumerated them to include: breathing, food, sleep, sex, homeostasis and excretion.²⁸⁷ He went further to argue that the higher needs come into focus only when these basic needs are satisfied. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs failed to take cognizant of the spiritual aspects of man and hence incapable of being generalized. By making sex a basic need, for instance, he contradicts the teaching of many world religions like christianity that exalts chaste and pure life. It is the ability to control such instincts that constitutes moral strength, that distinguishes man from other animals. Therefore to make the satisfaction of these needs a *conditio sine qua non* for the maturity and well-being

of people.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ World Bank PovertyNet (<http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/>)

²⁸⁷ Maslow, A., „A Theory of Human Motivation“ In: *Psychological Review* 50 (4) 1943, 370 – 396

of the human person is to negate the traditional teaching on the human virtues which date back to ancient Greek philosophers.

Henry Murray's understanding of basic human needs is based on his definition of the word 'need'. According to Murray, "a need is a construct which stands for a force ... in the brain region, a force which organizes perception, apperception, intellection, conation and action in such a way as to transform in a certain direction an existing, unsatisfying situation. A need is sometimes provoked directly by internal processes of a certain kind ... but more frequently by the occurrence of one or a few environmental forces."²⁸⁸ The foregoing helps us to focus our attention on another dimension of the issue of basic needs. They are not to be seen as something imposed from outside. The internal mechanism of the brain is involved in determining what constitutes fundamental needs. Murray he went further to make a distinction between what he described as primary or *viscerogenic* needs and secondary or *psychogenic* needs.²⁸⁹ The primary or viscerogenic needs are linked to characteristic organic events and typically refer to physical satisfaction, while the secondary or psychogenic needs are derived from the primary needs and are characterized by a lack of focal connection with any specific organic processes or physical satisfactions.²⁹⁰ An important point in Murray's theory of need is the fact that the failure to satisfy the basic human needs leads to agitation and then aggression. Because man is a being endowed with reason, the process of resolving the conflict between the 'world of desire' and the 'world of limit'²⁹¹ ought to be moderated by moral decisions.

A more general classification of basic human needs includes shelter, food, health, education and love. Shelter here refers to a place of last resort, where one feels free and secure. It does not necessarily matter what standard, but more important is the fact that one has a place to call his or her own. It was in this vein that Nelson Mandela observed in his autobiography that 'an African is not considered really a man until he builds his own house' or put in another way, till he finds a shelter that he can call his own. The statement is not only valid for Africans, but for all mankind. It is equally pertinent to observe that a European can live in an apartment where he/she pays rent monthly and be happy even if he could afford to build a house from his resources. The matter is, however, different for an African, with whom present cultural

²⁸⁸ Henry Murray cited in: Hall, S. C. et al., *Theories of Personality*, Fourth Edition, New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 1997, 234.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 235

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 235

²⁹¹ Kiely, M. B., *Psychology and Moral Theology*, Rome: Gregorian Press, 1987, 175

influence and/or competitive spirit make it at times difficult to draw a line between what one actually needs and what one desires out of greed. Topliste's definition of basic needs in a narrow and a broad sense, respectively, as "those things necessary for survival"²⁹² and as "those things reflecting the prevailing standard of living in the community"²⁹³ is of importance here. Next to shelter is food, which is here understood to also include potable water. When these two conditions are fulfilled, next need is for health care, education and love, which are essential to the socialization process. While human beings share the need for food and shelter with all other animals, the need for health care, education and love is entirely and uniquely a basic human need. For it involves receiving and imparting values which distinguish us as human beings. The reception and integration of the values of a particular culture into which we are born makes us members of the same culture, albeit these values are liable to change through contact with the cultural values of other people of a different social context. Corroborating the necessity of the social context, Atkinson asserts that "the satisfaction of the basic needs as a universal imperative has sense only in a social context characterised by effective enjoyment of the fundamental human rights."²⁹⁴ The concept of basic needs may change in a social context, but such a change may arise as a result of the improvement of the social living conditions, but never in the context of a reduction.

The above analysis helps us to arrive at the conclusion that the basic human needs may differ in levels, but never in form since human beings are the same everywhere. Although food is considered to be the most basic need,²⁹⁵ it is impossible to survive on it alone.²⁹⁶ Besides, the emphasis on economics, as Golding remarks, has tended to blot out the ultimate policy goal, which is not only to eradicate physical poverty but also to provide human beings with the opportunity to fully realise their potential.²⁹⁷ The main concern of the poor may not be necessarily to be provided with these basic needs, but much more to be given the opportunity to earn the basic needs by themselves. That is why the current demand for poverty reduction in particular and for development in general is directly focused on man and his/her needs for social justice as a major instrument.²⁹⁸ This dimension is imperative if human society is to know peace. For as J. F. Kennedy stated in his inaugural address: "To those peoples in the

²⁹² Topliste, D., *The Foundation of the Welfare State*, London, 1996, 32

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 34

²⁹⁴ Atkinson, A., Preface In: Atkinson, A. & Hills, J. (eds.), *Exclusion, Employment and opportunity*, Case paper no. 4, Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, LSE, 1998, iii

²⁹⁵ Cf. Wards, C., *The Truly Disadvantaged*, Chicago 1997, 27

²⁹⁶ Cf. Veit, T., *Ethical Foundations for Basic Income*, Britain 1997, 82

²⁹⁷ Cf. Golding, D., *Exclusion: The Hidden Face of Poverty*, Britain 1996, 97

²⁹⁸ Cf. Streeten, P., *First Things First, Meeting Basic Needs in Developing Countries*, New York 1998, 4

huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves, for whatever period is required – not because the Communists may be doing it, not because we seek their votes, but because it is right. If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.”²⁹⁹ This is a duty the society cannot afford to neglect, since the consequences are grave. At the same time cultivating the virtue of self-control and being contented with what one has is very important in our contemporary world of consumerism and offensively conspicuous waste.

1.4 Conclusion

Underlying human struggle in socio-economic milieu is the goal of trying to escape the fangs of poverty. Paradoxically, the same struggle which enables some to escape this social problem creates it for others. In the above concluded chapter we saw that poverty is a social problem and not something natural to man. The degree of poverty from which a people suffers therefore varies from one society to another and is conditioned by various factors within each society. While we may talk of poverty as a global phenomenon, some countries are much more affected than others, and even within the same countries some individuals are not touched by the reality of poverty. Thus a distinction was made between relative poverty and absolute poverty, with the conclusion that when we talk of the problem of poverty, it is absolute poverty that is meant since, in the context of relative poverty, every poor person is poor relative to some others in the same social setting. This distinction helped to underscore the fact that all the concern about poverty is mainly about socio-economic poverty. To address this limitation we have broadened the understanding of poverty to include theological and anthropological poverty. The former which is also called spiritual or evangelical poverty concerns the self-denial of the right to private property for the sake of the kingdom of God. With reference to this form of poverty, we took a cursory look at the history of Western civilization and the contributions of the various religious orders to the question of poverty. Whether it is called *askesis* or the rejection of material possessions, the individuals or groups involved in that form of life made the choice freely. Anthropological poverty, on the other hand, refers to the discrimination or the humiliation meted out to the poor as a result of their material deprivation. It is used here to designate the pitiable state of man when the individual is blocked from all avenues to education in general and moral education in particular for the

²⁹⁹ Obama, B., *The Audacity of Hope, Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream*, New York: Vintage Books, 2008, 372

sheer pursuit of material possessions. The trend whereby the human person is no longer valued for what he/she is, but for what he/she has or can do, is very dangerous for our human society judging from historical experience. The uncontrolled pursuit of material wealth without any reference to the demands of ethical principles is one of the major factors militating against the alleviation of poverty.

To answer the question of who can be designated as being really poor, we took up the theory of basic human needs. Although it was difficult to establish a criterion of assessment of basic needs which is valid for all people at all times, certain elements like food, shelter and clothing are common to all peoples irrespective of colour, language or religion. These fall under primary basic needs. But to stop at this as the focus of poverty reduction or eradication in the 21st century is to fail to move with time. Hence the secondary needs which we treated under socialization became imperative. This includes, inter alia, the education and training of children in various skills as a means of overcoming poverty. This is capability training. We concluded that the education of the human person in the virtues of hard work, self-control and contentment is the solution to the problem of poverty. After all is said and done, the really poor man is not he/she who *has* the least, but he/she who *wants* the most. It is therefore “wants” not “needs” that breed violence.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ROOT CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF POVERTY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

2.0 Introduction

In discussing the causes and consequences of poverty, few preliminary remarks are pertinent. The first is the fact that poverty is not caused by one single factor, but chains of inter-locking factors which range from social, political, economical, geographical and pathological.¹ The next point to be noted is the reciprocal interplay between the factors which serve as both causes and effects of poverty. Take for example the issue of disease which can be considered as both a cause and an effect of poverty at the same time. The same reciprocal relationship exists between the causes and consequences of poverty. Finally, cognizant of the fact that the causes of poverty are numerous and vary from one region to the other, we would want to classify the causes under three broad themes: the geographical and natural resources arguments, the disease and overpopulation arguments; the leadership problem and foreign policy arguments; and finally educational deficit arguments.

2.1 The Root Causes of Poverty

2.1.1 Argument 1: Geography and Natural Resources

One of the arguments adduced for the widespread poverty in the whole of Africa is the harsh climatic condition in that continent. The African tropical climate affects drastically not only the agricultural life of the people, but also the people themselves. This imbalance in nature has been seen by some scholars as the major cause of abject poverty which stands in contrast to the favorable conditions in temperate regions of the West. In view of the effects of the climate on the arable land in Africa in comparison to Europe, David Landes argues that Europe does have winters, cold enough to keep down pathogens and pests. Winter's severity increases as one moves east into continental climes, but even the milder versions fend off morbidity. Endemic disease is present, he observed, but nothing like the disablers and killers found in hot lands.² Africa is confronted with the intensive tropical heat with its many

¹ The term „pathological“ is here used to refer to different forms of incapacity resulting from bodily or mental sickness, which impedes the person from living a normal life.

² Landes, S. D., *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*, op. cit., 17

consequences as manifested in cyclical droughts and the advancement of the desert. Owing to the long absence of rains in some parts, the dry areas turn to desert, and the sands of the desert become an implacable invader, smothering once fertile lands on the periphery. Studies carried out around 1970 showed that the desert was advancing into the Sahel at the rate of 18 feet an hour.³ Such expansion of wasteland constitutes a great problem for agriculture in the continent. The crops wither as a result of scarcity of water and the topsoil is blown away by wind. John Kenneth Galbraith's remark on the enormous effect of this physical phenomenon is crucial: "If one marks off a belt a couple of thousand of miles in width encircling the earth at the equator, one finds within it no developed countries. . . . Everywhere the standard of living is low and the span of human life is short."⁴ Paul Streeten corroborates this:

Perhaps the most striking fact is that most underdeveloped countries lie in the tropical and semi-tropical zones, between the Tropic of Cancer and Tropic of Capricorn. Recent writers have too easily glossed over this fact and considered it largely fortuitous. This reveals the deep-seated optimistic bias with which we approach problems of development and the reluctance to admit the vast differences in initial conditions with which today's poor countries are faced compared with the pre-industrial phase of more advanced countries.⁵

With modern technology this problem could be addressed, but that demands capital investment, which the tropical countries cannot afford. Besides, it has been suggested that the pace of environmental destruction and desertification in Africa has been accelerated rather than retarded by the introduction of advanced farming technology in the colonial and post-colonial periods. In addition, the situation is not attractive to foreign investors because of the fear of disaster, as nature does not enter into an agreement with man. The physical ecology not only militates against agro-economics, but determines the distribution of natural resources. Not only the physical environment is hampered by the climate, but also the human person. It is believed that the intensive sun and its concomitant heat make the people from the region lazy. But laziness is not the issue. The law of heat exhaustion applies to all, and only few people manage to work at full capacity when the weather is hot and wet. Recounting his experience, a Bangladeshi diplomat writes that in countries like India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Nigeria and Ghana he felt enervated by the slightest physical or mental exertion, whereas in

³ Wade, N., "Sahelian Drought: No Victory for Western Aid" In: *Science*. 185 (19 July), 1974, 234-37

⁴ Landes, S. A., *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*, op. cit., 5

⁵ Seers, D. & Leonard, J., *Development in a Divided World*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974, 78

the UK, France, Germany or the US he always felt reinforced and stimulated by the temperate climate, not only during long stays, but even during brief travels.⁶

The magnitude of the problem of inimical climate becomes obvious when we consider the fact that at least 80% of the more than half a billion people in Africa, south of the Sahara earn their living from agriculture.⁷ The uneven distribution of rain is equally a hinderance to both subsistence and large scale farming. Tropical areas generally have rainfall, but the timing is often irregular and unpredictable with heavy downpours. In some other places where the rain lasts for a longer time there is always the danger of flood that destroys farm crops. Furthermore, marshy areas make it impossible for roads to be constructed to help in the transportation of farm produce, thereby preventing farmers from marketing their produce.

As plausible as the argument here discussed may seem, it is not a sufficient argument for the perduring acute poverty in the continent. On the contrary, it bespeaks the difficulty of insufficient education and acute lack of technical know-how, which are variables of the problem of poverty. There is, after all, no portion of the earth without its own physical problems. Some parts of the world which are better today owe their development to the sacrifices of a few individuals, who even at the cost of their lives were determined to find a solution to their peculiar difficulties. Some times when I reflect on what people go through in Europe in the cold seasons, I come to the conclusion that Africa would have been worse off if it had the winter of the West with its cost-intensive snow. Why is Europe not poor because of winter and the snow?

2. 1. 2 Argument 2: Disease and Overpopulation

Closely associated with the afore-discussed geographical factors as causes of poverty is the problem of disease and overpopulation. Research has established that the African tropical climate is very conducive for the breeding and transmission of certain vectors. One needs to think of the number of lives claimed annually by the most dreaded illness (before AIDS appeared in the 80s) malaria. Malaria is a potentially fatal protozoan disease transmitted by a specific kind of mosquito, the genus anopheles, which thrives mainly in Africa. The disease is treatable, yet, incredibly, it still claims up to three million lives per year, mostly young

⁶ Landes, S. A., op. cit., 15

⁷ Mazrui, A. A. (ed.), General History of Africa, Unabridged Edition, VIII Africa since 1935, California: UNESCO, 1999, 320

children, about 90% of whom live in Africa. The rest of the deaths occur in other tropical regions of the world.⁸ There is a hypothesis that malaria had coevolved with humans in Africa, and the result was a special intensity of transmission unequaled in any other part of the world.⁹ Although we do not have facts to prove this, the degree of vulnerability of Africans to this disease tends to make the hypothesis credible. The female anopheles mosquito which transmits the disease, takes a blood meal from a person already infected with malaria. After being ingested by the mosquito, the parasite finds its way to the mosquito's gut. There it undergoes a life-cycle metamorphosis, after which the parasite migrates back to the mosquito's salivary glands, where it can be injected into another victim. The life-cycle change, called *sporogony*, is said to take roughly two weeks, which is equally the life-span of the mosquito. It can happen that the mosquito dies before the completion of the sporogony. The main ecological problem with this process and the reason why Africa is particularly affected is that the warmer the temperature, the faster the sporogony – and the more likely it is that the anopheles lives to become infective.¹⁰

How can malaria cause poverty or vice versa? There is obviously a dual relationship of causation between malaria and poverty. In the first place, poverty exacerbates malaria by leaving impoverished households and governments without the financial means to fight the disease. Richer households and governments can afford to spray homes with insecticide or install screen doors and windows to help ward off mosquitoes; or even buy insecticide-treated bed nets.¹¹ Since only few people can afford some or all of these measures, most are exposed to the disease and many consequently lose their lives. Mention has to be made, in any case, of the lack of simple hygiene in the immediate environment which helps mosquitoes to breed at a high rate. Sometimes basic environmental cleanliness would have helped to ward off the insects and the disease they transmit, but it is often difficult to get people do something in a situation where the immediate result is not perceived.

On the other hand, malaria causes poverty by causing absenteeism from work and school. Sachs, in his already cited work, recalls how malaria and yellow fever delayed the construction of the Panama Canal for more than thirty years.¹² Malaria can therefore stop

⁸ Sachs, J., *The End of Poverty*, op. cit., 196

⁹ *Ibid.*, 198

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 198

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 197

¹² The first attempt, led by the great French engineer Ferdinand de Lesseps, ended in tragedy when these two mosquito-borne diseases struck down the work-force. Only after the United States invested heavily in a

investment projects and prevent foreigners from getting into any kind of business partnership with the people. The investment in human capital is equally not guaranteed, as children who suffer repeated bouts of malaria can suffer lifetime ill-effects caused by chronic anaemia and prolonged complications. This can disrupt their education and thereby affect their chances of getting a well-paid job. The high degree of uncertainty which malaria brings with it leads to high birth rates in rural areas. The fear that their children will not survive the onslaught of malaria makes farmers in the rural areas marry many wives and very early in order to beget many children whose survival then depends on fate. In other words, the fact that children die in large numbers make parents to overcompensate and have more children, with devastating results, namely inadequate funds to invest in the education of all of them. This course of action does not really follow, because it could be argued another way, namely that one who has not sufficient means to take care of two or three children makes the condition worse not better by begetting more. Malaria, nonetheless, is known as the biggest killer-disease in the whole world.

Apart from the problem of malaria, Africa still has to contend with the HIV/AIDS pandemics which struck the continent in the early 1980s, with the first identified case in Uganda. Like malaria, HIV/AIDS has spread like wildfire and cuts across all age brackets, children, youths and the old; but unlike malaria, HIV/AIDS is not dependent on the tropical climatic factors. HIV is a biological entity that is responsive to medical intervention, but the epidemic has continued to expand largely due to the failure to tackle societal conditions that increase vulnerability and the risk of infection. In any case, poverty plays a very vital role in both the contraction and transmission of this disease.

There are several widespread hypotheses concerning the extreme cases of HIV/AIDS in Africa. These range from the supposition that the sexual networking is different in Africa (there are more relationships between older men and younger women and more concurrent relationships) to the view that HIV/AIDS is transmitted more easily in Africa because the population has other untreated ailments (malaria, other sexually transmitted diseases), or the

mosquito-control effort guided by colonel William C. Gorgas was the canal constructed. Sachs further commented on the difference between the type of mosquitoes found in India and those found in Africa. While the type of anopheles predominant in India tends to bite humans about one third of the time, and cattle the rest, Africa, sadly has another predominating mosquito type which prefers biting humans nearly 100 percent of the time. The force of transmission of malaria in Africa is therefore roughly nine times that of India because of the difference of mosquito species.

frequent circumcision of girls.¹³ There is no research yet to establish the veracity of these hypotheses and their peculiarity to Africa. The fact, however, remains that HIV/AIDS is an unmitigated tragedy and a development disaster in the whole of Africa especially in the eastern and southern regions of the continent.

A recent UNAIDS report states that the scale and trends of the epidemics in the different African regions vary considerably, with southern Africa most affected. In 2007 this region accounted for almost a third (32%) of all new HIV infections and AIDS related deaths globally, with national adult HIV prevalence exceeding 15% in eight countries (Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe) in 2005.¹⁴ The report went further to state that “more than three quarters of all AIDS deaths globally in 2007 occurred in Sub-Saharan Africa.”¹⁵ South Africa is the country with the largest case of infections in the world. The country’s department of Health estimated that 18.3% of adults between 15 and 49 years were living with HIV in 2006. The majority of those affected were mainly young women and girls. Young women especially in South Africa face greater risks of becoming infected than men. Women, according to a study carried out by Rehle et. al., accounted for about 90% of the HIV infections, among whom were 15 – 29-year-old women, in 2005.¹⁶ The above data are meant to provide us with an idea of the enormity of the havoc which AIDS is causing in Africa, the degree of which was captured vividly by Johanna McGeary in the following lines, “Society’s fittest, not its frailest, are the ones who die – adults spirited away, leaving the old and the children behind. You cannot define risk groups: everyone who is sexually active is at risk. Babies too are unwittingly infected by mothers. Barely a single family remains untouched. Most do not know how or when they caught the virus, many never know they have it, many who do know don’t tell anyone as they lie dying.”¹⁷ This should not however, serve as a basis for blaming the victims in line with the age old moral model that the disease is a punishment for the sexually promiscuous. For if this argument had any validity, writes Bujo, then it could not be restricted to sexually transmitted illnesses, but all other diseases would have to be explained similarly. For instance, lung cancer would be categorized as God’s punishment for smoking.¹⁸ However, that does not exclude the fact that a change in sexual behaviour is an important step in the prevention of the

¹³ Ibid., 200

¹⁴ http://data.unaids.org/pub/Report/2008/jc_1526_epibriefs_ssafrica_en.ppdf

¹⁵ Ibid.,

¹⁶ Ibid.,

¹⁷ McGeary, J., “Death Stalks A Continent” In: Time Magazine, Nov. 2001, vol. 132, no. 15

¹⁸ Bujo, B., *The Ethical Dimension of Community: The African Model and the Dialogue between North and South*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1998, 185

disease. And then to realise that the majority of those infected with HIV/AIDS are women calls for urgent attention to the problem of gender inequality and the lack of empowerment of women and girls in the whole continent of Africa.

The AIDS epidemic is considered one of the most important issues related to poverty in Africa in recent times, with approximately 25.4 million people living with HIV and over 3 million new infections occurring each year. The coping capacities of African households and communities are stretched beyond limit when confronted by AIDS in the face of already existing extreme poverty. Besides, there are other health concerns apart from AIDS: Measles alone kills over 500,000 African children each year, according to the Red Cross, and 11 million children die before their fifth birthday each year as a result of mostly preventable diseases, including malaria, diarrhea and pneumonia. Speaking on this issue, Sustainable Development International observes that the record of African countries in dealing with disease is not encouraging. Millions of people in Africa simply do not have access to trained medical personnel, and even if they do, essential medical equipment and drugs are either not available or supplies are not sustainable.¹⁹

Another factor which plays a crucial role in combating the problems of disease and poverty in Africa is overpopulation. Africa is the world's second largest and second most populous continent, after Asia. With the population distribution at 30. 2 million square kilometer, it covers 6 % of the earth's total surface area and 20. 4% of the total land area. The estimate in 2007 put the African population at just over 934 million.²⁰ It is possible that the actual figure is higher than this estimate, given the problems associated with census-taking in developing countries, ranging from lack of expertise to evasion.

The booming population in Africa, if we can still describe it as such given the massive deaths caused by disease, is attributed primarily to lack of education. Africa occupies the unenviable first position as the continent with the highest number of illiterates. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (founded in 1945) in its regional overview on Sub-Saharan Africa in the year 2000 reported that only 58 % of children were enrolled in primary schools.²¹ Further in the same report, it was observed that while illiteracy is

¹⁹ "To fight disease, Africa must first get." Sustainable Development International 22 June 2005. 3 Aug. 2005, http://www.sustdev.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=631&Itemid=35

²⁰ "African Population", <http://na.unep.net/globalpop/africa/>

²¹ "Education in Africa", http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php_URL_ID=31010&URL_DO=DO_Topic

decreasing in other parts of the world, it is on the increase in Africa. For instance, illiteracy increased from 131.4 million in 1990 to 136 million in 2000.²² The result of this situation is that, as female education has not been welcomed in some parts of Africa, young girls get married early and begin to ‘make babies’. The time spent in educational training, if this were available, would have been a check against early marriage. We can understand why such young parents, who are lured into begetting children by instinct or custom without adequate preparation, can only perpetuate poverty. This is what leads to generational poverty. Illiteracy is equally manifested in the upbringing of the children in terms of healthcare. Most mothers lack basic information on health-care and preventive measures against infant diseases.

The next factor which contributes to the booming population in Africa is the marriage system which is still predominantly polygamous. The monogamous form of marriage which Christianity brought to Africa has still to take root even after so many years. Many factors contribute to the persistence of polygamy and hence to overpopulation in Africa. We cannot here go deeply into this area, but it suffices to say that large families (many children and of course more than one wife) are a status symbol in many parts of Africa even in the 21st century. The training of male children in Western education as lawyers or medical doctors is gradually creeping in as a rival to the traditional title-taking, but that will take some time to replace the old system. Polygamy prevails on the grounds of providing more hands for the farm work in the absence of machines. Besides, it is a source of security, because a child or a woman from a large family cannot be easily insulted or assaulted within the community. The family background from which the child or the woman comes is a source of protection and pride. The sense of community which is central to the African world-view seems to find its fulfillment in the promotion of large families. It is embedded in the philosophy of “*So mu adina*” (I will not be alone). Many married men in Africa, even the educated among them, still consider monogamy a Western imposition. An African woman, on the other hand, would ‘prefer’ to get married to an already married man with many wives instead of remaining single, because of the cultural stigma on singleness. This is also not unconnected with economic and social security, which does not favour the women in the entire continent. We shall discuss this problem later in this work under the feminization of poverty. Let us now see how leadership and foreign policies prolong poverty in the African continent, more especially in the countries within Sub-Saharan Africa.

²² Ibid.

2. 1. 3 Argument 3: Leadership and Foreign Policy.

The term “leadership” which is used in this section of the work to refer to political leadership or governance constitutes the major cause of poverty and an obstacle to poverty reduction in post-colonial Africa. If the fight against poverty is deeply a political issue, according to the United Nations Development Programme Report of 2001, then it follows that the persistence of poverty in the continent is closely linked to lack of good governance. It is an indubitable fact that poverty in most societies is all about disparities in the distribution of power, wealth and opportunity. To see that the opportunities are equitably distributed in a given society is the duty of a good governance. Good governance, even though entails a lot of things, may be defined simply as “the effectiveness with which a government performs its work and promotes the public good.”²³ It is this effectiveness which is grossly absent in governance in Africa, hence the persistence of poverty.

Certain factors could be said to be responsible for the lack of good governance in Africa. These factors include the inability to define an appropriate system of government that represents the values of the continent subsequent to decolonization; the incessant and protracted military leadership in post-colonial Africa; and the lack of vision among designated leaders, which gives rise to greed and corruption. Let us now take a look at each of these factors briefly and see how they contribute to the widespread poverty.

Professor Ali Mazrui, quoting A. B. Assensoh in an essay on Pan-Africanism, democracy and leadership in Africa, described the historical development of leadership in Africa as conditioned by eight different styles of leadership, which include charismatic, mobilisational, conciliatory, housekeeping, disciplinary, patriarchal, technocratic, and the personalistic political leadership/monarchical styles of leadership.²⁴ Without intending to go into a detailed explanation of what each of these styles of leadership means or which of the African leaders past or present was/is an embodiment of one or the other style, it suffices to state that the charismatic form of leadership was predominantly the system of leadership that gave birth to independence. Kwame Nkrumah, the man who led the first Black African country to

²³ Anyang' Nyong'o, P., Governance, Poverty and Sustainable Development in Africa: Paper prepared for the Conference on “Towards African Strategic Thinking and Action on Sustainable Development, Governance And Globalization.” Nairobi – Kenya, September 17 – 18, 2001.

²⁴ Mazrui, A. A., “Pan-Africanism, Democracy and Leadership in Africa: The Continuing Legacy for the New Millennium”, http://igcs.binghamton.edu/igcs_site/dirton6.html

independence was a symbol of the charismatic style of leadership. But Nkrumah was not a mobilisational leader. On the contrary Julius K. Nyerere was both a charismatic and mobilisational leader. Mazrui went further to underscore the fact that none of these styles of leadership had helped to make Africa better. This failure, he argues is traceable to two factors. The first is the fact that most of the afore-mentioned styles of leadership were directed towards the liberation of the African states from colonization. The only aim was to attain independence, which meant concretely to free the colonized from the colonizers. It was in this connection that one could understand the famous political slogan of Nkrumah at the time of the struggle, "Seek ye first the political kingdom, and all things shall be added unto you."²⁵ That was a message of hope for a people who were yearning to have the right to preside over their own affairs. But has this hope been realised? The answer is no! Fifty-two years after Nkrumah made that statement, the situation, instead of improving, has deteriorated to the extent that the slogan could be reframed as follows, 'seek ye first the political kingdom, and all else will be subtracted from it.' Moreover, the inability on the part of the leaders of this period and those following them to switch over from styles of leadership to goals of leadership, from leadership of liberation to leadership of development has remained unaddressed. One African leader after another let Africa down in the struggle to improve the material well-being of the African people. The style of leadership which remains a challenge to Africa south of the sahara at the beginning of the 21st century is developmental leadership. That means a style of leadership whose sole aim will be how to make the living conditions for the Africans better using the available resources, human and material.

The second factor responsible for leadership failure in Africa is the confusion arising from the difficulty in defining socio-political values in the context of pre-colonial traditions and post-colonial legacies. In the above mentioned paper, Mazrui distinguished four different pre-colonial traditions which have probably conditioned the style of leadership in post-colonial Africa. These include the elder tradition, monarchical tendency, the sage tradition and the warrior tradition.²⁶ The various traditions are not problematic in themselves, but to resuscitate

²⁵ Nkrumah, K., Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah, 3rd edition, New York: International Publishers, 1976, 164.

²⁶ Mazrui, A., op. cit. In the elder tradition, leadership is believed to be dependent on advancement in age. The monarchical tendency is to be found in those leaders who wish to remain in office for life even against the will of the people. Kwame Nkrumah attempted to create such monarchical tradition in independent Ghana by declaring himself life president, by sacralising his authority with the title of "Osagyefo" (Redeemer), and by surrounding himself with a class of ostentatious consumers parading themselves as Ghana's new political aristocracy who judged every political opposition to the president as treason. The sage tradition even though is less pre-colonial is symbolised in the acquisition of academic titles which resulted in promoting among Africans ostentatious display of Western Learning. A number of African leaders tried to become philosopher

and make them models for leaders in post-colonial Africa is simply anachronistic. The many decades of colonization of Africa south of the Sahara changed the mentality of the people and distorted their values, social, political and economic. Such a situation made it a herculean task for liberation leaders like Sekou Toure, Samora Machel, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Kwame Nkrumah and their political minions to project a goal-oriented leadership. The political new wine needed a new wine-skin and no longer the old wine-skin. But there was none. The structures which sustained the colonies under the colonial masters had no trained manpower to take over, and the political leaders did not make any provision for that. It became clear to the first African leaders after independence that, “no matter how powerful politicians may seem to be, or may even believe themselves to be, they do not control all aspects of the societies they claim to own.”²⁷ The reason is simply that ‘many of the social events in those societies are the product of economic decision-making which politicians often do not control.’²⁸

The series of military interventions and rebellious uprisings from opposition parties against incumbent regimes that characterises post-colonial Africa has made it difficult for any stable government to be constituted. The military is an institution whose duty is to guarantee the security of the citizens and defend the country against external enemies. The military personnel are trained to take orders and therefore are not amenable to discussion and debate after orders have been given.²⁹ As we saw above, pre-colonial Africa already had a warrior tradition with clearly defined roles before the advent of the Europeans. The colonizers made use of this already existent tradition to form the indigenous military institution which survived after independence. The military even constituted a force in the fight for independence, first in the North like the Tunisian war of independence (1952 – 1956) and the Algerian war of independence (1961 – 1974), both fought against France. West Africa, which lies on the Atlantic, was much more open to cultural and trade influences as well as to conquest by sea. The discovery of precious metals and minerals was an invitation to outside powers and often resulted in bloody clashes between the alien soldiers and those of the country. With the end of colonization, and the lack of vision by the indigenous leaders, the military began to usurp power arbitrarily in one country after the other, sometimes carrying with it ethnic influences which led to civil wars. The bloodiest of these wars in West Africa after independence was

kings for instance the Senghors (political philosopher and poet) the Nyereres (inaugurated the “Ujama” intended to be the authentic version of African socialism). Lastly we have the warrior tradition which stressed the skills of combat, self-defence and manhood. A typical example of this is the Mau Mau in Kenya and liberation fighters in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe.

²⁷ Alcock, P., op. cit. 41

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Anyang’ Nyong’o, P., op. cit. 9

the Nigerian – Biafran Civil War (1967 – 1970). Others were in Sierra Leone (1991 – 2002); Liberia (1986 – 1989); Guinea – Bissau (1998 – 1999); Cote d’Ivoire (2002 – 2004),³⁰ just to name a few. One thing is clear from all these, namely that there is no development in moments of crisis. When life is at stake, no one talks of a better way of living, *primum vivere deinde philosophare*.

Why is it that Africa has not known any peace since independence despite the degree of poverty in the continent? This question brings us to the third and last factor in the problem of leadership as a cause of poverty in Africa. From all indications one could trace the root of every unrest or conflict in Africa to the struggle for power. The struggle may at times couch itself in ethnicism or military coup d’etat, but there is always in the background the desire for political power, since that is the key to a great fortune and to the future as far as Africa is concerned. Although some politicians may have leadership qualities, if they do not bribe their way into political office they will never ‘win’ an election. And once in office, they continue in an ‘official way’ what they started before they came into power. Corruption is the name of this disease and it has eaten its way deep into the fabric of the society.

The word “corruption” (which is derived from the Latin, “*corrumpere*” – bribe or destroy) means dishonest or illegal behaviour.³¹ Corruption is an ‘impairment of integrity, virtue or moral principle; depravity, decay, and/or an inducement to wrong by improper or unlawful means, a departure from the original or from what is pure or correct, and/or an agency or influence that corrupts.’³² Our concern here is with political corruption and its allied ways of manifestation as bureaucratic and/or electoral corruption. Political corruption is the dysfunction of a political system or institution in which government officials, political officials or employees seek illegitimate personal gain through actions such as bribery, extortion, cronyism, nepotism, patronage, graft and embezzlement. The end point of political corruption is a “kleptocracy”, which literally means “rule by thieves”.³³ Without intending to paint the continent black than it is and with due regard to the negligibly few leaders who are making an honest effort, one can say that the only system of government that thrives in Africa is kleptocracy. Since this work is more a theoretical analysis than an empirical exposition, we are concerned more with causes than with social data, hence cases of corruption as

³⁰ Crawford Young, “Contextualising Congo Conflicts: Order and Disorder in Post-colonial Africa”, In: John F. Clark, ed., *The African Stakes of the Congo War*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, 15

³¹ *The New Pocket Oxford English Dictionary*, 10th edition, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005

³² *Websters New Collegiate Dictionary*, Springfield: G & C Merriam Co. 1980

³³ *Ibid.*,

experienced in Africa Sub-Sahara will not be compiled here. It suffices to mention a few examples. Africa is not the only continent where there is corruption is the argument of some people. We may agree with this assertion, but go further to add that while corruption is more the exception in other continents, it is unfortunately a rule in most countries of Africa.

On the 24th of February, 1966 Kwameh Nkrumah, whom we mentioned above as the man who led the first black African country to independence, was overthrown by a combined force of the police and the military for corruption. He was said to have inherited one of the richest countries of Africa, with a large reserve of foreign currency, but because of his financial misappropriation for nine years, Ghana became bankrupt, and food and consumer goods were in short supply. The Commission of Inquiry, which was set up by the National Liberation Council (NLC) in the same year revealed the details of the illicit practices among government officials: excessive mileage claims, over-inflated building contract estimates, unnecessary contract payments, *inter alia*.³⁴ This was possible because the leader was involved in the same practice. When the head of the fish starts to rot, the rest of the body will later be affected.

The Democratic Republic of Congo is another country worth mentioning. Mobutu Sese Seko ruled Zaire from 1965 – 1997, looting his country's wealth to an unprecedented degree without any qualms of conscience. Arnold Ludwig recounted an encounter with a relative of Mobutu who explained how the government illicitly collected revenue in these words: Mobutu would ask one of us to go to the bank and take out one million. We would go to an intermediary and tell him to give five million. He (the intermediary) would go to the bank with Mobutu's authority, and take out ten. Mobutu got one, and we took the other nine³⁵ It is alleged that Mobutu stole up to \$4 billion while in office.³⁶ On assumption of office in 2001, president Joseph Kabila established the Commission of Repression of Economic Crimes. Is Congo any better today years later?

Kenya, until recently after Tanzania, the apparently most stable African country, was spared cases of political corruption. The local chapter of Transparency International and the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR), released a report in February, 2006, stating that between January 2003 and September, 2004, the National Rainbow Coalition Government spent about \$12 million on cars that were mostly for the personal use of senior

³⁴ Commission of Inquiry in Ghana, 1966, <http://www.unodc.org/yournocounts/en/add-your-no-count/index> .

³⁵ Ludwig, A. M., *King of the Mountain: The Nature of Political Leadership*, 2002, 72

³⁶ Mequesta, Bruce Bueno de, *The Logic of Political Survival*, 2003, 167

government officials. The said amount substantially exceeded what the government spent in the same fiscal year on controlling malaria.³⁷

The case of corruption in Nigeria seems to be the most complex in the whole of Africa. It still remains a paradox for many people both within and outside the country that a country like Nigeria, richly endowed with natural and human resources, has more than 70% of its populace living on less than one dollar a day. Some attribute the cause to the rise of public administration and the discovery of oil as the two major events that have led to a host of sordid corrupt practices in the country. Corruption was prevalent in the first Republic of Nigeria, but was kept at a manageable level. The first case of corruption that attracted public attention was the 1975 corruption scandal surrounding the importation of cement. It was alleged that the officers in the Gowon administration falsified ship manifests and inflated the amount of cement actually purchased.³⁸ The case of corruption in the country reached its peak in the time of Sani Abacha. After his death in 1998, French investigations of bribes paid to government officials to ease the award of a gas plant construction in Nigeria led to the freezing of accounts containing about \$100 million dollars.³⁹ Prior to this time, however, a Swiss Banking Commission report indicted Swiss banks for failing to follow compliance processes in allowing family and friends of Abacha access to the accounts and to deposit amounts totalling \$600 million dollars into the accounts. The same year, a total of more than \$1billion dollars were found in various accounts throughout Europe.⁴⁰ This was not all that Abacha made away with nor is it to say that subsequent leaders were better. Wraith and Simpkins hypothesise that friends and kinsmen seeking favours may impose great pressure on the ethical disposition⁴¹ of leaders may be true, but in our opinion, not with regard to a case of corruption of this magnitude. Corruption continues to spread in Nigeria as many political office holders acquire wealth and properties in and outside the country. Many display wealth that is clearly beyond their means, but the society does not blink. Politics has become a lucrative business in Nigeria and in many other African countries, because anything spent to secure a political office is regarded as an investment, which matures immediately one gets into power.⁴² There are no longer ethical demands on political office holders. In his essay on

³⁷ <http://www.africaeconomicanalysis.org/articles/gen/html>.

³⁸ The Nigerian Cement Racket, African Guide, 1976

³⁹ Igbikiowubo, H., „TSKJ SAGA: Swiss Govt. Freezes \$ 100M Accounts”, Vanguard, Nigeria, Dec. 6, 2004

⁴⁰ David Pallister, „Comments & Analysis: Pennies from heaven; many of Nigeria’s missing millions were laundered through greedy banks in London”, In: The Guardian (London), September 7, 2000

⁴¹ Wraith, R. & Simpkins, E., „Corruption in Developing Countries”, In: The Journal of Modern African Affairs, 1983.

⁴² The Guardian, July 14, 2002

corruption in Nigeria, Victor Dike distinguished among three forms of corruption: political corruption (found among politicians and political decision makers); bureaucratic corruption (occurs in the public administration or in the implementation of political decisions, and is encountered daily in places like hospitals, schools, local licensing offices, airports, police stations and check-points, etc) and electoral corruption (which involves purchase of votes with money, promises of office or special favours, coercion, intimidation and interference with freedom of election).⁴³ What this analysis shows is that corruption touches almost every bit of the social life in that country and the greatest danger is that it has become part of the people's life. Corruption causes poverty and poverty can also lead to corruption. Politicians and government officials are not corrupt because they are poor, but because they are greedy. Sen argues that with clear systems of rules and penalties, along with rigorous enforcement, a difference could be made in the behaviour pattern.⁴⁴ This has to begin with the leaders. It is in this regard that we can understand the following words of Alcock: "If poverty remains, then it means that politicians have failed either to identify it accurately or to develop appropriate policies in response to it. In that sense then, poverty is the result of political failure, or the failure of political will."⁴⁵

There are, however, some economic decisions which fall outside the control of the political leaders. Some of these are at the level of foreign politics, where the countries who are supposed to benefit from such decisions are, most of the time, not consulted before the decisions are made. To what extent are the interests of the poor countries taken into consideration in the making of such decisions, where their views are not requested? What roles do the economic forces play in the reduction of acute poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa? Foreign policy as a factor in the problem of African poverty is a broad topic, which is not the direct concern of this work. However, it may be expedient to discuss briefly some specific aspects of foreign policy that have direct bearing on the problem of poverty in Africa and which take a stance on this matter that is sometimes ambivalent, a sort of 'mixed messages'. We shall limit our discussion in this regard to the issues concerning the conditions of loans from the West and international financial institutions like, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which are also the sources of Africa's debt burden. Then we will look at the question of security in Africa and in contradiction the supply of weapons

⁴³ Dike, E. V., „Corruption in Nigeria: A new Paradigm for Effective Control“, <http://www.africaeconomicanalysis.org/articles/gen/corruptiondikehtm.html>

⁴⁴ Sen, A., *Development as Freedom*, New York: Anchor Books, 1999, 275

⁴⁵ Alcock, P., 40

from foreign countries, the activities of some international organisations like the EZA in some African countries, and finally, the effects of global international trade policies as they concern the alleviation of poverty in Africa.

(a) Economic Policies and Foreign Debt Services

Let us begin with the last point. In his widely read book, “The End of Poverty”, to which we have already made several references in this work, Jeffrey Sachs called attention to the fact that the informal division of the world into first, second and third worlds is based on economic development and market policy. The first world comprises the countries (Europe, United States and Japan) that were already industrialized in 1945, when a new international trading system was established under U.S. political leadership. The success of the first world is attributed to the post-war reconstruction of a market-based trading system, which was a boost to rapid economic growth after two big wars that blocked trade and resulted in financial instability.⁴⁶ The economic rebuilding in the first (rich) world did not mean a restoration in the global economy, instead political leanings were forced to follow the economic divisions.

The socialist world, first forged by Lenin and Stalin in the wake of World War 1, then became the second world, with the most important characteristics being state ownership of the means of production, central planning of production, one-party rule by the communist parties.⁴⁷ The third world, which later became synonymous with poor countries, refers to the post-colonial countries, most of which are found in Africa. The concept “third world” was used initially to refer to those countries emerging from imperial domination that chose neither to be part of the capitalist first world nor the socialist second world. The aim was to stay non-aligned and to establish their own system of economy. By choosing their economies, the third world countries closed themselves off from global economic progress and the advance of technology.⁴⁸ What this meant was that these countries were subjected to a system of economics that was imposed on them. When a product from a third-world country, there is not a balanced negotiation between buyer and seller, but a situation where the buyer determined beforehand what is to be produced and brought to the market, the quantity of what is to be offered and the price at which it is to be sold. Since the economies of most African countries are dependent on the production of a small number of primary commodities, it is easy to appreciate the magnitude of the dangers of leaving the prices of those commodities to the

⁴⁶ Sachs, J., *The End of Poverty*, op. cit. 47

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

control of international markets. A study of Sub-Saharan Africa estimated that for every dollar of capital inflow that enters the region as aid, 51 cents make up for commodity price losses.⁴⁹ This extends also to other areas such as the US position that makes food aid to African countries affected by famine contingent upon their acceptance of genetically modified foodstuffs. This kind of aid, according to many agricultural experts, could prove a costly 'gift' for African famine-ravaged countries. This is because the likely spread of genetically modified (GMO) seeds that would arise will force small farmers in those countries to pay large fees to the large US-based companies that own the seeds' patents for subsequent production.⁵⁰ In a situation where the countries involved have no other option, these conditions are forced on them. The alternative would be to make room for effective participation of those countries in global economic decision-making.

(b) Bretton Woods Institutions and Poverty Alleviation Policies

Bretton Woods institutions are the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB), both founded in 1944 at Bretton Woods, in the US. At their inception, the two institutions had different tasks: While the one was meant to provide help to member countries with balance of payment deficits, the other offered loans for anti-poverty projects and remained a strong supporter of rural development programs. With the changes in the world economy from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s, the activities of the two institutions were co-ordinated. Jointly they introduced the austere policies⁵¹ known as the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) and the Economic Recovery Program (ERP), which became the preconditions for granting loans to the countries in need. These strict conditions affect, in Africa more than elsewhere, especially such areas as loans, debt cancellation and aid. For example, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other organisations demanded cuts in healthcare, education and the privatisation of industries in some countries in Africa in order for them to qualify for loans in the first place. Even debt relief and rescheduling has been granted to countries that agreed to open up their economies to privatisation by multinationals in the West as well as to carry out neo-liberal policies. In Angola, for instance, water, which was free, now has to be paid for, which has led to disconnections and a subsequent increase in dysentery, cholera, etc. In Malawi the World Bank advised the government to sell off its

⁴⁹ Cadiari, A., Debt, Africa and Global Economic Governance, <http://www.fpif.org/commentary/2003/0306g8>

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ These policies demand, among other things, re-financing of foreign debts, otherwise regarded as the effective control of debt servicing; devaluation of national currency, exchange control, trade liberalization, reduction of spending on social services, privatization of public enterprises. It is against this background that one can see the difficulty in understanding the role of these institutions in the poor countries of Sub-Saharan Africa.

surplus grains as part of a debt restructuring deal, despite widespread starvation in the country. The same Malawi spends more on servicing its debt than it spends on health. This is at the time when 20% of Malawians are HIV positive. Sub-Saharan Africa on the whole pays back in debt repayments almost 100% of the aid it receives each year. There is therefore the temptation to conclude that Western capitalism thrives on the indebtedness of Africa and other nations.⁵² Real and effective help should begin by making sure that food and water as basic human needs are secured, with the issue of debt coming later. Unfortunately some purported aid to Africa did not really come to fruition in this direction. For example, about 35 years ago, the UN set a target for all industrialised nations to provide 0.7% of their GDP in aid to the developing world. Only a few countries have complied with this directives, some others have made only a meagre contribution. Aid comes to only 0.15% of GDP. In total, high-income countries provide only 0.25% of GDP in aid. Almost all of that is in loans on which poorer countries can barely afford to pay back the interest. It means an ever-spiralling debt burden.⁵³ Statistics show that African countries are spending more on debt payments to rich countries than on health and education for their own people.

In its report on the conference held in London in September, 1987, the Institute for African Alternatives (IFAA) observed that although the IMF and World Bank have initiated many programs for the economic development of Africa, these have had only one result, namely the impoverishment of Africa. This is reflected in massive unemployment, falling real incomes, inflation, increased imports with persistent trade deficits, net outflow of capital, mounting external debts, denial of basic needs, and de-industrialization.⁵⁴ This critique can not be accepted as completely true. It may be pertinent to acknowledge the fact that foreign policy, with reference to those institutions, has its own *modus operandi*, which the masses do not comprehend most of the time. Foreign aid is more often than not confused with charity, hence the partial judgments on the institutions responsible for aid. Arguing with reference to this topic, Guy Arnold states that aid by its nature is highly political. He goes further to remark that some people mistake it for charity, whereas aid is part of a bargain between donor and recipient. What this means is that the donors have a surplus of capital and know-how and are willing to make it available to developing countries at a price. The price varies. It may be a matter of influence or military base facilities, it may result in protection of trade, investment

⁵² Can anyone hear us? Voices of the Poor

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ehmeir, W., Neugebauer, Ch. & Neuwirth, M., "The Impact of IMF and World Bank Policies on the People of Africa" (IFAA, 7 – 10 Sept., 1987), In: Zeitschrift für Afrikastudien, Nr. 1, 1987, 7- 11.

or other interests; it is not done for nothing.⁵⁵ We shall see more of this in our critique of this line of thought in the last chapter of this work.

(c) Trade in Arms in Africa: An Ethical Challenge to Economic Globalization⁵⁶

One area that very much affects the African poverty condition and contradicts the foreign assistance posture is the issue of trade in arms. From the 1980s to date, military spending has increased tremendously in the whole of Africa, with Western arms companies finding lucrative markets in a continent torn apart by violent conflicts. Within the period under review, the US government alone provided through grants and low-interest loans more than 1.5 billion dollars in arms and other security assistance to independent Sub-Saharan African countries, which were selected for their strategic importance in the Cold War duel.⁵⁷ As would be expected, these arms fueled internal repression and military conflicts that led to the deaths of many hundreds of thousand of people, most of whom were civilians. Today the child-soldier syndrome has become common in most of the African countries plagued by civil war. It is very worrisome to see these children half-clad carrying sophisticated weapons. The cost of one such weapon can send a child to school and feed him/her for some months, were the money not used for arms.

Research carried out by the United Nations International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF) in Sierra Leone, one of the most conflict-ridden zones in Africa shows, that poverty and lack of access to educational or work opportunities are factors which make children join militant groups. However, the same study observes that the majority of the children recruited were under 15 years old and comprised those who were abused as workers in mines. Some were kidnapped, while others were forced to join to prevent the killing of family members.⁵⁸ Between 10,000 and 30,000 children are said to have participated in the

⁵⁵ Arnold, G., *Aid and the Third World: The North/South Divide*, Sussex, 1985.

⁵⁶ The term 'globalization' was invented by the German professor Theodor Levitt, who migrated to England where he taught at Oxford Business School. The term was first used in 1944, but appeared officially in the English Lexikon in 1961. Globalization refers to the worldwide 'Verflechtung' (interlocking) in all areas of human endeavour especially in such areas as economy, politics/military, communication, culture and ecology. In the area of economy and business transaction, which could be said to be the basis of globalization, attempts are made to do away with all barriers to international trade like taxes and every form of restriction in the labour and capital markets. With this process, it becomes easier for the transnational corporations to market their wares everywhere in the world without restriction or interference from the governments of the individual countries. The ethical challenge to the process of globalization is how to reconcile the economic goal which is that of maximizing profit and minimizing loss with the dignity of the human person, who should be served by every economic system. Can economic globalization stand the test of time if it neglects the human person?

⁵⁷ Volman, D., „Peace and Military Policy in Africa“, <http://www.fpif.org/briefs/vol2/v2n9afr.html>

⁵⁸ UNICEF, *The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of children associated with the fighting forces, lessons learned in Sierra Leone, 1998 – 2002*, July 2005.

conflict.⁵⁹ That was only in Sierra Leone, but we know that Africa has an extremely high number of child soldiers as a result of the prevalent civil wars throughout the continent. Other African countries involved in the recruitment of child soldiers include Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda, Cote d'Ivoire, among others.⁶⁰ Trade in arms thrives because there are internal conflicts, but without these arms, violent conflicts would probably not escalate to civil wars and the recruitment of child soldiers.

The ethical challenges arising from the above-described form of transaction under the auspices of economic globalization are enormous. In the first place, economic globalization aims at extirpating all forms of difference so as to guarantee equality in business transactions. This 'reductio ad unum' of the economy at the international level is unrealizable. The reason is that every form of economic equality is only affordable through money or its equivalent, which means everybody or every nation should have access to sufficient financial resources so as to compete fairly at the global level. But this is neither realizable nor necessary. Besides, every economic system is ruled by competition which sometimes tends to neglect social realities. Moreover, a market society thrives better when some of those in the competition fail or even are ruined, and the others who are successful then have the opportunity to enjoy fully their success. Thus market globalization, which means making goods available on the world market, demands a corresponding purchasing power from the participants. This, in any case, is not available to all participants. As long as economic globalization is concerned only with globalizing the sale of produced goods without a corresponding move at globalizing the means of production, it remains ethically unjust, because it serves the machinery of economic exclusion and marginalization of some regions⁶¹. The consequence, therefore, is the widening of the gap between the rich and the poor, which for some economic theorists like Friedrich Hayek⁶² is the inevitable outcome of every economic system. This leads us to raise the

⁵⁹ Amnesty International, Sierra Leone: Childhood – a casualty of conflict (AI index AFR 51/69/00) 31 August, 2000, <http://web.amnesty.org/library/engindex>

⁶⁰ http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org/content/facts_and_figures_child_soldiers

⁶¹ With reference to this trend, the working documents to the second Special Assembly for Africa warned that globalization which is 'an accepted fact of this century is tending to marginalize Africa'. (Cf. Synod of Bishops, II Special Assembly for Africa, *Instrumentum Laboris*, The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2009, 15).

⁶² Hayek had argued, in an interview granted to *Wirtschaftswoche* that the nations which cannot feed themselves should be allowed to perish. Inequality should never be regretted but is to be highly welcomed and considered as necessary. This is because a world that is structured on egalitarian idea has the problem of over-population and that problem is insoluble. The only check against over-population is that only those people capable of feeding themselves should be allowed to exist and multiply. (Cf. *Fredrick Hayek, 'Ungleichheit ist nötig', Interview in Wirtschaftswoche, Nr. 11, 6.3.1981, 30 – 40*).

question as to whether the market economy is an end in itself or is it meant to be at the service of the society, hence of the human person. Is it possible to talk of economic ethics? Can we speak of ethical criteria in the process of globalization? Does ethics have a role to play at all in this process?

There is no gainsaying the fact that economic globalization has brought with it some advantages to humanity such as the growth in world trade; growth in direct foreign investments; increase in the number of global players like the transnational corporations and the globalization of financial markets, among other things.⁶³ The advantages of globalization are felt much more in the areas of communication and information technology, as every part of the world is connected to every other with just a press of the button either on the keyboard or the cell-phone. Nevertheless, we re-iterate that these global dividends need as a matter of urgency and necessity a global ethical framework, without which it is bound to create more social problems.

A move in this direction is the UN Global Compact initiated by Kofi Annan in 1999, which made three demands on the global economic system namely, respect and support for human rights; the elimination of all forms of forced or child labour; and a response to ecological challenges. The threefold points enumerated by the Global Compact are in accordance with the ideas of the Chicago Declaration Toward a Global Ethic of the Parliament of the World's Religions in 1993, which underlined the absolute respect for human dignity at the global level be it economic or cultural. It is through a global ethic that a global culture can be sustained, since only such an ethic can lead societies from confrontation to reconciliation, from degeneration of moral values to the restoration of the quality of life that restores the presence of transcendence in human life.⁶⁴ John Paul II in his address to the Papal Academy of Social Sciences on 27th April, 2001 supported the need for a global ethic when he said: "As humanity embarks upon the process of globalization, it can no longer do without a common code of ethics. This does not mean a single dominant socio-economic system or culture which would impose its values and its criteria on ethical reasoning. It is within man as such, within universal humanity sprung from the Creator's hand, that the norms of social life are to be sought. Such a search is indispensable if globalization is not to be just another name for the

⁶³ Altvater, E. & Mahnkopf, M., *Grenzen der Globalisierung: Ökonomie, Ökologie und Politik der Weltgesellschaft*, 7. Aufl., Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2007, 21

⁶⁴ Dunning, H. J. (ed.), *Making Globalization Good: The Moral Challenges of Global Capitalism*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003, 151

absolute relativization of values and homogenization of life-styles and cultures”.⁶⁵ The point we have tried to make here is that even though economic globalization is a plausible development, it needs a corresponding global ethical basis.⁶⁶

(d) NGOs and the Politics of Entwicklungszusammenarbeit (EZA)

The role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the third world countries, but especially in Africa, can be said to be the only oasis in the desert, but sometimes government policies are a hindrance to the implementation of the programmes of the NGOs aimed at alleviating poverty. The activities of the NGOs are often perceived by the host governments as external interference with their sovereignty. Sometimes, policies which make the implementation of the projects impossible are put in place as an indirect way of preventing the NGOs from reaching the people who really need help. For instance, the rule restricting foreigners from having direct contact with the people for the fear that they could be spies.

On the other hand, some people opposed to the activities of the NGOs cite the dependency theory as an argument against them. According to this theory, to be subjected to help perpetually can only prolong the poverty of the people. It is therefore better to allow the people to seek a workable way of solving the problem of poverty on their own. This stream of thought came from the influence of the liberation theologians of Latin America, some of whom believed that the best help to render to the poor was to help them be independent. In other words, the poor should be provided with the means for self-sustenance either by creating jobs for them or by assisting them to be self-employed. It is in line with this vision that the “Entwicklungszusammenarbeit” was established in the 1970s to assist the poor people of the third world countries to manufacture and sell their products internationally. The aim was to help bridge the social gap between the poor and the rich by marketing their goods at a fair price. On a more broader basis, EZA endeavours equally to correct the imbalance in trade between the first and third worlds. For the past thirty years, the EZA has distinguished itself as an effective system for fair-trade imports. It encourages small farmers to form co-operatives and encourages them with loans and helps them at the same time to market their produce. The aims of this collaborative developmental work include, the prevention of the exploitation of children and forced labour. On the ecological level, it is opposed to the

⁶⁵ http://www.vatican.va/cgi-bin/w3-mysql/news_services/bulletin/news/8998.html

⁶⁶ The search for a global ethic is strongly opposed by ethical relativism, which does consider any ethical precept as universally binding on all human persons, because the world in which we live is multi-cultural. But the elements of global ethic are those core values which flow from human nature like the respect for life, truthfulness, tolerance, partnership, justice etc.

introduction of GMOs and the overuse of much chemicals in the cultivation of crops; and encourages, instead, long term planning. Some of these policies are opposed to those of international trade bodies or even those of some host countries, which leads to frequent conflicts between those who support the policies and those who are opposed to them.

The EZA, in a bid to overcome the problem of imbalance, encourages and sponsors research programmes directed at enhancing communication between the donors and the target groups in any development. This means dual projects that offer counseling services thereby correcting the asymmetrical relationship often associated with development projects. This asymmetrical relationship goes back to the early history of Afro-European development that gave rise later to the British Colonial Development Act of 1929, where development was used as an object of colonial politics.⁶⁷ Secondly, it opens up a new trend in the goals of NGOs, which places emphasis on bridge-building and capacity-building.⁶⁸ As noble as these goals may be, the question remains how to define the terms of collaboration between the NGOs and the host government to avoid unnecessary bottle-necks or even direct confrontation.

2. 1. 4 Argument 4: Inadequate Education and Lack of Technical Know-how

The bottom line of every discussion on the causes of poverty is that of insufficient education and the lack of technical know-how. One can therefore argue that any and every effort directed at poverty alleviation in Africa south of the Sahara, that neglects the promotion of education is bound to end in futility. And when we talk of education as a vital aid to fighting poverty, we are confronted with two schools of thought. The first school represented by the few Western-educated Africans maintains that any effective system of education in Africa has to be indigenous. What this means is that it has to take into consideration those core African values like the affirmation of life, creation, community, person and work in its curriculum. To this effect, Fafunwa, one of the advocates of the indigenous system of education points out seven cardinal goals of indigenous education:

The development of the child's latent physical skills; the development of character; the teaching of respect for elders and those in position of authority;

⁶⁷ Gomes, B., Hanak, I. & Schicho, W., "Interkulturelle Kommunikation und partnerschaftlicher Diskurs im Kontext der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit: Ein Projekt-Bericht", In: Stichproben, Nr. 1, 1.Jg, 2001, 117-120.

⁶⁸ Lister, S., "Power in Partnership? An analysis of an NGO's relationship with its partners", In: Journal of International Development, March, 2000; 12:2; ABI/INFORM GLOBAL, p. 227

the development of intellectual skills; the acquisition of specific vocational training and the development of a healthy attitude towards honest labour; the development of a sense of belonging and the encouragement of active participation in family and community affairs; and the understanding, appreciation and promotion of the cultural heritage of the community at large.⁶⁹

This form of education is said to be holistic and spans throughout one's life. The defenders of this position opine that for Western education to be productive in Africa, it has to build on this as a basis and not displace it. But the indigenous form of education which Fafunwa and like thinkers propose is informal education, which was meant to enhance socialization within the extended family, age-grade organizations and institutions of religious rites. Elleni Tedla, in her work "Sankofa: African Thought and Education", argues that the development of education in the West and its achievements in science and technology was based on liberal culture.⁷⁰ Thus, the argument of this group is that not only are many Africans without formal education, but that those who have received education according to the Western system have failed to integrate that with the core African values.

This inability to apply acquired knowledge to the improvement of the standard of life is the argument of the second school of thought, which sees that as a justification for the hypothesis that the African is of inferior intelligence when compared to other human beings that inhabit the earth. Hence phrenologists and some ethnologists concluded that it was hopeless to train the African. For instance, the ethnologist J. W. Jackson suggested that the reason the black man's faculties were not as well developed as those of the white man was that he lacked "due nervous development". In other words, Jackson was convinced that owing to the absence of certain nerves in the brain of an African, Western education would in no way help the black man.⁷¹ For this reason, some scholars of Western origin even went so far as to assert, "...perhaps in the future there will be some African history to teach. But at present there is

⁶⁹ Fafunwa, B. A., *African Education in Perspective*, In: B. A. Fafunwa & J. U. Aisiku (Eds.), *Education in Africa: A Comparative survey*. Boston: George Allen, 1982, 11

⁷⁰ The liberal culture of the West was the basis of the mathematical-mechanistic conception of the universe that developed between 1500 – 1700; the Enlightenment era (1700 – 1800) and the evolutionary interpretation of the universe (1800 – 1900). Liberalism is guided by the assumption that people functioning primarily as individuals can achieve theoretical and practical mastery of nature and the human person. Consequently, the individuals, in order to succeed, have to de-emphasize family and community ties so as to pursue their own advancement and ascendance unencumbered. Priority was placed on individual interest over community or common good. The modern national states emerged therefore with the sole function of government as that of protecting individual interest and property while interfering as little as possible in the individuals' economic affairs (cf., Elleni Tedla, *Sankofa: African Thought and Education*, New York: Peter Lang, 1995, 80)

⁷¹ Lyons, C. H., *The educable African: British thought and action, 1835 – 1865*. In: V. M. Battle & C. H. Lyons (Eds.), *Essays in the history of African education*. New York: Teachers College, 1970, 6.

none: there is only the history of Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness.... And darkness is not a subject of history".⁷² If this assertion is to be upheld, it then means that the poverty condition of Africa can not be solved by western education, since the Africans are by their constitution ineducable. This fable, in any case, is no longer accepted among scholars anywhere in the world, for if it were tenable, then the efforts of foreign countries and international organisations like UNICEF in the educational sector in Africa would be a political farce. Besides, professionals of African descent are making their contributions in various fields of human endeavour across the globe as we shall see later in the section dealing with brain-drain.

It has to be remarked that modern education in Africa south of the Sahara did not start early enough to have made the type of impact on the development of the continent that many people would have wished for. The first students to graduate from an African higher education institution (in the Western tradition) did so in 1879 from Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone. And by the time most of the countries in this region achieved their independence in 1960, there were only six such institutions in the whole of Sub-Saharan Africa.⁷³ This situation has improved tremendously in the sense that there are many more institutions of higher education, but there are still inadequate resources for applied research and greater outreach. We have already mentioned the need for the government to give more attention to education, making it accessible to a good number of people as a way of promoting personal development. What this entails is, among other things, to invest hugely in the areas of research on the programmes that could help reduce poverty by empowering the people. This equally entails modifying the methods of teaching and learning. As in most of the aspects connected with the problem of poverty, particular attention should be paid to the education of women, who are often the most disadvantaged.

A modern African system of education, if it is to improve African conditions, will not either limit itself to the so-called indigenous education nor be alienated entirely from the context of African life. A possible approach to the reformation of the philosophy of African education has to take into consideration the points which Julius Nyerere raised in his speech at the Arusha Declaration, namely to integrate Western education into the life of the family and the community; to end elitism through a programme of universal primary education that

⁷² Chamberlain, M. E., *The Scramble for Africa*, Hong Kong: Longman, 1974, 3.

⁷³ Hinchliffe, K., *Issues Related to Higher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*, World Bank Staff Working Papers, no. 780, Washington, D. C: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 1985, 9

integrates Western and traditional systems of education; to inculcate the spirit of work and service to the community in the process of education.⁷⁴ Some of these points have been overtaken by events, but the fact remains that much reform remains to be carried in the area of education as an instrument of social change. For according to Whitehead, the progress of a society depends upon its inclusion of three groups of people – scholars, discoverers and inventors.⁷⁵ To this observation, one must add the remarks of Nicol Davidson, the permanent Representative and Ambassador of Sierra Leone to the UN, that the progress of a state is facilitated also by wise and benevolent leaders who offer their intellectuals an unparalleled opportunity to make significant contributions to those things which are noble, lasting and true in a changing world. The number of educated Africans has increased tremendously since independence. The UNESCO compendium of statistics on illiteracy in Africa at the beginning of the millennium shows a decrease in illiteracy in almost all the countries of Africa. This decrease is more significant in some countries than others. For instance, countries like Ghana had a 47. 2% illiteracy rate in 1985 and 26. 4% in 2000; the percentage of Burkina Faso's illiterate population was rated at 85. 5% in 1985 and 72. 3% in 2000; Kenya had 35% and 23. 8%, and Nigeria had 57. 3% and 34. 4% both within the same period. Madagascar had one of the best educational records with an illiteracy rate of 23. 1% in 1985 and 14. 5% in 2000⁷⁶. One thing we notice when the conditions in those countries are surveyed is that the rate of development has followed proportionally the decrease in the level of illiteracy. However, the impact of the gradual increase in the level of education still needs to be felt more with regard to the reduction of poverty and the general attitude of the populace. Next to this would be the need to bridge the gap between urban and rural education, with particular attention paid to the relevance of educational skills in different contexts.

2. 2 The Consequences of Poverty for Human Behaviour

The consequences of poverty, like its causes, are multiple, but more pervasive than the latter. In any given society one can escape poverty by overcoming the causes, but the same person cannot avoid the negative consequences of other people's poverty; if he/she is not affected directly then certainly indirectly. The International Labour Organisation articulated this beautifully in its Philadelphia Declaration 2005 in the following words, "Poverty anywhere

⁷⁴ Cf. Nyerere, J. K., *Education for Self-Reliance*, Dar es Salaam: Ministry of Information and Tourism, 1967.

⁷⁵ Whitehead, A. N., *The Aims of Education and Other Essays*, New York: The Free Press, 1929, 98

⁷⁶ UNESCO (2000), *Compendium of Statistics on Illiteracy*, no. 31, Division of Statistics on Education, Office Statistics, Paris.

constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere”. Let us examine the truth of this statement by considering the various consequences of poverty under its different dimensions: social, economic, political and psychological. The first three may be treated as one since they form the external factors that influence human behaviour in the society, while the last has to do with the individual’s internalization of the influence and his/her response through manifest behaviours. We will thus discuss the consequences of poverty under the two broad themes of social decline and psychological stigmatization.

2. 2. 1 The Decline of Social Cohesion

One of the greatest consequences of poverty is the decline of social cohesion. The structures of social systems relate intimately to beliefs about human nature. And these beliefs are in turn used to justify both change and the status quo.⁷⁷ A decline in these systems therefore implies a decline in beliefs and consequently a crisis in the understanding of human nature and human values. Accessibility to basic facilities like education, health care and employment opportunities becomes impossible. Migration becomes the next option. A high rate of migration from a particular social milieu to another is always an indication of poverty. People move from their places of birth in search of work opportunities. By doing this, family ties are broken willy-nilly. The more severe the degree of poverty, the greater the number of families affected. The result is that many communities are extremely divided, with little commonality in terms of needs and aspirations to the extent that the notion of community becomes very tenuous.⁷⁸ To an African for whom the community plays a vital role in his/her world-view, this new form of existence needs time to be understood and accepted. Lamenting the harm caused to community life by migration as a result of poverty, an elderly man in Kagadi, Uganda says:

Poverty has always been with us in our communities. It was there in the past, long before the Europeans came, and it affected many – perhaps all of us. But it was a different type of poverty. People were not helpless. They acted together and never allowed it to “squeeze” any member of the community. They shared a lot of things together: hunting, grazing animals, harvesting etc. There was

⁷⁷ Washburn, L. S., “Human Biology and Social Science”, In: Hoebel Adamson et. al (eds.), *Crisis in Anthropology*, Views from Spring Hill, New York: Garland Publishing Inc. 1982, 323.

⁷⁸ Can anyone hear us? 6

enough for basic survival. But now things have changed.⁷⁹

The above quotation, far from taking us back to the *Jagd- und Sammeln Gesellschaft*, intends to underscore the communal spirit which has been destroyed by migration. It may be that the much talked about globalization is nothing other than an attempt to recapture at the international level this social interconnectedness which is essential in human existence. But it is an illusion to believe that this can take place at the international level without a strong community base. The constitution of human society, like that of the human organism, begins with the cells (family), the tissues (community), the organs (nations) and the whole person (world). The man from Uganda is not alone in his observation. A group of rural women from Ghana decried the disappearance of social stability as a result of labour migration in the following words:

In the past, men organised themselves in groups through communal labour to assist each other to build and roof houses. Women support each other to do farm work such as sowing, weeding, and harvesting. A woman who had recently given birth to a baby was always supported by young girls who cared for them and by older women who brought firewood and even treated the baby when it fell sick. Individual families tried to support each other. Women would work in groups in search of food to feed their children. Respect and authority was given to the chief and his elders.⁸⁰

The disintegration of social cohesion can have far-reaching consequences for normal life in all facets of the society, but especially in the educational, political and economic aspects. This is because social cohesion forms the connectedness among individuals and social groups that facilitates collaboration and equitable resource distribution at the household, community and state level. Social cohesion is important for societal stability as it affirms individual and group identities.

In addition to the problem of migration and the attendant decline of social cohesion, there is also a significant manifestation of changes in the traditional gender roles in the family. Traditionally, the role of women across the centuries and in various countries, Africa inclusive, was considered to be that of home-making, tending to the family and taking

⁷⁹ Ibid., 3

⁸⁰ Ibid., 1

responsibility for the well-being of the children and husbands. The men, on the other hand, were the breadwinners. These traditionally socially defined roles of men and women are today not only unattainable, they themselves stand in stark contradiction to current reality. African women, in most cases, have taken over the role of men as breadwinners in a bid to sustain the family against the threat of hunger. Unlike men, women will do any type of menial job just to provide food for the children. The combined role of breadwinners and home-makers has placed women in many parts of Africa at the head of the families, at least in principle. Men feel emasculated by the new development. The reason is that the tie between a man's self-worth and earning capacity is so strong that it may be difficult for them to even acknowledge their dependence on women's incomes.⁸¹ Many men in this situation feel 'redundant' and react to their loss of power as breadwinners by collapsing into drugs, alcohol, depression and domestic violence.⁸² Men generally experience the pressures of poverty as a threat to their social status, self-respect, and confidence in their economic role as providers for their family. As economic hardship forces men and women to adapt to new ways of living, the adaptive actions bring about change in the structure of the society. Values and relationship are being broken, tested, contested and renegotiated in silence, pain and violence.⁸³ The lack of stability of family units is a result of these changes in the society. Whereas social cohesion is normally accompanied by political stability, which in turn signals the exercise of property and citizen rights, and which furthermore encourages private investment from local and foreign investors, its absence means insecurity and the denial of basic rights. We shall see how this is manifested in the later part of this work devoted to the link between poverty and violence.

2. 2. 2 Social Exclusion and Psychological Stigmatization

The social exclusion of the poor and its concomitant psychological stigmatization is one of the consequences of poverty. Social exclusion refers "to the norms and processes that prevent certain groups from equal and effective participation in the social, economic, cultural and political life of the societies."⁸⁴ It is mainly concerned with the role of relational features in deprivation and all forms of unequal treatment based on social status. Social exclusion can take the form of prejudice, which is the "unfavourable attitude towards a social group and its

⁸¹ Can anyone hear us? 8

⁸² Ibid., 26

⁸³ Ibid., 6

⁸⁴ Ibid., 229

members.”⁸⁵ Hogg and Vaughan consider social exclusion, otherwise known as prejudice and discrimination, as the greatest problem faced by humanity, and bemoan the persistence of this problem in human society despite the advancement in science and technology thus:

We can put people on the moon, we can genetically modify living organisms, we can replace dysfunctional organs, we can whizz around the world at an altitude of 10,000 meters, and we can communicate with almost anyone anywhere via the Internet. But, in recent history, we have seemed helpless in preventing the Palestines and the Israelis from fighting over Jerusalem, the Catholics and Protestants from tearing Northern Ireland apart, and various groups in Africa from hacking each other to death with machetes.⁸⁶

The forms of prejudice highlighted by Hogg and Vaughan in the above paragraph concern differences in religious and tribal affiliations. Goffman, in line with the foregoing, outlines three forms of stigma commonly observed in any given society to include, “the physical stigma (deformities), tribal stigma of race, nation and religion, and the stigma of blemishes of individual character.”⁸⁷ These forms of stigma make it difficult for interpersonal relationships in the society. The stigma of poverty on the other hand is a special type of stigma, which attributes to the poor a status of being “less than human” or “not quite human”⁸⁸ and treats them as such. It is on this basis that the poor are cut off from the networks that provide access to power and resources, thereby making them vulnerable and increases their risk of being poor. Being poor is in itself a cause for social exclusion due to the social stigma poverty carries.

The stigmatisation of the poor in the West can be seen to have taken a dramatic turn in the 14th century in England. Up to this time, the view of the poor as deemed to be of the highest moral status and the rich as second class was promoted by the Church.⁸⁹ But this was not to last long, as internal struggles within the Church led to a hierarchical classification of poverty and a hostile attitude toward begging.⁹⁰ What this meant was that a person could be poor relatively, but going to the streets to beg for alms in order to survive was not tolerated. The situation became worse in the 16th century to the extent that hungry men were publicly

⁸⁵ Hogg, A. M. and Vaughan, M. G., *Social Psychology*, 5th Edition, England: Pearson Education Limited, 2008, 350.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 350

⁸⁷ Goffman, E., *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, New York, 1983, 3

⁸⁸ Waxman, C. I., p. 70

⁸⁹ Shelton, D., “Bringing Culture into the Development Paradigm: The View from the World Bank.” *Development Anthropologist* 16, 1996, 152 – 159

⁹⁰ Walter, B., *The Spirit of Poverty*, New York, 1990, 48

castigated as invincibly idle and were treated as people with a moral defect. Repressive policies to deal with the poor were subsequently adopted.⁹¹ Supported by official fiat, the perception of the poor as being morally depraved became dominant at the time.⁹² The poor were blamed for their poverty and accused of being lazy, of stealing and of not being willing to get an education and improve their lots.⁹³ Waxman further underscores the fact that the religious developments of the 16th and 17th centuries, which influenced the rise of modern capitalism, equally contributed to the increasing antipathy toward the poor.⁹⁴ He observed that, “just as the Lutheran and Calvinist Protestant tenets of predestination led to a view of work as inherently positive and material rewards as a sign of chosenness and virtue, they unintentionally provided a new religious legitimization for the perception of the poor as immoral”.⁹⁵ The material rewards for work was seen as a divine sign of moral worth and wealth therefore became identified with worth and the absence of wealth with the absence of moral worth.⁹⁶ The stage was then set for the struggle to acquire more wealth so as to acquire more ‘moral worth’. This situation has continued to date, as the poor are not only castigated and socially excluded, they are also dehumanised by the rich.

The rich and the poor live side by side in every society, and there is bound to be mutual suspicion whereby the rich suspect the poor of being capable of stealing their wealth, the prevention of which depends on maintaining the poor on relief. On the other hand, the poor attack the rich for depriving them of their own share of wealth and society’s benefits. Malthus theory of less eligibility is used as a measure to moderate this condition. This theory states that by maintaining the poor on relief, the food supply would run short, thereby raising its cost and ultimately subjecting the non-poor to impoverishment.⁹⁷ It therefore restrains some rich people from engaging in relief programme. Where they do, it comes only as *tokenism*.⁹⁸ The aim of the less eligibility theory, according to De Schweinitz, was to make relief detestable and therefore force the recipient to get off the relief rolls and become independent.⁹⁹ The workability of this option is very much dependent on the social condition in which the poor find themselves. There are places where it is impossible to get off the rolls, because the socio-

⁹¹ Jordan, W. K., *Philanthropy in England, 1480 – 1660*, New York, 1989, 80

⁹² Lenski, G., *Power and Privilege*, New York, 1986 22

⁹³ Waxman, C. I., *op.cit.* 3

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 80

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 80

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 81

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 82

⁹⁸ Tokenism is a subtle practice of publicly making small concessions to a minority or disadvantaged group in order to deflect accusations of prejudice and discrimination. (cf., Hogg and Vaughan, p. 368)

⁹⁹ De Schweinitz, K., *England’s Road to Social Security*, New York, 1991, 124

political atmosphere does not hold an alternative arrangement for the poor or that the rich make it difficult for them for fear of rivals. It is the same rich people who control the sharing of power and opportunities.

The poor on the other hand accuse the rich of exploiting them and making it impossible for them to improve their living conditions. Some prefer to remain poor rather than raise their voice against their oppressors, lest they be oppressed still more.¹⁰⁰ There is no doubt that such prejudice from the poor can lead to mischievous actions against the rich in the form of destruction of property, robbery or even assassination. It is widely alleged that most of the killing of wealthy and influential men in Africa and some other third world countries is done by those who feel that they are disadvantaged, because other people have kept them from advancing in the society. Some of them, however, become instruments in the hands of the rich who, for example, want to avenge a wrong deed, and so they are hired as assassins. Because of this unfriendly relationship between the rich and the poor, whether it is within a country or between countries, some people hold the view that “the war against terrorism is bound up in the war against poverty.”¹⁰¹ That would mean that it is the poor frustrated youths who gang up as terrorists. It is yet to be established to what extent poverty leads to violence or crime in a society. However, it cannot be negated that poverty leads to crime or violence, since to be poor means to be without work or to be underpaid in the place of work. As an ancient adage has it, “an idle man is the devil’s workshop”. Piven and Cloward corroborate this view by affirming that ordinary life for most people is regulated by rules of work and the rewards of work that pattern each day and week and season. Once cast out of that routine, people are cast out of the regulatory framework that it imposes. Work and the rewards of work underpin the stability of other social institutions as well. When men cannot earn enough to support their families, they may desert their wives and children, or fail to marry the women of their choice. And if unemployment is long-lasting, entire communities may disintegrate as the able-bodied migrate elsewhere in search of work. In effect, daily life becomes progressively deregulated as what Edelman calls the “comforting banalities” of everyday existence are destroyed. The first signs of the resulting demoralization and uncertainty are usually rising indices of crime, family breakdown, vagrancy, and vandalism.¹⁰² Lack of access to meaningful, adequately paying jobs upon graduation undermines the rationale for staying in school; in consequence, dropout rates often, for example, exceed 50% in inner-city public school systems in developed

¹⁰⁰ Dams, T., *Integrierte ländliche Entwicklung*, Band 16, Hamburg 1985, 210

¹⁰¹ Sachs, J., *op. cit.*, xvii

¹⁰² Devine, A. J. and Wright D. J., *op. cit.*, 129

countries like US. Widespread joblessness strongly enhances the appeal of crime or drug-dealing as an economic alternative; for many youth in the inner-city, the drug trade and related criminal activities now represent nearly the only 'plausible' route to economic success and material well-being.¹⁰³ The degree of the effects of poverty in the city differs greatly from that in the rural areas, as a result of the impersonal characteristic of the former, making it more conducive to crime.

The next important point to be considered in analysing the consequences of poverty and the association with violence is the issue of gender. It is common knowledge that in every society women generally suffer the effects of poverty more than do men. But the rate of crime and violence which is attributed to poverty is much higher for men than women. Why is this so? We shall now take a cursory look at the effect of poverty women coupled with the attendant social prejudice which places women at a disadvantage especially in the less developed countries of Africa. The development of Africa in the 21st century will have to take the role of women into consideration and give them their proper place in the society.

2. 2. 3 Social Insecurity and Violent Conflicts

One of the outstanding consequences of violence in Sub-Saharan Africa is social insecurity. Africa is said to have the highest rate of civil wars in the world followed by Asia. Violent conflicts in Africa south of the Sahara are commonly attributed to the ethnic diversities of its countries. The reason for this attribution is the fact that most African rebel movements are almost always ethnically defined. But recent and more systematic analyses by social scientists show that political and economic factors are at the root of most violent conflicts. The struggle to control either the source of power or economy by the different ethnic groups gives rise to violent conflicts. When this happens, social life is paralysed, as nothing works and peoples lives, especially those of women and children, are highly threatened. According to the Human Science Research Council Review, the rivalry for resources, which is one of the major causes of violent conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa can take two forms. It can come in the form of traditional rivalries between herdsmen and farmers about land and water. This was actually the problem of the people of Darfur in Sudan, which unleashed a massive killing of innocent souls. In this case, the best means for restoring peace is through reconciliation customs. Then there is the more drastic form, which are those rivalries between entrepreneurs or elite groups

¹⁰³ Ibid., 129

for access to wealth; for example through mining (diamonds, gold) or drilling for oil. This is the type of rivalry that is often linked to government leaders or clan leaders, who use private armies to protect their interests¹⁰⁴. In such situations, there is no regard for law and order. The matter becomes even more complicated when foreign companies are involved. Life is made unbearable for everybody. Even where the conflict has been controlled, it still takes a good number of years for the people to return to normal life. Here the adage that prevention is better than cure describes the best line of action.

2.3 The Feminization of Poverty

The expression “feminization of poverty” was coined in the early 1970s to refer to an increase in the role that gender inequality plays as a determinant of poverty. The disparity in social status as a result of gender difference is a social problem with a long history. In almost all the societies of the world, women are treated as second to men, not as equal. Not even in the developed countries of the world is this problem completely absent. But it cannot, in any case, be compared with what obtains in the developing and Islamic countries. There is a profound unequal treatment of women and men in the areas of employment as it concerns work opportunities, salary and promotions. Traditionally certain roles are assigned to women that make it difficult, if not impossible, for them to rise in positions of leadership even where they have the same qualification as men or are even better qualified. This discrepancy, which is described in social psychology as the “glass ceiling”¹⁰⁵ effect, gives men more opportunity for economic improvement than women. This and other gender related problems led to the emergence of “feminism” in the late 1960s, to which feminization of poverty could be considered an extension. Poverty, generally understood as a deprivation of resources, denial of capabilities or freedom, which are often described as the dimensions or spaces of poverty, affects women more drastically than men in the countries of Africa.

The expression ‘feminization of poverty’ was popularised by a study by Diane Pearce, which focused on the gender patterns in the evolution of poverty rates in the United States between the beginning of the 1950s and the mid-1970s. Pearce used the concept initially to mean “an

¹⁰⁴ HSRC Review, vol. 6, March 1, 2008.

¹⁰⁵ „Glass ceiling“ is a social psychological term which refers to an invisible barrier that prevents women and minorities from attaining top leadership positions. Eagly, Karau and Makhijani (1995) used the expression first in their research on the differences in the rise to leadership positions of women and men in their areas of work (cf. Hogg and Vaughan, op. cit., 355).

increase of women among the poor” and “an increase of female headed households among the poor households”.¹⁰⁶ Feminization is to be understood as an action, a process of becoming, and like every other process, is dependent on factors which can enhance or deter its realization. In the case of poverty, education and equal job opportunities should be available on an even playing field for both women and men in the struggle for economic development. A change of mentality on the part of the society which places women at a disadvantage because of culture or convention is crucial. This is the platform for action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, which identified the eradication of the persistent and increasing burden of poverty of women as one of the twelve critical areas of concern requiring special attention and action by the international community, governments and civil society.¹⁰⁷ A year after this conference, the United Nations Commission on the status of women discussed the issue of women and poverty at its fortieth session in 1996, and proposed further action to be taken by the UN member states and the international community, including the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all poverty eradication policies and programmes. The Beijing Conference was an important breakthrough as there has been, following its conclusions, a recognition by governments that there is a greater dimension to poverty, taking into consideration not only minimum basic needs, but going beyond this to include the denial of opportunities and choices.¹⁰⁸ Empowerment of women is a critical factor in freeing millions of people who are caught in the cycle of poverty and hunger. The provision of micro credits for rural women, which has become a very popular and successful strategy for the eradication of poverty, is a step in the right direction that needs to be expanded and sustained.

The unique status of women in Africa for cultural or religious reasons, compounds the problem of poverty as it affects the women in that continent. In many countries of Africa women are not allocated land for cultivation, because it is against the culture. A man gets a portion of land and then leases it to a woman for farming. Furthermore, women do not have the right of inheritance, which places them at a disadvantage relative to their male siblings. Don Pogreba in his paper on “Poverty in Africa” observes that all of the problems facing Africa society are magnified in the condition of women, who often bear the brunt of poverty and its implications. He went further to argue that despite constituting more than 50% of the

¹⁰⁶ Pearce, D., *The Feminization of Poverty; Women, Work and Welfare*. Urban and Social Review, 11 New York; 1978, 28 – 36. Northrop takes up this theme from another perspective in his article on “the demographic factor and the composition of economic growth” (cf. *Journal of economic issues*, 24 (1), 145ff.

¹⁰⁷ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/followup/session/presskit/fs1.html>

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

total population of Sub-Saharan Africa, women are undervalued and often ignored in policy discussions.¹⁰⁹ Women suffer very much in the rising poverty and unemployment besieging Africa. The International Labour Organisation annual report of 2007 succinctly summarizes the issue of poverty and African women thus:

In developing countries, nearly 570 million rural women – 60% of the rural population – live below the poverty line. Recent research by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) shows that in those countries, it is women who are nonetheless responsible for most food production. On the African continent, it is estimated that women produce 70% of the food. Poor women in these countries produce for sale as well as for subsistence; the poorer the household, the harder and more essential these two activities become. Analysis of the effects of structural adjustment programmes on African agriculture suggests that the increasing work load of women could provoke a new poverty crisis in which poor households will have record mortality levels even as overall agricultural revenues increase.¹¹⁰

The feminization of poverty in Africa is further compounded by gender inequality, which leaves many African women vulnerable to a range of other problems including HIV/AIDS. There are gender inequalities in personal relationships, in the community, within the workforce, and in political circles. Inequalities increase women's vulnerability to poverty and vice-versa, and both hinder them from enjoying full human rights.¹¹¹ Just as it is unacceptable to discriminate on the basis of gender so it is against the dignity of the human person to be discriminated on the grounds of poverty. A poor person is first a person before being poor.

There is no society that has been able to completely eradicate the problem of poverty, but many have found the means and the political will to reduce the level of poverty. What this suggests then is that an approach as to how poverty can be reduced should not be an exercise in utopian fantasy, but rather a blueprint for practical action towards attainable goals. Therefore, desirability must be balanced against feasibility, merit against cost, good will against the practical economic, social and political realities. A discussion like ours on the problems of poverty like ours does not intend to propose an economic levelling. A degree of

¹⁰⁹ Pogreba, D., „Poverty in Africa“, A topic paper prepared for the National Debate Topic Selection Committee of the NFSHA, (Unpublished Paper) 2006, 7

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 7

¹¹¹ Ibid.

inequality in the distribution of the social good is a necessary feature of modern society. Some, that is, will have more and earn more than others; perfect equality is neither desirable nor attainable. Extreme material deprivation, however, is in no way essential or desirable and neither is extreme wealth. It is on this note that we want to reappraised the theory of basic needs or the so-called poverty line, below which a person is considered abjectly poor and so leads a life unworthy of human dignity.

2.4 Conclusion

In the just concluded chapter we outlined the root causes and consequences of poverty in the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa. In the course of the discussion, we were able to establish that poverty is not caused by a single, but by several factors. From these many factors four of them (geographical, disease and over-population, leadership and foreign policies; and inadequate education and technical know-how) were discussed. Among these four, the leadership and foreign policy factor were given special attention as the interplay of internal and external policies has a major role to play in the African poverty condition. Internally, this involves wrong policies and misappropriation of funds by the leaders, while externally, it concerns the servicing of debts from foreign countries and institutions. Closely related to this, is the conflict that often arises from political policies and the NGOs. Finally, we underlined the fact that most of the root causes of poverty could be attenuated or eliminated with adequate education and technical know-how. In other words, illiteracy plays a great role in the persistence of poverty. Just as the prophet Hosea lamented that the people perish for lack of knowledge, one could say that Africans are poor for lack of education. One striking aspect of this lack of knowledge is the predominance of superstition that accounts for poverty as destiny or force people to move from one house of prayer to another in search of miracles.

CHAPTER THREE

THE DYNAMICS OF VIOLENT CONFLICTS IN A MULTI-CULTURAL SOCIETY

3.0 Introduction

The incidence of violence, like that of poverty, poses a great threat to modern man and the peaceful co-existence of humanity. Contemporary human society is haunted by the fear of violence, despite the progress already made in the advancement of fundamental human rights and inalienable human freedom. Today it has become difficult to move freely on the streets in most parts of the world without the fear of being attacked by an unknown person or a group of persons. There are frequent reports of deaths through explosives and bombings; innumerable cases of killings; kidnapping; house-burning; rapes and other forms of both domestic and public violence which inundate the media. Although abhorred by all men and women, “violence is especially cruel, and often more frequent, when targeted at those groups of people who already find themselves disadvantaged or discriminated against in society”.¹

Scholars are unanimous on the fact that violence in its manifestations is part and parcel of human existence; in all likelihood a constituting element of human society used as a cement in processes of social integration it is. Everywhere history has been written in blood. And yet violent action as we find it in a variety of forms remains in all its complexity one of the least understood fields of human social life.² According to general historical and social theories, violence occupies a central place as a factor in the constitution of human society and in the emergence of state civilizations. This assertion may be true in the uncivilized and primitive societies, but it is difficult to find any modern society where violence is legitimized as a way of life. However, the modern massive production of dangerous weapons of war drastically reduces the chances of attaining sustainable peace. How are we to understand this infinite capacity for self-destruction and the destruction of others manifested in the making of weapons and the prevalence of violence in view of the dignity of the human person as a rational and free being?

¹. Brown, H., Violence against vulnerable groups: Responses to violence in everyday life in a democratic society, Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 2004, 7

². Aijmer, G.(ed.), Meanings of Violence: A Cross-cultural Perspective, New York: Oxford International Publishers Ltd., 2000, 1

Our aim in this chapter is to consider the various ways in which violence can be understood as a social dynamic in a multi-cultural society with a particular interest in the ugly drama that has taken a centre stage in Sub-Saharan Africa after the colonial era. Violence is, however, neither natural nor endemic to African cultures. Nonetheless, a study of the prevalence of violence in the length and breath of that continent tends to demonstrate the contrary. There are various opinions as to the origin of the widespread violent conflicts in Africa. These range from the initial resistance of the natives to colonialism, the struggle for independence to the patriarchal family system. What does it mean to be violent? How do we reconcile the 'violent' customary practices in Africa, especially against women and children, with the integrity of the human person? To what extent does the problem of violence in Africa contribute to the hunger and poverty which has bedevilled that continent and vice versa?

3. 1 The Meaning of Violence and the Nature-Nurture Controversy

The ambiguities associated with the term 'violence' makes its definition far from being simple. Such ambiguities stem from the fact that violence is an interdisciplinary terminology, the hermeneutical understanding of which is dependent on the particular branch of studies that is under consideration. While each discipline has its own distinct contribution to make to the study of violence – the new developments in criminal sociology, law, ethology, history, psychology and human evolutionary biology cannot be ignored – the challenge, however, is to integrate some of them into a larger whole and to reshape our perception of the nature and causes or relevant factors of violent behaviour. Furthermore, owing to the diversity of culture, what is considered an act of violence in one culture may be embraced as a way of life in another culture. For instance, the process of selecting a bride by the nomadic Fulanis of northern Nigeria, which involves the use of rods by two young men with each other in a mock fight with the goal that whoever wins takes the bride, would leave a stranger nonplussed. Another difficulty encountered in explaining the term 'violence' has to do with its measurement and categorization. This is captured by Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois in the introduction to the book, *Violence in War and Peace*. According to them, "violence challenges categorization. It can be legal or illegal, visible or invisible, necessary or redundant, illogical or rational and strategic. The most that can be said about violence is that like madness, sickness, suffering or death itself, it is a human condition. Violence is present

(as a capacity) in each of us, as is its opposite – the rejection of violence”.³ This may be considered a step toward an understanding of violence, but the difficulties associated with its definition have not been overcome. This notwithstanding, it would be the height of pretence to conclude that we do not know what violence is, merely because of the afore-stated conceptual difficulties.

Violence, etymologically, comes from the Latin, *violentia* (*vis* – *force*) and usually refers to great force, excessive force, or constraint. The first two of the three meanings are derived from the standpoint of the agent’s activity, while the third is derived from that of a passive object affected adversely by the activity of the agent. The latter is Aristotle’s concept of violence which Thomas Aquinas took over and made use of in all his works. In this strict sense, the principle is mainly extrinsic and the thing suffering violence contributes nothing.⁴ Following this train of thought, we see that two principles are involved in violence, namely the constraining and the constrained, the latter, though always passive relative to the agent inflicting violence, may suffer violence either as an active or as a passive principle. As an active principle, it suffers violence when it is forced by an extrinsic agent to act contrary to its own inclination or prevented from acting according to it. The inclination denotes the intrinsic source of activity, which is represented by the will for rational beings and by sensory desire for brutes. On the other hand, if it is a passive principle (that means that it requires an external agent to move it to action), it suffers violence when it is moved to an act opposed to the one to which it is naturally, though passively, inclined to or prevented from receiving from a corresponding natural agent its proper act to which it has a natural passive inclination. Since inclination necessarily involves End, violence, in this strict sense cannot be understood without reference to Final Causality.⁵ The foregoing expose’ raises two fundamental questions with reference to our understanding of violence: Can violence be understood as an act of the will, in other words, a rational act? Is there any connection, direct or indirect, between a violent act and the human person’s striving towards an End? That is to say, has violence any meaning?

David Riches succinctly described violence as, “...contestably rendering physical hurt”.⁶ The issue of the contestability of a particular act as ‘violent’ which is not only encountered in the

³ Scheper-Hughes, N. and Bourgois, P., *Violence in War and Peace*, In: Pal Ahluwalia et al.(eds.), *Violence Non-Violence in Africa*, New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2007, 1

⁴ Nico. *Ethics*, 1110b 15, cf. 1110a 2

⁵ *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd edition Vol. 14

⁶ Riches, D., *Aggression, War, Violence: Space/Time and Paradigm*, *Man* (NS) 26, 1991 281 – 298

definition of the word, but also in the description of the act, is here underscored. But limiting violence to only physical hurt is superficial and incomplete. In his commentary on this definition, Jon Abbink says that violence refers to social interaction whereby intentional harm is done, and where the views of perpetrator and victim (and witnesses) are the issue of dispute, these parties being conscious of the problematic aspects and of different views on the (il)legitimacy of the harm done. The definition, he argues, points also to the fact that violence, even in its most crude and apparently aimless forms always has an aspect of ‘communication’ – be it as a statement of social protest, intimidation, terrorizing, or self-assertion – and thus of certain cultural representations or values. Moving a step further from the definition, Abbink adds that violence in most cases is tied to questions of social honour and of the integrity of the person or the group as these concepts are defined on a personal or cultural level.⁷

In his essay on, “Violence: Reflections on a National Epidemic”, James Gilligan (former director of Massachusetts prison mental health services and a one-time faculty member at Harvard Medical School) defines violence as: “The increased rates of death and disability suffered by those who occupy the bottom rungs of the society, as contrasted with the relatively lower death rates experienced by those who are above them.”⁸ Gilligan’s description of ‘excess deaths’ as ‘non-natural’ and their attribution to the stress, shame, discrimination and denigration that results from poverty and hence lower status is very significant. But this is not yet a definition of violence. He, however, draws from Senneth and Cobb who examine the ‘contest for dignity’ in a context of dramatic inequality. Exclusionary practices could be seen as both the cause and the effect of violence, which in any case are preceded by stigmatisation. This is what Anton Blok describes as ‘ritualization of violence’, which involves according to him “attempts to avoid moral responsibility for killing ‘fellow’ human beings. Special names for opponents and victims, like animal names (‘dogs’, ‘cockroaches’ and the like), offensive nicknames and other abusive terms serve to dehumanize them, set them apart from ordinary people and remove them from the moral community”.⁹

The foregoing discussion has demonstrated how tedious and almost a futile attempt it is to try to define the term ‘violence’ as far as it remains a too open and abstract notion. It therefore needs relocating historically and into certain socio-cultural relations and structural systems of

⁷ Abbink, J., ‘Restoring the Balance: Violence and Culture among the Suri of Southern Ethiopia’ In: Aijmer, G. and Blok, A. (eds.), *Meaning of Violence*, op. cit. 78

⁸ Gilligan, J., *Reflections on a National Epidemic*.....

⁹ Blok, A., ‘The Enigma of Senseless Violence’, In: Aijmer, G. and Blok, A. (eds.), *Meaning of Violence*, op. cit. 29

power. Edna Bay shares this view by arguing that, “violence is an elusive subject for scholars in multidisciplinary settings. Definitions are hard to pin down: Is violence physical or bodily force alone, and force directed toward whom? Should the definitions of violence include the structural violence of poverty, or of institutions that place individuals in disadvantaged classes or in disadvantaged gender or racial and religious categories? Can political and domestic violence be equated? Who has the right to define and describe violence?”¹⁰ There is, in any case, a connection running through all these dimensions of looking at violence which Bay raises in the above quotation, because the study of violence as physical does not exclude the context of structural violence of poverty or the institutions whose indifference makes the persistence of violence inevitable. Donham’s two-fold approach to the subject of violence as ‘reality and concept’, and as ‘event and word’ is a step further in understanding the concept. He defines violence as a “force that threatens bodies and the bare life of bodies”.¹¹ He remarks that violence is always culturally defined, along with its implicit moral condemnation. Indeed, coercive power and legitimate force are euphemisms for acceptable violence conducted by states; discipline and correction are equivalents in domestic parlance. Both are related to authority and its recognition, which give legitimacy to certain forms.¹² Our task in this work is not so much the exposition of the different cultural notions of violence and their sometimes superficial simplistic moralistic approaches as that of proposing a norm for evaluating violence, which norm has the dignity of the human person as its determining factor in an emerging new world order. Whether we look at it from the point of cultural perspective or from linguistic analysis, the concept of violence denotes a deviation from order; a violation of integrality and/or integrity. The search for the meaning or the goal of what is performed in any act of violence or violation should be undertaken at a deeper level; which can lead to the question of the end justifying the means. At this point, it is pertinent to situate our further discussion of violence in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa after the period of colonialism. In doing this we shall try to outline the various forms of violence that are to be found in Africa, their cultural rootedness and how socio-political situations have modified the hitherto accepted ‘harmless’ cultural practices.

¹⁰ Bay, G. E. and Donham, L. D.(eds.), *States of Violence: Politics, Youth, and Memory in Contemporary Africa*, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2006 2

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 3

¹² *Ibid.*

3. 2. The Nature and Forms of Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa

The understanding of the nature and forms of violence in Sub-Saharan Africa requires a clarification of some background information. In the course of the above hermeutical excursus into the meaning(s) of violence, we saw that in no human society or social formation is interpersonal aggression, physical threat, assault, or armed conflict and homicide completely absent or totally banned; at the same time some seem to be affected more than others in terms of degree and variety. Africa, more specifically Sub-Saharan Africa, may be classified as a continent with a unique history of violence. Two factors can be said to be at the background of this uniqueness.

The first discrepancy to be noted in any description of violence in Africa is that between the reporter (ethnographer) on the one hand and the perpetrator(s) and victim(s) on the other hand. Ethnographers have always had the problem of making a clear-cut distinction between what constitutes the cultural life-style of the people and a case of violence. Coming from a different cultural context, ethnographers perceive some practices as irrational and therefore not worthy of human beings. But for the people concerned it is through such practices that their life can be defined as meaningful, therefore to eliminate them means to deny their life of cultural identity or meaning. It is impossible therefore to downplay the tension generated from the perception of cultural practices by ethnographers in Africa and the representation of the validity of such practices. Thus the basic task to bear in mind, borrowing from Edward Said, is to situate ethnographers within a certain 'geopolitical' entity and to show how this situatedness accounts for both the relativity of their discourse and its ideological nature. The 'general liberal consensus' that scholarship produces non-ideological, non-political knowledge becomes untenable judging from the works of scholars in this area. Consequently, Said remarks that, "no one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of a society".¹³ If it is true that all academic knowledge is somehow tinged and impressed with, violated by, the gross political fact, the fact, that is, of the scholar's inevitable involvement in life, as Argyrou wishes us to believe, then it follows that 'no production of knowledge in the human

¹³ Said, E., *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage, 1978, 10 – 11 quoted in Vassos Argyrou, *Anthropology and the Will to Meaning*, op. cit. 15

sciences can ever ignore ... its author's involvement ... in his own circumstances'¹⁴, and it must also be true that for an ethnographer of foreign extraction studying the phenomenon of violence in Africa, there can be no disregarding the main circumstances of his/her actuality. Thus conditioned by his/her facticity, a social and historical construct, it becomes difficult for him or her to see the world through disinterested eyes. It is against this background that one can understand the controversial statement of the cultural anthropologist Levy-Bruhl, that "*die Geistesart der Naturvölker vor allem mystisch ist*".¹⁵ Levy-Bruhl's assertion that the most fundamental characteristic of native mentality is mystical sets up a dichotomy between 'primitive' and 'civilised' minds. To say that the natives are incapable of reasoning according to Levy-Bruhl, is to say that they only exist in a way that does not allow them to conceptualise themselves as entities at once in, and also distinct from the world.¹⁶ The implication of this is that, bereft of reason, which is traditionally said to be the major distinction between man and brutes, the natives are regarded as less human, driven by basic instincts and grossly violent, hence are incapable of a cultivated way of life. Violence, and the colossal suffering associated with it, is viewed by its opponents as degeneration into irrationality, barbarity and horror, an anathema to the very ideals of the Enlightenment – justice, humanity and freedom.¹⁷ But this position is completely opposed to real life, as the degree of violence among human beings whether 'primitive' or 'civilised' has surpassed that of the animals. This view of Levy-Bruhl has few dissenting voices, among which, however is that of Evans-Pritchard, who argued that "given the circumstances under which most natives live, it is hardly possible for them to lead a life enveloped in mysticism ... they live closer to the harsh realities of nature, which permit survival only to those who are guided in their pursuits by observation, experiment and reason".¹⁸ Besides, the natives no longer appear to be hopelessly immersed in mysticism and magic; nor do Western societies any longer appear to be an exclusively rational domain of thought and action. Evans-Pritchard therefore concluded that Levy-Bruhl failed to make a distinction between perceptual and conceptual analogies in his study of the natives.¹⁹ We shall come back to this in the later part of this work when we shall be discussing the first contact of Westerners with the native Africans and the impression that contact has left on the psyche of both parties.

¹⁴ Ibid., 15

¹⁵ Levy – Bruhl, L., *Geistige Welt der Primitiven*, Düsseldorf-Köln: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1959, 337

¹⁶ Argyrou, V., op. cit. 44

¹⁷ Ahluwalia, P., op. cit. 2

¹⁸ Evans-Pritchard, E. E., *Theories of Primitive Religion*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965 quoted in Argyrou, V., op. cit. 45

¹⁹ Ibid., 46 – 7

The second observation has to do with the problem of reconciling the cultural institutions of the natives with contemporary modern values, which entails a construction of new identities. There is no gainsaying the fact that the native Africans who subject their daughters and/or their sons to mutilation as a part of integration into the society mean well for them. They are only trying to hand over that which they received from their forefathers. The rejection of these rites of passage to adulthood, in some cases, whether in the form of skin scarification or organ mutilation is in most cases perceived as a rejection of tribal or communal identification and all the benefits that go with it. What may appear meaningless in the eyes of a stranger becomes the pivot on which the entire life of the people rotates. Be that as it may, there are certain crucial questions to be raised concerning these practices where they still perdure. How plausible is it to defend such practices that violate the integrity of the human person in the name of tradition or cultural identity in the 21st century? Are there no other ways in which such processes of identification could be carried out apart from violent acts? Can a process of change be brought about through the use of violence or through education and enlightenment? In any case, these questions concern only those forms of violence that are rooted in the socio-cultural cum religious institutions of the people. And in this regard, Sub-Saharan Africa can boast of a good number of such institutions with a long history and undocumented cases of violence, except where they escalated into inter-tribal wars. But there are other cases of violence that arise from political and economic struggles. Let us now consider the different forms of violence as they pertain to this work.

3. 2. 1 Historico-Cultural Violence and Its Valorization

The term ‘culture’ is empirically plural and conceptually diversified. It is commonly understood as the entire way of life, material and non-material, of a human society. Culture is said to be essentially social, the product of a society’s tradition and its interaction with other societies. Culture is therefore not a static but a dynamic reality.²⁰ Furthermore, culture refers to the arts and other instances of human intellectual achievement regarded as a whole.²¹ It is also used to designate ‘the arts, customs, ideas, etc. of a nation, people, or group’²² In one of the earliest definitions, Sir Edward Tylor summarises the elements of culture as, “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, moral, law, custom and any other capabilities

²⁰ Shorter, A., *African Culture: An Overview*. Social – Cultural Anthropology, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1998, 22

²¹ New Pocket Oxford English Dictionary, Tenth Edition, 2005

²² Ibid.

and habits acquired by human beings as members of society.”²³ The conclusions that can be drawn from the above definitions are, firstly, there are no people without a culture. Secondly, culture is dynamic since it involves constant interaction with those of other societies and a revision of the society’s traditions in line with evolving contexts. In this regard therefore, culture is constantly learnt, hence B. F. Skinner’s concept of culture as the learned aspect of human behaviour. The third conclusion that follows from the afore-stated definitions is the fact of cultural pride and identity. In its openness to innovations, every culture struggles to retain its identity. When can an aspect of culture be designated as violent? What does cultural violence refer to or how could a people’s culture contribute to violence?

The expression ‘cultural violence’ refers, according to Johann Galtung, to “any aspect of a culture that can be used to legitimize violence in its direct or structural form. It means those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence – exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science – that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence”.²⁴ Galtung’s analysis does not imply that any culture could be described as violent, but that some violent acts could be permitted under the auspices of culture. Just as political science is about two problems, namely the use of power and the legitimation of the use of power, so violence studies are about two problems: the use of violence and the legitimation of that use.²⁵ Our discussion so far has shown that violence is a social problem that has to be fought and overcome, because it is an ill-wind that does not blow any man any good. But every effort geared at combating violence in a given society or in the world is paralysed when violence is justified as being part of the culture of the people. This part of the work intends to explore only two aspects of culture that lend credence to the use of violence *ad intra et ad extra*, from which the people of Sub-Saharan Africa are not immune. These aspects include the preservation of a society’s tradition on the one hand and the interaction with other societies with their own independent traditions on the other hand; and the role of religion as a vital system of African culture.

Let us begin by taking a look at what constitutes the cultural traditions of any given society. To talk of traditions (latin, *tradere* – to hand over), is to refer to those elements of culture with their rites and rituals handed over from previous generations. The passage of time adds weight to such practices. It does not really matter whether the particular practice that falls under this

²³ Shorter, A., op. cit. 22

²⁴ Galtung Johann, Cultural Violence, In: Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 27, no. 3, 1990, 291 – 305

²⁵ Ibid.

category is 'reasonable' or not. Its only justification is simply that it has always been done like this and it does not have to be discontinued in 'our time'. In some cases the particular practice that is accepted as tradition is simply tolerated, because it is through such that the individuals who undergo it are identified as members of the same society. This forms the basis of cultural rituals, which are considered as occasions in which the ties of identity, belonging, and solidarity are reinforced through an elaborated ceremony presented in a dramatic form, in which feelings and emotions are shared.²⁶ Although such rituals entail some bodily cuts and pains, they are accepted nonetheless as proof of identity and maturity. This is described by Arnold van Gennep as the rites of passage that involve rituals in which the community helps individuals to take a step forward in life, that is to say, to pass from one status or role to another status or role.²⁷ Shorter explains that the ritual is anti-structural and status is suspended for the time being. It de-emphasizes sex. It is characterized by poverty and nakedness, by submissiveness, and by a strong sense of community, which creates a bond between age-mates. It is an authentic form of African asceticism.²⁸ A typical example of this is the process of initiating office-holders and chiefs in some parts of Africa, "where the candidate is seized, secluded, instructed, beaten for the last time, anointed, invested, brought out, introduced to the living and the dead".²⁹ Once more, we underscore the fact that it is the strong sense of community that acts as the propelling factor in the submission to ritual violence. The ritual circumcision of young girls (initiation into social strata) before marriage in many parts of Africa may be better understood in this context, which is, however, not to be seen as an approval of the practice. Our position is more of an attempt to bring out the crucial role of cultural rituals (even where they are perceived as violent) as carriers of the people's world-view and meaning of existence. It is because of this fact that the meeting of two cultures some times crystallises into violent encounter.

Karl Popper's classification of the human society as either 'open' or 'closed' is a key to understanding the roots of some forms of violence predominant in Sub-Saharan Africa. According to Popper, the "open society" is one in which competition is present, and in which there are alternative courses of action. Forces for radical change exist within the society. Outside influences give innovators the opportunity to bring about change. The "closed society" on the other hand is one in which radical change is unthinkable. There is no planning.

²⁶ Bouroncle, A., *Ritual, Violence and Social Order: An Approach to Spanish Bullfighting*, In: Göran Aijmer and Jon Abbink, op. cit., 55

²⁷ Shorter, A., op. cit. 62

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 63

Alternative courses of action are not available. New elements are absorbed into previously existing tradition or even totally rejected. Such societies, he added, are open to modernization. However, Popper concluded that there is no human society or culture so completely closed that change is totally impossible.³⁰ The Popperian closed society bespeaks the African condition, where the attempt to bring new elements into the cultural repertoire gives birth to violence. One aspect of culture where this is very obvious is in the area of religion.

Religion is an essential part of African culture, such that it is not easy to find any aspect of the peoples' life that is not rooted in religious belief. Thus Africans are said to be notoriously religious. The people living in the vast area South of the Sahara had already sustained rich systems of belief and practice long before the arrival of Christianity and colonialism, and certainly in some cases before the Muslim expansion from the Arabian Peninsula. Islam made its way into Sub-Saharan Africa in the 8th century, and within six hundred years of the death of the prophet Mohammed had penetrated from the Sahara to the Sudanic belt, and from the Atlantic to the Red Sea, making its presence felt among the indigenous peoples who inhabited this expanse. This, however, was everything but peaceful. Christianity, on the other hand came to North Africa earlier than Islam, but was extended to the rest of Africa in the 19th century in the period of colonialism; a coincidence which has made some authors regard the work of the missionaries, unfortunately, as a means employed by the colonialists to subjugate the Africans and thus render them docile and porous to European exploitation.³¹ Three main streams of religious belief and practices are to be discerned in contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa, each commanding a large number of followers. These include, the indigenous African religions (also called traditional African religion); World Religions (Baha'i, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Sikhism and Zoroastrianism); and the New Religious Traditions or African Independent Churches. Unlike the African traditional religion, the other two groups are mainly proselytic in nature, and the process of proselytizing is sometimes accompanied some times by violent conflicts which often provoke intra/inter tribal clashes. The Arabic word '*jihad*' refers to war or struggle against unbelievers in Islam, which describes the pattern of conversion peculiar to this form of religion. Since what is implicit in the use of the word *jihad* is that the unbeliever in Islam (*infidel*) should be converted or killed, one is moved to come to the conclusion that it is utopic to think of any practice of this religion that is devoid of violence. In his commentary on Dr. Daniel Pipes' article on "*Violence is an integral component of Islam*", Kenneth Besig remarks, "Islam of any kind, without a strong

³⁰ Popper, K., cited in: Shorter, A. op. Cit. 29

³¹ "*The Gospel and the Gold Rush*", in Time Magazine, June 1, 1978, 64

and pervading component of violence would not be Islam as it is commonly known and practised by Moslems throughout the world”.³² To buttress this assertion, Besig recounts that Islam is the only religion which teaches that husbands may beat their wives for just about any reason. Furthermore, the same religion demands that the male family members murder their female relatives for immodesty or even the suspicion of improper sexual behaviour, the so-called honour killing.³³ On a more objective note, Ali Mazrui attributes violence in Islam to what he described as the ‘radicalising trend’ in Islam. Mazrui identifies two trends in Islam: the revivalist trend and the radicalising trend. While the former is conservative and politically accommodating, the latter is more recent and politically explosive. Both trends are to be found in Somalia, Eritrea and Kenya (where they bombed the US embassy in 1998); and in Nigeria, where they are gradually emerging from the dominant revivalist group.³⁴ Mazrui’s is that the radical trend in Islam is attributable to such factors as poverty, corruption and political alienation.

The religious invasion that was championed by Christianity and Islam dethroned the African traditional religious system, in which each ethnic group located in a particular territory developed its religion, usually associated with places of origin, with particular myths, with different ways of understanding God’s role in its localised societies, and with the role of the spiritual world in its communal and social life. The different ethnic groups had different accounts concerning their origin, as well as ritual specialists who knew how to communicate with the world of the divine, and with the spirits, and who also had access to places associated with their religion. The world of the spirits exercised a constant intervention in the world of humans, especially in the life of their descendants and therefore needed to be consulted. All this ceased, though not completely, with the coming of Christianity and Islam. There is a continual attempt to convert new members, while some old members drop out. Of course, we know that Islam imposes the death penalty on anyone who leaves the religion. Both Islam and Christianity consider their mission of evangelization in Africa as a competition where each group struggles to outdo the other in the conversion of more members which at times results in violent conflicts and unrest. This fact makes us raise the question of whether the zeal to win more members in Africa by these two world religions is purely religious or has a political undertone. For Raymond Ibrahim, the holy war (jihad) is a religious duty, which has the goal,

³² Violence is an integral component of Islam, in <http://www.danielpipes.org/comments/25005>

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ali Mazrui, „Jihad in Sub-Saharan Africa“ <http://www.jihadwatch.org/archives/007657.php> August 13, 2005

among other things, “to gain power over other nations”.³⁵ In light of the foregoing, let us now consider the admixture of ethnic conflicts and political violence often appearing in religious guise in Sub-Saharan Africa.

3. 2. 2 Ethnic Conflicts and Political Violence

More than two third of the cases of violence in Sub-Saharan Africa fall under the broader division of ethnic conflicts and political violence. Even where they assume a socio-economic and/or religious aspect, they are, in the long run, considered to be rooted in ethnic diversity and political rancour. Ethnic identity and ethnic consciousness are strong traits that define the existence of every African. It is a common belief among most Africans that belonging to a particular ethnic group or tribe determines their personal development or socio-political status. This belief leads to the exclusion and treatment of people of other ethnic groupings with contempt. Although there may be no real differences between them, the fact that they have been taught to believe that there is a difference breeds problems. It is a usual human experience that if people believe something to be real, when it is actually not real, the consequences of that belief are real enough. Writing on the importance of ethnic identity, Amartya Sen in his book, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*, observes that:

A sense of identity can be a source not merely of pride and joy, but also of strength and confidence. It is not surprising that the idea of identity receives such widespread admiration, from popular advocacy of loving your neighbour to high theories of social capital and of communitarian self-definition.³⁶

In this regard, the positive feelings of belonging to a particular group, be it a nation, a race, a religion, a tribe or even a clan, can be a source of pride, joy, strength and confidence for each one of us, if the mentioned group is seen positively on the international, national, tribal or ethnic levels. Even where there is a negative stereotype, the people who are so classified (the in-group) hold together and tend to defend their commonality or roots against all forms of derogatory remarks or treatment. Ludwig Bertsch recalls an incident during the Vatican II Council, when an Italian Cardinal, in the discussion on Latin as the only possible language for

³⁵ Raymond Ibrahim, „*Conflating History with Theology: Judeo-Christian Violence vs. Islamic Violence*” In: Jihad Watch, March 15, 2009

³⁶ Sen, A., *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2006, 1

the liturgy, said, “Is it not an honour, for example, for an Indian Christian who can say: ‘As a Catholic I am really a Roman citizen (Cives Romanus sum)’ ”. To this remark an Indian bishop replied: “Your Eminence. Our Indian culture was before your culture. My honour is, as an Indian, I am a member of the Catholic Church”.³⁷ Identity consciousness can therefore be a source of discord if belonging to one group carries with it the perception of distance and divergence from other groups, even though the different groups may be found living together in one geographical area. But ‘within-group’ solidarity can fuel ‘between-group’ discord only when there is something at stake, be it economic empowerment or political position. It is against this background that we can understand the problem of ethnic conflicts and the concomitant political violence in Sub-Saharan Africa. At the threshold of an election, ethnic awareness is increased and the tendency to move from the general to the particular prevails; and people are informed that they are not only Rwandans but Hutus and Tutsis; not only Kenyans but Luos and Kikuyus; not only Liberians but Americo-Liberians and the native Africans; not only Nigerians but northern Hausa/Fulani and southern Igbos and/or Yorubas. The struggle for political power and the control of national wealth becomes the *Auslöser* of the already latent ethnic differences. And when the ethnic group that feels that it is its birthright to rule fails to win an election, it unleashes violence on the other. The genocide of the Tutsis and the massacres that claimed almost one million lives in Rwanda between April and July 1994 will ever remain in the psyche of the two parties as the most unfortunate consequence of ethnic ideology at the end of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st century. But how are we to understand such a mass slaughter of men, women and children only on the basis of their belonging to a particular ethnic group?

Etymologically, the word ‘ethnic’ derives from the Greek ‘ethnos’, meaning ‘people or nation’. It is said to have entered the French language in 1896, where it derived its standard definition as “a language, an area, customs, values, a name, a shared lineage and an awareness on the part of its members that they belong to the same group”.³⁸ In most cases this type of claim is not historically established as researchers end up in myths. Still ethnic or tribal stereotypes persist in Africa as a reality that cannot be wished away along with their tragic consequences. Ted Gurr defines ethnic groups as “groups whose members belong to a psychological community. The members of this community share a history, an identity,

³⁷ Bertsch, L., *Magisterium and Inculturation*, In: Amissah, J. B., Anyanwu, J. E., et. al. (eds.), *Inculturation and the Mission of the Church in Nigeria*, Port Harcourt : CIWA Press, 1992, 20 – 38

³⁸ Amselle, J. & M’ Bokolo, E., *Au Coeur de l’ethnie, Ethnies, tribalisme et Etat en Afrique*, Parution, Mars 2005

cultural values, beliefs, a language and a motherland.”³⁹ It is the feeling of psychological nearness that makes united action feasible in times of conflict. However, Gurr and Marshall attribute the prevalent cases of conflict in Africa to the combined factors of poverty, weak states and institutions. Kaufmann highlights the defining elements of an ethnic group to include a common name, the belief in a same line of descent, habits or colour.⁴⁰ The fact of a common name makes ethnic identification obvious. In a more consensual approach, Smith outlines six aspects of ethnic identity to include: the name, the common past, the history, the culture, the territory and the solidarity.⁴¹ Conflict then arises when group interests or values based on ethnic aspects have to be defended in the face of other competing groups. Ethnic conflicts according to Michael Brown refer to quarrels between two or many ethnic communities about important litigations related to economic, politics, social or territorial questions.⁴² When all is said and done, it is the political element that sparks off violence in ethnic conflicts, as we have already mentioned above.

In view of the major role played by politics in ethnic conflicts/violence and civil wars in post-colonial Africa, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, scholars both of African and non-African origin are unanimous that the arbitrary creation of modern states in the colonial era is to blame. This is, however, not to say that ethnic conflicts and inter-tribal wars were not known in pre-colonial Africa. But the point which these scholars wish to make, which is backed up by a reasonable degree of consensus in the literature is that colonialism contributed immensely to the present ethno-political problems in post-colonial Sub-Saharan Africa. Three areas stand out in considering the impact of colonialism on the problem of ethnicity. The first is the arbitrary creation of nation states out of different and diverse ethnic groups, which was contrary to the pre-colonial process of integration and assimilation of ethnic groups. Commenting on the impact of this action, Okwudili Nnoli writes that “colonialism brought the various ethnic groups under one political administration through a process which was quite arbitrary. In some cases the ethnic group was split into parts administered by different colonial powers or under different administrative units run by the same colonial power. Not only that, in some cases the already assimilated groups were separated into the original

³⁹ Gurr, T. & Marshall Monty, *Peace and Conflict*, 2001, 11-13

⁴⁰ Kaufmann, S. J., An international theory of inter-ethnic war, In *Review of International Studies*, vol. 22, 1996, 150

⁴¹ Smith, A., “*The Ethics Sources of Nationalism*”, In: Michael E. Brown (ed.) *Ethnic Conflict and International Security*, Princeton, N. J: Princeton University Press, 1993, 29 – 30

⁴² Brown, E. B.(ed.), *Ethnic Conflict and International Security*, Princeton, N. J: Princeton University Press, 1993, 29 – 30

components while others were segregated in different residential areas of the city.”⁴³ This did not, however, constitute much of a problem for the colonial administrators, as they had sufficient administrative machinery to contain any resistance from the natives. With their exit, all hell was let loose as the post-colonial ruling class manipulated the different ethnic groups and other loyalties in their struggle for power and other material advantages. Such a struggle was naturally carried out along ethnic affiliation. The parallel governing structure which was to be provided by the presence of Christianity, unlike in the areas dominated by Islam, did not work, as the first Christian converts made by the former were people who had no social standing. Achebe captures this well when he wrote that, “none of his converts (referring to the white missionary) was a man whose word was heeded in the assembly of the people. None of them was a man of title. They were mostly the kind of people that were called *efulefu*⁴⁴, worthless, empty men.”⁴⁵

The next issue was that of the appropriation of arable lands that hitherto had belonged to the indigens. The construction of satellite towns and the establishment of production units demanded that some acres of land be taken from the natives. Regarding the experience of the Kenyans, Walter Oyugi documents that, the belief that requisite technology did not exist locally resulted in the initiation of white settlement and the appropriation of some of the most fertile land in the territories of the present Nakuru, Uasin Gishu and others. The socio-economic consequences were immediate and far-reaching, as what was traditionally Massailand that served as grazing land was taken away from the Massai people thereby constraining their economic activities.⁴⁶ At the beginning, this move met with resistance, but was later welcomed by the people as they came to realise that it was for their good as it such places became centres of development. Things augured relatively well as long as the colonial administrators were there, but by the time they left, the original owners of the land moved in to reclaim it. The colonial administrators were a neutral body unlike their post-colonial successors, whose ethnic groups were known to the people. Many violent ethnic conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa still take the form of struggling for land and its resources.

The third point was the introduction of commodity production and a cash economy. The advent of colonialism changed the traditional way of assessing wealth. The measurement of

⁴³ Nnoli, O. (ed.), *Ethnic Conflicts in Africa*, Dakar: CODESRIA 1998, 16

⁴⁴ Achebe, C., *Things Fall Apart*, London: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1958, 135. The image of an *efulefu* in the Igbo language is a man who sold his Machete and wore the sheath to battle.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 135

⁴⁶ Oyugi, O. W., “*Ethnic Politics in Kenya*”, In: Nnoli, O. (ed.), *Ethnic Conflicts in Africa*, op. cit. 290

wealth was now to be based on cold cash. And the means to acquire it was dependent on the learning of various skills which presupposed the acquisition of a Western education. Consequently, competition was introduced among the different ethnic groups as each group struggled to be represented in the cities, where the colonialists had made modern amenities available. Some distinguished themselves more than the others and therefore earned recognition for their ethnic groups. In most of the cases the ethnic groups that had not had much to show in the traditional mode of assessment of fame, based either on the demonstration of physical prowess or the possession of herds of cattle and large acres of land, were now to take the lead. It did not long for certain ethnic groups to be associated with certain qualities. For instance, the Belgian colonial ideology categorized the Tutsi as Hamitic pastoralists who came from the north and were endowed with beauty, intelligence and leadership qualities. The Hutu, on the other hand, were presented as Bantu cultivators who were timid, lazy and fit to be ruled by the superior Tutsi. The Twa were described as an old and fatigued race of dwarfs doomed to extinction.⁴⁷ The Tutsi, as a result of this categorization, gained popularity among the colonialists and were given job opportunities which they made available to their own kin. It is alleged that they even opposed the struggle for Rwandan independence, because they feared losing their position of leadership and control over the country's wealth. But the other two ethnic groups, that is the Hutu and the Twa did not approve of this idea. The development of ethnicity under colonialism has been described as a product of the process of establishing and consolidating both the colonial economy and the colonial administrative systems.⁴⁸ Under the division of labour, that was done according to ethnic groups, the development of ethnicity and ethnic consciousness was facilitated. The struggle for the control over the means of production left by the colonialists, which also meant the political control or vice versa with a heated atmosphere of ethnic diversity ushered in independence. The ethnic differences escalated and became even worse in the post-colonial period.

To sum up this discussion: Ethnic conflicts and political violence in Sub-Saharan Africa may have their roots in the legacy of artificial boundaries created by the colonial powers and other factors enumerated above, but their evolution is purely the product of the greed of African leaders. Furthermore, every form of politics whether in the ancient city-state of Athens or in the modern nation-state of America entails some degree of violence. To this effect Hannah Arendt remarks that whereas violence can be justified, it can never be legitimised. But the

⁴⁷ Rutake, P. & Gahama, J., *Ethnic Conflict in Burundi*, In: Nnoli, O., *Ethnic Conflicts in Africa*, op. cit. 81

⁴⁸ Mpangala, P. G., *Inter-Ethnic Relations in Tanzania*, In: Nnoli, O., op. cit. 315

brutality with which the acts of political violence are carried out in the independent states of post-colonial Sub-Saharan Africa defies any rational justification.

3. 2. 3 Socio-Economic Forms of Violence

The concept of socio-economic violence refers to those acts of maltreatment(physical violence) or abusive words(verbal violence) perpetrated against an individual or a group of individuals, because of their social standing. The victims of socio-economic violence are mostly people who are economically disadvantaged or socially vulnerable. When we talk of social vulnerability here, we think of people who by belonging to a particular ethnic group, class, or gender are in danger of being maltreated. Violence is said to occur when an individual or group acts unilaterally, imposing its opinion and action without allowing space for negotiation; when the power of the two sides is not equal. Such an imposed action can affect the body, life, plans or future of the other, whether an individual or group. Some scholars define as social violence the violence exercised by oppressed or dominated groups in society against the legally established order with the goal of bringing about social change. Social violence in Sub-Saharan Africa has many faces which are dynamically manifested as physical, sexual and psychological; individual and group; domestic and public; brutal, vulgar and perfidious; spontaneous and premeditated; and create the impression of a world populated by perpetrators and victims only, or by human actors incapable of stepping, with respect to each other, into any other roles.⁴⁹ For the purpose of approaching the subject systematically, we intend to consider the problem of socio-economic violence under two perspectives; as either organised(state) violence or common(domestic) violence.

State or organised violence, also called institutional violence, involves the use of government security organs to victimise the poor. With the advent of a market economy, social evils like poverty and unemployment became rampant. The poor and those without work take to roaming the streets. In the event of any incidence of crime, they are the first to be accused. Thus, combating social evils came to be associated with fighting the poor and jobless who embodied them. This often gave rise to bloody clashes between the organs of security like the police force and the jobless in the major cities and on the streets. Under the pretext of social control, innocent souls are extra-judicially murdered. By so doing, the state which ought to help fight the social problems of poverty and unemployment, ends up fighting the poor and

⁴⁹ Tomov, T., "Social Violence and the Social Institutions", <http://www.human-nature.com/hrj/ttsocvi.html>.

unemployed. In some cases, it is their own dissatisfaction and anger with the system that the security men transfer onto defenceless civilians. George Ehusani in his reflection on the social insecurity in Nigeria laments that, “our land is now held under siege and ruled by fear. We are living today perpetually haunted by death, sudden death, violent death. On the highways, innocent Nigerians are exposed to the deadly harassment of drunken security operatives who brandish their fully loaded guns menacingly at oncoming vehicles as if at warfront. Now and again these thugs in uniform empty the content of their barrels on innocent citizens and blame it on accidental discharge, if the victim is not framed up as an armed robber attempting to escape.”⁵⁰ The same state security apparatus is used to prevent individuals or groups of individuals from expressing dissatisfaction with such obvious injustices. The accumulation resulting from these cases of injustices led to the emergence of rebel groups which through their demand for a change in the system, bring about social rebellion and civil disorder that metamorphose into civil wars. In no other part of the world are civil wars so widespread and deadly as in Africa or more precisely Sub-Saharan Africa. The statistics from the year 2000 show that over 300,000 people throughout the world died as a result of conflict and war; and over half of those deaths were in Africa.⁵¹

Another aspect of state or institutional violence in Sub-Saharan Africa is manifested in the so called *amoral familism* hypothesis. Amoral familism is a term coined by social anthropologists to designate the practice whereby some traditional cultures operate with double moral standards. According to this hypothesis, the ‘partyocracies’,⁵² the communities based on kinship and tribal loyalty have been known to prescribe one set of ethical norms to their members in their relationships with one another and a different set of norms for relating to the people from other groups or the outside world.⁵³ Supported by the philosophy of the ‘the limited pie mentality’, which holds that there is a fixed quantity of resources and that the only way for one to have more is if one’s neighbour (a member of another group) has less. The implication is that social interactions degenerate to competition and rivalry that occasionally result in clashes and the loss of lives. Politically examined, amoral familism is the exact opposite of democracy in as much as the latter implies reciprocity in social

⁵⁰ Ehusani, G., *Nigeria: Years Eaten by the Locust*, Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 2002 65/6

⁵¹ Habeeb, M. W., *Africa: Progress and Problems, Civil Wars in Africa*, Philadelphia: Mason Crest Pub., 2007
14

⁵² This expression is coined by the author and used to refer to the tendency by a ruling party to be much more concerned for the interest of the members of the party than that of the general public. The success of the government is measured by the well-being of the members of the ruling party.

⁵³ Banfield, E. C., *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society*, New York: The Free Press, 1958 quoted by Toma Tomov, op. cit.,

interactions.⁵⁴ This is clearly manifested in the case of Zimbabwe where the relationship between the two armies that fought for independence and the political leaders is characterised by violence and suspicion.⁵⁵ Those who fought for independence believe that political leaders have to be those who participated in the struggle for independence or those nominated by them. All sorts of arguments are put forward to justify this claim ranging from the conspiracy hypothesis that classify those who oppose perpetuation in office as anti-nationalists. According to them, no matter how the government is run, people should be satisfied, because the people now govern themselves, there is no longer a colonial government. Defenders of this view make reference to the situation of the Israelites in the desert away from the abundant food in Egypt. But this argument is in itself opaque and elusive for two reasons: First, the statement implies the shortcomings of the post-colonial leaders. Besides, the goal of a people is not simply to be governed, but to be governed well. Second, the Israelites had a goal, they were on their way to the Promised Land, hence could put up with any type of suffering in order to attain it.

Finally, amoral familism leads to organised criminal institutions like secret societies and mafia, where members united by a common bond operate clandestinely to bring into office political leaders of their choice or strive to prevent any government policy that does not favour them, and work to protect their own interests. Such organised bodies systematically eliminate through various means persons or group of persons whose activities are perceived to be contrary to theirs. It is believed that economic interests sustain the existence of these groups in Sub-Saharan Africa, where the entire wealth of the region is in few hands, mostly members of the same group. Some trade unions which began as honest organisations become secretive and exclusive with changes in the social conditions. A society torn apart by group interest at the expense of the common good can only be a theater of violence, a paradigm of the Hobbesian state of nature. The moral question raised by this condition is how a Christian can compete on a neutral basis either in politics or in the area of work or trade without identifying with such groups. We may not go into this issue in detail, but suffice it to say that a Christian has the moral duty to protest against an unjust structure or regime, provided he/she deploys peaceful means so as to avoid creating more problems, for two wrongs can never make a right.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Alexander, J. & McGregor., "Veterans, Violence and Nationalism in Zimbabwe" In: Bay, G. E., op. cit., 216

Unlike state or institutional violence which is organised, common or domestic violence is unorganised and spontaneous. Common violence, as its name implies is the most prevalent kind of violence and can take place in any place at any time, among friends as well as among strangers. There is always a limit to human endurance in response to social pressure and changes. When the social conditions of the people degenerate, the only way the ordinary person can express his/her dissatisfaction is through protest, which sometimes leads to violence. Common violence is manifested in street fighting, wife-beating, rape, banditry, arson and other destruction of private and public property. In some cases, common violence is taken as entertainment or as part of the culture of the people and therefore institutionalised. We have treated this above under the section dealing with culture and violence. But since it is sometimes difficult to make a clear-cut distinction between what falls within the ambience of culture from that of social life, a repetition becomes unavoidable here. Besides, as the Igbo people of eastern Nigeria say, “*Njo gbaa aro, o bulu Omenala*” (an evil deed that perdures for a year is taken to be part of the culture), the persistence of some of the violent acts in the social life of the people invariably becomes grafted onto their cultural repertoire. Within the individual cultural context, this would not constitute a problem, but since the world has become a global village, it becomes expedient to evaluate such practices in the interest of others. A typical example of such violence that is perceived as an aspect of the people’s social life is the *Chai* body treatment among the Suri people of southern Ethiopia, which involves, inter alia, the piercing of lips and ear-lobes with sticks and inserting big wooden and clay discs; the making of scarifications with a razor blade on the arms, back and abdomen of women; the kicking out of lower incisors with a stone, and the ‘honorific’ rido-scarifications (carved in the skin by an age-mate) for people who have killed. Although blood flows and pain is inflicted in all these cases, it is not seen as an infliction of harm to be contested. It is part of self-conscious cultural body aesthetics.⁵⁶ Closely related to this, but carried out in another context, is the practice of cattle raiding among the Kuria of Kenya. This is a practice where “a small group of men from one clan area raid into the territory of another, bringing the cattle back under the shelter of night into their own territory where they are able to cross over the border into Tanzania. The cattle may then be exchanged with cattle raided by their Tanzanian clansmen, with these Tanzanian cattle then smuggled back into Kenya, on occasion even on the same night”.⁵⁷ For those people it is part of their culture, but in reality it is the act

⁵⁶ Abbink, J., “Restoring the Balance: Violence and Culture Among the Suri of Southern Ethiopia” In: Aijimer, G. & Abbink, J., op. cit. 78

⁵⁷ Heald, S., Tolerating the Intolerable: Cattle Raiding Among the Kuria of Kenya In: Aijimer, G. & Abbink, J., op. cit. 106

of theft. Now, it is such social elements as seen in the life of the Suris and the Kurias that form the people's *habitus*⁵⁸, which is incorporated into action, feeling and thinking of individuals in their specific societies.

Apart from these forms of common social violence where there is some degree of acceptance by the practising group, there is another form which may be described as generated by the complex question of the interplay between individual minds and changes in social contexts. The major change that can easily lead to violence is that of unemployment. To be without a job is to be without a means of existence. But since the first law of every living creature is that of self-preservation, the human person is propelled from within to seek ways to overcome conditions of scarcity or directly unleash his/her anger at any obstacle on the way to this goal. When this condition perdures such that people begin at very tender age to experience the harsh aspects of life, they grow up knowing no other better way of living than being continuously traumatised and violent; which inevitably leads to traumatic identity.

The notion of traumatic identity refers to the effects on mental life of coercive human environments, where violence is practised in a way that is not immediately obvious. A few examples of this include: Possessive parents, controlling partners, secret societies, totalitarian regimes, etc., etc. In these settings of disguised violence, coercion comes in a subtle way with a mystifying semantic envelope and has a devastating and long-lasting effect on its victims, who in turn devise a means, either intentionally or unintentionally, to take revenge on others for what they have experienced. Sluzki argues that the profound effect of traumatic identity results from two factors, namely "the perpetration of violence by the very agency entrusted with the care and protection of the individual"; and secondly, "a context of discourse that mystifies meanings, so that the shift from protection to violence is impossible to recognise".⁵⁹ Living in such coercive human environments can lead to the development of ego structures and defences that arise as a result of failed containment and experience of rejection. The consequences include the impairment of behaviours of interpersonal and social relating that are consistent with the restrictive norms of coercive settings and ensure the survival of the individual. In such a context, the acquisition of traumatic identity becomes necessary for survival and eventually becomes the norm. And by the same token, such environments are

⁵⁸ The term is used here in Bourdieus understanding to refer to the human disposition acquired in society through a process of internalization of external 'objective' social conditions. But since the society is not a static reality, the human dispositions change as the society changes.

⁵⁹ Sluzki, A. in: Tomov, T., *Social Violence and Social Institution*, op. cit. 54

doomed to reproduce generation after generation of individuals with traumatic identity. In this way a culture of violence is born which cannot be changed easily.⁶⁰ This fact accounts for the pessimism that accompanies any discussion on topics relating to poverty or violence in Africa. There is always the tendency to throw in the towel and fall into resignation. Two areas where the effects of traumatic identity and its consequent violence in Sub-Saharan Africa are felt more are the institutions of higher learning and social security, the former plagued by secret cults while the latter is haunted by vigilantism. Both of them are, however, very closely related to each other with the one acting as preparatory ground for the other.

The phenomenon of violent vigilantism in the whole of Africa, but more especially in Sub-Saharan Africa shows that it is security not poverty that constitutes Africa's major problem. It is yet to be scientifically established whether the peoples of this region are poor because of the violence or whether they are violent because of the widespread poverty. The issue could be argued either way, but it suffices to note that the degree of violent vigilantism on the continent is beyond imagining. Violent vigilantism is the product of an ineffective government, since the first duty of any government is to provide adequate security for its citizens. Where this is not done, individuals and groups of individuals take the law into their own hands, holding the populace to ransom in the name of trying to bring about civil order. The historian Richard Brown described vigilante groups as "an organised, extralegal movement, the members of which take the law into their own hands".⁶¹ He further pointed out that although vigilante groups have an organised structure, they are semi-permanent and illegal; regardless of their intended purpose, they have no legal authority to enforce the law or morals or tradition.⁶² Even where they appear to be offering an important security service to the society, vigilantism can become socially destructive and anarchic. There is no law guiding their activities, hence there is no limit to what they can do under the cover of maintaining order. Two examples help to illustrate the point we are making here with regard to the brutality of vigilantism: The one is the barbaric way in which war victims in Sierra Leone were amputated, which Martha Carey described as 'a form of violence found only in that country'.⁶³ The other is the operations of the 'Bakassi Boys'⁶⁴ in south-eastern Nigeria, which

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Brown, M. R., *Strain and Violence: Historical Studies of American Violence and Vigilantism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975, 165

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Carey, M., *Survival Is Political: History, Violence, and the Contemporary Power Struggle in Sierra Leone*, In: Bay G. E. & Donham, L. D. (eds.), op. cit. 111

⁶⁴ The name Bakassi refers to the peninsula between Nigeria and Cameroon that has been the object of dispute between the two countries. A group of traders in footwear in Aba (South-Eastern Nigeria) adopted

clearly grew out of and gave expression to frustrations over a widespread sense of insecurity in the country. The activities of the Bakassi Boys, which started in the late 1990s in the city of Aba, were an expression of anger and discontentment over the extent of extortion and violent robberies perpetrated by an increasingly powerful group of criminals. This group made up of young boys embarked on the mission of ridding the market of violent criminals, publicly executing dozens of alleged criminals in the area. They killed these alleged criminals with machete blows, dismembering their bodies and then burning them at the site of the execution.⁶⁵ These executions, termed ‘instant justice’ in conventional language, took place in prominent public places, such as major intersections or market centers, attracting large crowds of observers of every age bracket.⁶⁶ By employing such barbaric means in ‘enforcing justice’, the vigilante group was sowing a seed of violence in the minds of the populace – which provides the condition for the development of traumatic identity already discussed above.

The moral question in the two cases presented above, which constitutes the deciding criterion for assessing the quality of violence in an act, is not the intention, the will or the resolution of the acting agent, which is to bring about social order in the case under consideration. What is decisive are the consequences for the person(s) concerned, the persons on the object-side, whether they are wounded or destroyed, whose will and the right for self-determination and personal integrity are destroyed. It therefore means that, no matter the degree of good intention behind the works of the vigilante groups, the fact that they are not lawfully constituted and the inhuman manner in which they carry out their activities cannot be morally justified. It is not proper to try to overcome violence with violence. Besides, the Bakassi issue was a paradigmatic example of the effects when in any society a group of people brand another group in order to humiliate it, for the Bakassi Boys eventually turned out to be worse than the robbers they were out to get rid of.

this name as an umbrella to fight the menace of armed robbery in the city and redress other social problems in the environs and beyond. The shoe market from which the vigilante group first emerged was situated at the boundary between Osioma Local Government Area and Aba North Local Government Area, which intermittently caused conflict between the two local government, hence the name Bakassi is to be understood metaphorically.

⁶⁵ Smith, D. J., The Bakassi Boys: Vigilantism, Violence, and Political Imagination in Nigeria. *Cultural Anthropology* 19 (3): 429 – 55.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

3. 2. 4. Violence Against Women and Its Relationship to Economic Power

Violence against women, which is also called gender-based violence and will be used interchangeably in this work, is one of the forms of violence prevalent in Sub-Saharan Africa. Gender-based violence includes all the acts of violence in the form of physical, psychological or sexual violence perpetrated against a person specifically because of his or her sex.⁶⁷ It is said to constitute ‘one of the most widespread human rights abuses and public health problems in the world today, with devastating long term consequences for the victims’ physical and mental health’.⁶⁸ According to Green, whether it is manifested in the form of physical violent acts, threat or intimidation, the intent of all violence against women is to promote and perpetuate hierarchical gender relations. It may occur in several forms, he argues, but all serve the same end, namely the preservation of male control over resources and power.⁶⁹ Although much attention is paid to the use of force and physical violence in gender violence, the greater harm concerns the emotional and psychological abuse, which Mary Maynard describes as ‘the sophisticated and systematic wearing down of women’s autonomy and self-esteem. It involves a range of mechanisms that may be subtle or obvious, it enforces gender roles and is ultimately geared at reinscribing the relations of power’.⁷⁰ There may be a few cases where women are the perpetrators of gender violence, but in general, the expression ‘gender violence’ invokes the image of a male perpetrator and a female victim. Men are therefore regarded as the primary perpetrators of violence against women, and are equally considered critical partners in eliminating it, both as members of families and communities, and as individuals involved in upholding or changing social norms.

Gender-based violence is practised at the three levels of gender-structured relationships, which include the family, the economic system and the state. Our subsequent discussion on this theme will proceed in this order, but first, it is pertinent to point out that accurate study and statistics on violence against women in Sub-Saharan Africa are militated against by cultural mores which forbid reporting abuse especially within the family and sometimes within the community to a public office. The matter is much more difficult in Islam, where the victim is expected to provide two eye-witnesses, which is impossible to obtain in matters of sexual abuse, without which the complainant stands the risk of being stoned to death.

⁶⁷ Gender-based Violence Laws in Sub-Saharan Africa, <http://www.reproductiverights.org/en/document/html>, 2007

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ December, G., *Gender Violence in Africa: African Women’s Responses*. London: Macmillan Press, 1999 1

⁷⁰ Maynard, M., *Gender Violence and the Economic Relations to Power*, In: December, G., op. cit. 52

Besides, what may be considered by an outsider as abuse in a domestic relationship could be culturally approbated. For instance, husbands beating their wives is not looked upon as abuse in many traditional African societies.

Gender violence in the family takes two forms, namely, wife-battery and female genital cutting. To understand the problem of wife beating, it is necessary to situate it in the broader spectrum of marriage, which is commonly viewed in much of Africa not as a union of two individuals but of two lineages. The 'traditional' African marriage is commonly understood as an alliance between two kinship groups for the purposes of realizing goals beyond the immediate interests of the husband and wife, namely procreation and survival.⁷¹ This position is strongly criticised by radical feminists who oppose the belief that collective ends should take precedence over individual interests. However, with reference to the feminist stance, Janice Boddy remarks that Western assumptions of the person as the locus of natural rights are bound to clash with African notions of self, in which the person is unthinkable except in relational terms.⁷² This relational dimension makes the issue of wife beating complicated, because it is not only the husband that is the perpetrator, but the family members are often summoned to collectively beat the woman/the wife of a relation in the name of discipline. What constitutes wife beating? Wife battery/beating is commonly described as the violent victimization of women by the men to whom they are married or with whom they share a marriage-like relationship. It usually involves a variable combination of the threat of violence, emotional violence, forced sex and physical assault.⁷³ For their own part, most African women south of the Sahara still believe that husbands have the right to beat them, since they have 'a right over their bodies' following the payment of the dowries⁷⁴ to the parents of the women. One South African woman described the particular kind of torture she endured thus:

⁷¹ December, G., *Gender Violence in Africa: African Women's Responses*, op. cit. 21

⁷² *Ibid.*, 22

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 25

⁷⁴ Pocket Oxford English Dictionary defines dowry as the "property or money brought by a bride to her husband on their marriage". Contrary to this original meaning of the word, it is the man who must bring property and/or money to the parents of the girl he wants to marry in Africa. The amount or the quantity of goods he has to bring is negotiated in a way that appears as if the girl is 'sold', although in the course of this negotiation the two parties have it at the back of their minds that they are neither selling nor buying the bride, but the atmosphere is more or less business-like. When the man eventually marries/buys the girl and takes her to his home, he feels he has the right to do with/to her what he wills. Should the girl leave him and return to her parents, the latter have to pay back all they received from the man, a situation which many families would not want to find themselves in instead would encourage their daughter to endure the maltreatment. The case is more pathetic when the family of the girl is poor. The practice makes it sometimes difficult for a boy and a girl who love each other to get married, if the boy's parents are poor and cannot afford the dowry. The reverse is the case in India, where the bride has to provide some amount and property for her marriage. The word dowry is applicable here in its original meaning unlike in Africa, but the sociological problems remain the same: Wives are still beaten in India as much as in Africa, and some marriages are cancelled because the girl

My husband has always abused me. He has a drug and alcohol problem. I stayed because I am a catholic and because we have six children, until he kicked me out. He used to tie me to the bed so I couldn't go out. I wasn't allowed to answer the phone. One time, he beat me so bad that he cracked my head and broke one of my fingers. Another time, he burned me with boiling water.⁷⁵

There is also the traditional opinion among many Africans that it is the duty of the woman to make the man happy. Hence the guilt feeling among some African women when a man beats his wife, that it is because she has not done her duty of making the man happy. In line with this view, a Gikuyu woman from Kenya blames herself for her abuse in these words:

Sometimes I used to be beaten, and if it was me in the wrong I would try to change and never repeat that thing again. When a wife is beaten, it is because she has not made her husband happy, so she tries to change her ways.⁷⁶

Not infrequently connected with wife beating and the self-recrimination of the victim is the issue of child-bearing. The erroneous and superstitious belief that the problem of childless marriage is always the fault of the woman still finds acceptance in many parts of Africa. A woman who is barren is regarded as a witch and therefore bad luck for the husband. And the only way to get rid of her is to keep on beating her until she dies or runs away. Dorcas, a 38-year-old Tanzanian woman married for ten years, rationalizes her treatment in this way:

He calls me 'barren' and attacks me at the slightest excuse. Because I cannot have children I just remain silent and accept it. It is really my fault – if I had borne him children, perhaps he would have been kind to me. He has children by another wife, but because he had to pay a lot of bridewealth (dowry) for me and we were married in church he says he cannot divorce me. Despite this he promises to go on beating me until I die.⁷⁷

The situation in which a battered woman views herself as a child that needs correction and often feels at fault and tries to find a reason to justify her maltreatment presents a definite psychological problem which might be let out in other ways, particularly with reference to the

or her parents could not afford the dowry in the case of India.

⁷⁵ Human Rights Watch, 1995a, 60.

⁷⁶ Human Rights Watch, 1995a, 48.

⁷⁷ December, G., op. cit. 26

strict upbringing of the children. Moreover, the fact that most of the beatings take place before the children, and there is no psychological intervention thereafter makes the perpetuation of this form of abuse inevitable. Our previous discussion above on the effects of traumatic identity comes to mind here.

The next form of violence against women that takes place at the family level is that of female genital cutting, also called female genital mutilation or female circumcision. Despite the efforts of human rights organisations the world over, estimates suggest that between 85 and 114 million girls have been subjected to female genital cutting in the past couple of decades. Consequent upon this are various cases of medical complications ranging from pain, prolonged bleeding, infections, obstetric complications and psychological trauma.⁷⁸ Unlike wife beating which may be influenced by drugs or alcohol, female genital mutilation is seen as purely part of the culture with some religious background. It is commonly assumed in these cultures that circumcised women are less wayward than uncircumcised women. Radical feminists, on the contrary contend that female genital cutting is part of the strategy applied by the society to maintain men's control over women in a world whose family system is principally patriarchal. They argue that the patriarchal appeal to 'tradition' or 'nature' is nothing short of pernicious ideology. Furthermore, the feminists point out that the woman's sexual autonomy is connected to her economic autonomy; hence to be robbed of this autonomy in a male-dominated world is to be robbed of all, including economic power. According to Maynard, what indicates that gender-based violence is connected to economic power, is that it is during periods of economic, political, and social upheaval and uncertainty that violence against subordinated groups escalates.⁷⁹ This illustrates how gender violence expresses the economic relations of power. It is this fact that forms the basis of Marxist feminism, which is based on Engel's argument that women's oppression has coincided with changes in the means of production and the emergence of male control over wealth, namely the emergence of private property and capitalism.⁸⁰ The connection between gender violence and economic control may not be completely denied, but to situate female genital mutilation in male-controlled economic machinery is historically untenable. Most of the cases of female genital mutilation are, in any case, carried out by older women relatives in the community and not their male counterparts.

⁷⁸ Kiragu, K., Female Genital Mutilation: A Reproductive Health Concern. *Popul. Rep. J* 1995; 23 (33, Suppl): 1 – 4.

⁷⁹ Maynard, M., *op. cit.* 53

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 54

There is, however, sufficient empirical evidence to show that most men deploy their economic power to foster violence either in defence of their status or as a way of satisfying their bestial passions. Violence perpetrated against women not only because they are women, but also that, being women, they are made to be economically dependent on men, is a widespread problem in Sub-Saharan Africa. In Chapter one of this work, we underscored the fact that in most parts of Africa, women have no right of inheritance or the right to acquire land. Even where they have the money to buy plots of land for personal use, they have to arrange the purchase through men.

A survey conducted in several countries of Africa shows that women are frequently abused by the men in places of work or in the schools, either in the form of direct physical violence (rape) or making offers in money or goods as a means of having access to the girl-child/woman in question. According to this survey, 40% of Ugandan women, 60% of Tanzanian women, 42% of Kenyan women, 40% of Zambian women and 46% of Nigerian women report regular physical abuse.⁸¹ It is therefore not an overstatement to assert that gender-based violence is directed towards females who lack the economic and social status to resist or avoid it. Sexual exploitation of young people is frequently facilitated by their lack of economic power and job opportunities. Young women are vulnerable to coercion into sexual relationships with older men who take advantage of the girls' lack of economic resources by promising to help with their expenses in exchange for sex. These circumstances make the exercise of human freedom impossible, as alternative choices are denied.

Campbell argues that when confronted by economic hardship men are forced to migrate which is a way to escape the threat to their power within the family on both the material and the decision-making fronts posed by the hardship. This threat to male power in the family relationship occasioned by economic hardship is what Campbell calls "crisis in masculinity", which he says gives rise to various forms of 'remasculinization', which includes acts of individual and collective violence against women.⁸² With the economic shifts associated with technological development and industrialization in Africa, it is becoming increasingly common for women, whether by choice or necessity, to undertake roles and perform tasks that displace men from their roles as breadwinners of the family, thereby increasing men's

⁸¹ Wood, K. & Jewkes, R., Violence, Rape, and Sexual Coercion: Everyday Love in a South Africa Township. In: *Gender and Development*. 1997; 5(2): 41 – 46

⁸² Maynard, M., op. cit. 60

violence against women. What is required is not violence as a solution to the changing roles, but adjustment.

The state may contribute to gender-based violence by failing to promulgate and enforce strong laws punishing cases of violence against women, as is the case in most countries of Africa. It is not an overstatement to assert that because the laws of most if not all the countries of the world are made mainly by men and enforced by the same, women are rather placed at disadvantage in matters that pertain to them. Violence against women in the forms of rape and battery are treated with kid gloves in various courts of law especially in the developing countries. They are either tagged as domestic issues or shifted to the private domain. Women's rights are also human rights. Scholars hold, and rightly so, that there can be no development, no peace and no social justice as long as gender inequalities persist in Sub-Saharan Africa. Efforts have been made by some countries in this region by making laws to protect women from violence of all forms, but time is needed to get them properly enforced.

There are other forms of violence directed at the so-called 'vulnerable groups' in the society. I use this term with much hesitation, because to refer to a group of people as such is, in my opinion, a form of verbal violence, which we purposely did not explore in this section, but which we intend to treat under causes of violence in the subsequent section. In any case, the people who are normally classified as 'vulnerable' in the society are children, women and elderly people. Having devoted a reasonable portion of this section to gender-based violence, we are left with the conditions of children and old people in Africa. The latter might not be considered a part of the vulnerable group in Africa, because the more advanced in age one is in Africa, the more respect he/she is accorded in the family and also in the society at large. Violence against children in Africa is principally manifested in two areas: the child labour syndrome and the child soldier malaise. While the former is the outcome of liberal capitalism and the cash economy, the latter is the offensive consequence of civil wars, in which many children, some as young as eight years of age, have been recruited into, or forced to join, militia groups and even official government armies. International organizations working in Africa put the estimate of children involved at over 100,000 child soldiers that actively participate in civil conflict and add that even the youngest of them carry weapons.⁸³ It is difficult to think of a reintegration in the society, as virtually all child soldiers suffer severe psychological trauma from their experiences, and without an intensive psychological

⁸³ Habeeb, M. W., *Civil Wars in Africa*, op. cit. 18

intervention risk becoming hardened criminals lacking the ability to form healthy human relationships.⁸⁴

Central to all the various forms of violence is the fact of power play. Every form of violence presupposes and is vindicated by the use of force. This force may serve the goal of masculine chauvinism or be used as a means to economic gain. And the nature of violence involved in any given situation is determined by the goal at stake. Studies coupled with common knowledge show that men are more prone to violence than women. It is erroneously believed by some that violence, either inflicted on others or received from them, is the measure of manhood, in line with the saying 'boys don't cry'. Thus violence is often considered, even by women, an expression of male identity. The following section will focus on the causes of violence in the individual and in the society according to the classical theories.

3.3 The Aetiology of Violence: Its Individual and Social Perspective

The causes of violence are not always easy to pinpoint, as almost every act of violence whether directed towards the individual self or towards other persons, is as a result of an accumulation of multiple factors. In discussing the roots of violence, it may be pertinent to pay special attention to the changing interaction between the individual and his/her environment during the process of psychological development, which is technically called 'object relations'. Crucial to this point is the question of the immensely complex interplay between individual minds and social contexts, such as families, groups, organisations and institutions. In sum, one can say that the philosophico-ethical debate on the relationship between the individual and the society is historically based on this complexity. However, our concern here will be to see how the different phases of this interaction can lead to violence. Whether the act of violence is in-born or a product of the environment is still a matter of great controversy among social scientists. Below are some of the arguments proposed by scholars in support of either the genetic constitution and/or the environment (human and physical) as the cause of violence. Over and above this polarity is the postulation that different *Weltanschauungen* can facilitate violence.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 20

3. 3. 1 Innate Factors Arguments

The innate factors arguments hold that every human individual has the potential to be violent. In other words, one is equipped from birth with this trait and it is that which helps the individual to survive his/her harsh environment. Two schools of thought espouse this position, though from different dimensions. The first of these is the Freudian school of thought which holds that there are two diametrically opposed instincts in the depth of the human personality, namely, the instincts of life and death,⁸⁵ also called the pleasure and pain principle. According to Sigmund Freud, the death instinct manifests itself in the forms of aggression directed either against oneself in the nature of suicide attempts and other, mere minor, acts of self-hatred or toward others in the nature of violent acts and in the extreme case, *Mordversuch*. The social contexts in which each individual finds himself/herself, like the family, organisations and institutions have the duty of moderating these instincts through education, which Freud believes ends up most of the time in internal conflicts which lead to acts of violence. Freud's theory of the human personality has its merit for being a breakthrough in the study of the nature of the constituents of human personality and the latent motivation behind human actions. Nonetheless, the theory is grossly reductionistic, as it fails to acknowledge the spiritual dimension of the human person and his/her inalienable freedom.

The second school of thought attributes the roots of violence to a defective aspect of the individual make-up or the outcome of a biological process 'designed' for the preservation of species. The first school called phrenologists, that link human behaviour *en general* to physical characteristics, dates back to the Italian criminal anthropologist, Cesare Lombroso, who popularised the notion that violent individuals possessed distinct physical features indicative of primitive or inferior development known as *atavisms*.⁸⁶ We know, without a doubt, that some acts of violence are caused by physical defects like damage in the brain system, but we can argue, though metaphorically, that all who engage in acts of violence suffer some defects. Just as Jesus would say of his persecutors that "...they do not know what they are doing".⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Kottayariki, C., Sigmund Freud on Religion and Morality: *A Challenge to Christianity*, Resch Verlag, Innsbruck, 1977, 125 – 135

⁸⁶ The Causes of Violence, <http://law.jrank.org/pages/2292/violence-causes-violence.html>.

⁸⁷ Lk., 23: 34 (Jerusalem Bible)

Others argue that aggression, which gives rise to every form of violence is common to all animals without any exception. The various forms of aggression and the degree of its expression are determined by evolutionary development. While lower animals may express their aggression in biting and kicking, the much more advanced human species makes weapons of war and mass destruction. From an evolutionary perspective, human violence may represent a context-sensitive solution to particular problems of social living that may ebb and flow in accordance with changing conditions. With reference to these adaptive conditions, Buss and Shackelford describe problems for which violence may have evolved as a solution, including co-opting the resources of others, defending against attack, inflicting damage on same-sex rivals, negotiating status and power hierarchies, and deterring rivals from future aggression.⁸⁸ It is in this line of thought that Konrad Lorenz holds aggression to be a necessary biological aspect of all living organisms.⁸⁹ But one has to underscore the fact here that although there can be no violence without aggression, not every aggression leads to violence. What we want to point out is that endowed with reason as he/she is, man can control his/her aggression so that it does not result in violent acts. There are a lot of other ways open to him/her through which conflicts can be resolved rationally.

3. 3. 2 Socialization Factors Arguments

Socialization refers to the process through which a person learns patterns of thinking, behaviour, and feeling through his or her early life experiences. It involves learning the “scripts” for specific social behaviour, along with the rules, attitudes, values, and norms that guide interactions with others in a specific community.⁹⁰ The key issue at stake here is that anti-social behaviour and aggression are often equally learned, which is a contrast to the tenets of the proponents of innate factors. The social psychologist Erich Fromm is of the view that the social context in which one finds himself/herself can have positive or negative influence in the shaping of a person’s behaviour. According to Fromm, it is the changes in the socio-economico-political conditions in the society that give rise to violence. One must add that it also depends on which side of the society one finds oneself on. If the person is on the bottom of the ladder or at the edge of the society, the reaction to adverse economic changes is likely to be violent. But if the person is at the upper end of the ladder in the society or

⁸⁸ The Causes of Violence, <http://law.jrank.org/pages/2292/violence-causes-violence.html>

⁸⁹ Hidber, B., *Fenomenologia del Male*, Academia Alfonsiana, Rome, 1980 cited in Obuna, E., *The Roots of Violence: A Moral Evaluation of the Nigeria-Biafra civil war*, Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1985, 17

⁹⁰ American Psychological Association (APA), 1996, 3

materially well off, the changes which affect him/her positively will of course be defended and promoted.

The mass media play a crucial role when it comes to the issue of learned violence. It is a known fact that the simplest means through which a child learns new things is through imitation. The multiple means of communication in our time, thanks to technology, are turning into a curse for our children. The volume of violent acts to which the children are exposed, whether in the internet or through the television is nothing short of a time bomb, which can explode anytime. One cannot imagine the fascination with which young children gather in a typical African village in the house of an average rich man who has a television set and an electrical generator to watch films in which people are shot or stabbed. The children are left on their own with nobody to censure what is watched. The few elderly people who gather around are equally entrapped. Let there be a little quarrel in the middle or primary school and they begin to practice on each other what they have seen on the screens.

According to group relation theorists, most individuals do not really learn violence from the social conditions, rather the social milieu provides the favourable environment that enables the individuals to project their internal conflicts onto persons in the external world by means of projective identification. They may equally re-internalise the course and outcome of externally experienced conflict by means of introjective identification. In other words, unresolved personal conflicts could be unleashed on the society. This is experienced mainly among the group of people who feel hurt by the society and feel the need to carry out a revenge mission in violent ways. The prevalent cases of *Amoklauf* in our society have their roots in this situation. What makes this factor crucial as far as Sub-Saharan Africa is concerned is the great value that is placed on community spirit, which no doubt has its advantages when it comes to building up the society, but which at the same time has enormous drawbacks in times of violence.

In conclusion, the socialization arguments present two basic conditions that are very crucial for the eruption of violence in any social milieu. On the one hand, there is the belief that a child who has experienced hurt is more likely to experiment that which it has suffered on others. For example, a child who has been spanked, hit or beaten or threatened with violence has a greater tendency to be violent than a child who was never exposed to any violent act. On the other hand, the inability of the child hurt to express the emotions resulting from hurts can

also lead to violent actions. In other words, being victims of some acts of violence can lead to further violence only when the pains arising therefrom have not been expressed and resolved. It is as a result of this that we talk of the situational factors argument, which focuses on those peculiar conditions in a social context that breed violence. After all is said and done, the social groups which tend to violent reactions are mostly those which do not benefit from the promised material improvements. Violence is after all nothing but a distorted expression of a person's rage or terror in an environment where it is not safe to reveal or release strong feelings. What that means is that the first duty of any given institution or society is to prevent violence and/or develop strategies for containment where it becomes inevitable. But this is only possible when the situations that can lead to violence are known. We shall now turn to the situational factors argument for more explanation of those situations that make the eruption of violence unavoidable even when it is glaring that the outcome will be disastrous and that the tensions of the moment could have been resolved through dialogue in which rational solutions may be found.

3. 3. 3 The Situational Factors Arguments

The situational factors argument steers a middle course between the innate and socialization factors arguments. According to this position, the source of violence is to be sought neither in the human person nor in the environment alone, but in the different situations in which individuals find themselves. What that means is that although the changes in the social contexts produce the necessary condition for violence, without the human factors there is no sufficient condition for acts of violence to take place. This point was highlighted by Pope Paul VI, in an address to the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See, thus: "We do not forget that many individual and collective acts of violence spring from serious injustices and disorders which themselves amount to acts of violence against human rights and, in part, provoke the chain reactions we deplore".⁹¹ According to the Pope, treatment of symptoms cannot and should not excuse us from action which effectively deals with the real causes.

Situational factors refer equally to characteristics of the environment such as stress or aggression in others that encourage or engender violent behaviour. Unpleasant situations such as continuous loud noise, repulsive odour, crowded and unpleasant living conditions can

⁹¹ Paul VI, „Breaking the Chain of Violence“, Address of Pope Paul VI to the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See, January 15, 1977, In: *The Pope Speaks*, Vol. 22 Nr. 2

provoke aggression and violence in those subjected to them. Other situational factors include the presence of weapons, and a deprived environment where poverty and frustration are prevalent. The increased rate of violence in Africa is attributed mainly to the situational factor of abject poverty and frustration, which is mainly a man-made condition. Studies testify that children who grow up in a deprived environment are much more prone to violence than other children. This follows the natural tendency to experiment on others what one has personally suffered. Abused children, for instance, usually grow up to be child-abusers themselves. Violence is carried out as a revenge mission. There are thousands of cases of this form of situational violence spread over Africa. And that is why it will not be an easy task to stop acts of violence without proper redress, involving confession of guilt, compensation and plea for forgiveness. This means, in a word, keeping open a space for dialogue and rational solutions. Children who have lost one or both parents, either in inter-community clashes or as the victims of extra-judicial killings by security men on the roads, can hardly grow up to be non-violent, without adequate treatment of the trauma and proper reintegration in a normal social life.

3. 3. 4 Religio-Cultural and Ideological Arguments

The argument that religion, culture and ideology are the main causes of conflicts and violence in our world of today is maintained by many scholars. This view has received greater attention since the attack of the 11th of September, 2001 when a large amount of literature on the issue of violence and religion flooded the market. For some, it was a clash of civilization or culture. Whatever name one may choose to give to what happened on that fateful day, one thing that cannot be ruled out is the fact of strong religious influence.

The ambivalence of violence in the content of religion is a phenomenon that is not very easy to comprehend, but the reality of which we live with in our contemporary society. That religion which is supposed to preach love and peace, should at the same time foment violent actions is self-contradictory. This undeniable fact brings out the meaning of the prophecy of Isaiah that the people would “hear, indeed, but do not understand; see, indeed, but do not grasp” (Isaiah 6: 9). Throughout history human beings have tried to perceive and interpret the divine message in ways that may be considered to be against the will of God. But the greater irony is that “religious violence throughout history has not been caused by the ‘moral incontinence’ of believers failing to live up to what they perceive to be good. It has, rather,

been occasioned by believers being true to what they considered to be the truth, and we are astounded by the lengths to which believers went to defend their faith from both internal and external attack”.⁹² It beats human imagination to think of the many persons who have given up the comforts of hearth and home to travel over land and sea to support the cause of the faith and engage in acts of violence against perceived enemies and the many lives lost in such exercise.

The three monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam have a long history of violence perpetrated in the name of religion. One needs to think of the genocide against the Canaanites as documented in the Old Testament, or the Crusades of the 11th century and the Jihad of the 15th and 16th centuries. A consideration of these and similar historical incidents of religious violence, which are repeated in different forms today, makes one wonder with Paul Anderson in the following words:

If God (Jahweh or Allah) is the one commanding either murder or non-violence, such a presentation has moral implications for those seeking to follow the will of God (Jahweh or Allah). If indeed God (Jahweh or Allah) commands both actions, God (Jahweh or Allah) seems contradictory, or at least inconsistent, and the struggle then becomes how to decide which of those directives should be followed. What results from these considerations is that the Bible (Torah or Koran) is often interpreted variously, and it ceases to speak with a clear and authoritative voice on a historically important matter, especially with relation to the Bible's (Torah or Koran) role in supporting or resisting violence.⁹³

The crux of the matter is not religion *per se*, but the human understanding or should we say misunderstanding of religion and its role in a multicultural world. Not only is religious violence perpetrated against people who do not share the same faith, but even members of the same faith are sometimes victims of religious excesses. When violent actions are carried out among the people of the same belief system, it is usually occasioned by the interpretation of the holy book of the particular religion. While some adherents would want to maintain a strict/verbal interpretation of the holy writ, others would prefer a liberal/contextual application of the message of the holy book. The positions of the two groups are technically

⁹² Abulafia, A. S.(ed.) Religious Violence between Christians and Jews: Medieval Roots, Modern Perspectives New York: Palgrave Publishers Ltd, 2002 188

⁹³ Anderson, N. P., Genocide or Jesus: A God of Conquest or Pacificism? In: The Destructive Power of Religion: Violence in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam vol. IV, edited by J. Harold Ellens, Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2004, 31

designated as religious fundamentalism (or what Karen Armstrong calls *militant piety*⁹⁴) and Liberalism. Harold Ellens describes the objective of religious Fundamentalists as that of the promotion of an orthodoxy which is very strange to us, and observes that fundamentalism is equally to be found in other fields of human endeavour. According to him, fundamentalism is first of all a psychological phenomenon and only secondarily religious. One can find fundamentalism, of course, in religion in the world. An essential component of this psychology is a rigid structuralist approach that has an obsessive-compulsive flavour to it. Ellens further argues that it is the “mark of those who have very limited ability to live with the ambiguity inherent to healthy human life; or have no capacity for that at all”.⁹⁵ Fundamentalism is therefore psychopathology which constructs a delusional model of reality in terms of which it fashions its worldview, that is, the source of an unreal picture of the truth about the matter to which it pertains – religion, science, ethics. Soren Kierkegaard traces the roots of fundamentalism to the dynamics between the objective and the subjective. Human history is replete with the ugly memories of the effects of fundamentalism particularly noticeable in religion and ethics. One might cite the history of the Spanish monks who mounted the Inquisition of the late Middle Ages, some of the Gnostic forms of early Christianity that sought to suppress others, the Hassidim in Jewish religion, and the framers of the doctrines shaping al Qaeda today.⁹⁶ In Christianity, however, the prominent forms of fundamentalism arose out in the United States. This mind-set was then exported everywhere in the world⁹⁷, especially in Africa in her contacts with the West. The work of the early missionaries in Sub-Saharan Africa was hampered by the activities of the fundamentalists, who were bent on turning the “pagans” into Christians at once by destroying their objects of worship. This manner of conversion was not only to cause a big division between the missionaries and the natives, but was to leave a gap in the way the Gospel was received among the people. The same thing was applicable to Islam, which waged a war of conversion of the natives through the Jihad. Central to the beliefs of Islamic and Christian exponents of religious violence is a hatred of those who think differently, for which they claim divine authority. The presence of Christianity and Islam in Africa (a different culture) coupled with the fact that the two religions have not had a harmonious co-existence in the past, breeds social tension and conflicts. Nigeria is an ugly example of the persistent cases of unrest and conflict between the two religions. Researchers on the modern dimensions of violence and

⁹⁴ Armstrong, K., *The Great Transformation: The Beginning of Our Religious Traditions*, New York: Anchor Books, 2006, XVI

⁹⁵ Ellens, J. H., *The Destructive Power of Religion: Violence in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, op. cit. 120

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 121

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 121

terrorism question whether it is faith alone or other factors in combination that account for them. For, if it is faith alone that compels Muslims to violence and terror, they argue, then there are important lessons to be learned for those who seek to promote global projects founded on liberal democratic values with their inherently secular biases.⁹⁸ Quite on the contrary, a considerable amount of literature demonstrates that violence currently associated with Islam can be explained in other ways and thus de-couples it from core spiritual values identified with the faith system.⁹⁹ One of the ways in which violence in Islam can be explained is through political ideology.

It is principally the ideological manipulation of religion for political ends that is the real catalyst for tension and division and eventually violence in the contemporary society. Islam provides the best example of this both in its internal organisation and external relationships. With reference to internal organisation, it is common knowledge that the struggle between the Sunnis and the Shi'ites is a political one¹⁰⁰, the so-called fragmentation of the Muslim *Umma* (brotherhood). And like every political struggle, at least in Africa, it is accompanied by violent actions. With regard to the external relationship, it is not an over-statement to say that the relationship of Muslims to other people has been geared towards political domination. Ibrahim Abu-Lughod discusses the importance of Islam as a political force. In his analysis of the introduction of Islam into Africa and the later political struggle for independence, he concludes that "while Islam and its civilisation might play a unifying role among groups of states that share this common ground, by the same token it might impede an overall Pan-African movement should this ever become a serious possibility"¹⁰¹ But even the unifying role which Abu-Lughod alluded to is not tenable when we think of the afore-mentioned internal disharmony which characterises Islam. The claim of Abu-Lughod is further criticised by McKay, who in his study of the impact of Islam on relations among the new African states,

⁹⁸ Milton-Edwards, B., *Islam and Violence in the Modern Era*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006 6

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 7

¹⁰⁰ The Sunnis, deriving their name from *Sunna*, which means tradition, claim that the successor of Prophet Muhammad as the leader of Islam should be decided by the living community since the Prophet had no son and did not appoint any successor before his death. The Shi'ites on the other hand maintain that Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law (married the prophet's daughter Fatimah), Ali, was the licit successor and acknowledge leader of Islam. This struggle has been on from the 7th century to date and it does not appear that an end to it is in view. It is however, of interest to note that the problem is not on doctrinal issues, but political. The idea of an interreligious dialogue which fails to address this internal issue is bound to fail. On the alternative much more attention will be focused on the things that are common to all religions involved in the dialogue with emphasis on the humanness of the adherents of those religions.

¹⁰¹ Abu-Lughod, I. *The Islamic Factor in African Politics*. *Orbis*, vol. 8, Summer 1964, 425 – 444 cited in: *Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa, A Partially Annotated Guide*, compiled by Samir M. Zoghby, Washington: Library of Congress, 1978, 29

opined that “Islam is not a useful instrument of foreign policy”. Of note, he went on to say, “in the Sudanic belt is the dichotomy between a Muslim population in the north and a Christian and/or animist population in the south, in such states as Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and the Sudan”.¹⁰² Whether it is in Sudan, Eritrea, Somalia or Ethiopia, it is indisputable that Islam hardly makes a separation between its religious and political objectives. In his lectures on Islamic government, Khomeini argued that ‘Islam as a religion must include a governmental system’ – according to Zubaida Khomeini believed that the “functions which are integral to the Islamic religion require a government”.¹⁰³ The governmental system which Islam demands is nothing short of the imposition of the religious law, the Sharia, which can only breed conflicts and violence, as is witnessed often in Nigeria where 50% of the population are Muslims and 50% Christians. When such religious view-points as this are made political policies, the inevitable consequence becomes the abuse of human rights and the rejection of democracy based on dialogue. One outstanding instance is the Islamic terrorism whose dogmatism breeds suicide bombings and overall insecurity. Harold Ellens articulates the situation thus:

Violence is always the product of such worldviews. Whether it is violation of the truth, or violation of persons, property and appropriate procedures for human social and juridical order, it is violence. Whether it destroys persons, the necessary conditions of healthy human existence, or useful understandings of the real world, it is violence. Whether it corrupts freedom, constrains legitimate liberty, or fouls the human nest with mayhem and bestiality, it is violence. Whether it oppresses persons or peoples with the force and power of empire building, represses hope and the resilience of the human spirit with mass-casualty fear and intimidation, or terrorizes the tranquility of children with media reports of those kinds of mayhem, it is phenomenally destructive violence.¹⁰⁴

Another aspect of violence supported by Islamic ideology that is against the dignity of the human person is the maltreatment of women. The following lines from the Koran bring out clearly how women are perceived in Islam: “Men are the managers of the affairs of women, for that God has preferred in bounty one of them over another, and for that they have

¹⁰² McKay, Vernon., The impact of Islam on relations among new African states. In: Proctor, Jesse Harris, ed. Islam and international relations. New York: Praeger, 1965 158 – 193, cited in Samir M. Zoghby, Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa, Op. Cit., 31

¹⁰³ Zubaida, S., Islam, people and the State, London: Routledge, 1988 16

¹⁰⁴ Ellens, J. H., The Destructive Power of Religion, op. cit., 122

expended of their property. Righteous women are therefore obedient guarding the secret for God's guarding. And those you fear may be rebellious admonish; banish them to their couches, and beat them. If they then obey you, look not for any way against them".¹⁰⁵ The often quoted parallel passage in the Bible from the letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians that "wives should be subject to their husbands as to the Lord"¹⁰⁶ is modified in the later part of the letter where Paul says, "...but I am applying it to Christ and the Church"¹⁰⁷ where the Church is the wife and Christ is the husband/head. In any case, there was no instruction that one should beat the other, as clearly stated in Islam. The afore-quoted passage from this Sura is an evidence that violence is made sacred in the broadest sense of the term, and a strong correlation to the culturally dominant framework of the patriarchy can be demonstrated, which stands in opposition to the equality of all men and women. However, what makes this 'problem' difficult to solve is the ambivalent interpretation which the practice receives from both insiders and outsiders. According to the former, it is a religious practice and for the latter it is an act of violence against women. The controversy that punctuates any discussion on violence against women in Islam was underscored by Milton-Edwards in the following lines:

For those outside, particularly in the liberal West, where feminist interpretations of violence have begun to impact culturally and legislatively to alter the 'acceptability' of violence as a form of behavioural regulation as well as an expression of power and authority in the private realm that which is understood as 'Islam's position' is considered inhumane and unacceptable. The debate within Muslim societies centres on the force-violence distinction and the continuing interpretation of Koran and hadith not only by traditional male scholars but also by a small and new generation of Muslim women as well. In some Muslim locales women have also disputed the force-violence distinction through the public realm of the courts, which have, in turn, also prompted debate in some Muslim legislative and other forums.¹⁰⁸

Force and violence by men against women and in some, although rare, cases by women against men can be found anywhere in the world. The danger, and that is the reason why we cited Islam as an example in this section, is to deploy faith as the sanctioning force for such behaviours. The result is nothing short of the distorted image of a God/Allah who created man and woman, and at the same time empowers the man to maltreat the woman. Vickers

¹⁰⁵ Sura 4: 35

¹⁰⁶ Ephesians 5: 22

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., v. 32

¹⁰⁸ Milton-Edwards, B., *Islam and Violence in the Modern Era*, op. cit., 112

considers the matter differently. For him, “it is in the separation of human values into categories of masculine and feminine, as a way of making social and cultural distinctions between men and women, that the roots and the perpetuation of violence are to be found”.¹⁰⁹ The bottom line is that, whether it is as a result of faith system or influenced by gender stereotypes, women are always the victims and not the perpetrators.

3.4 Conclusion

The result of our discussion in this chapter leads us to make certain conclusions about violence. First of all, we established that violence is to be found in every human society, but like poverty, it varies in degree and form from one society to the other. Two explanations presented as underlying the violent tendency in man are the theological and scientific explanations. The one traces the roots of violence to the effect of original sin following the fall of our first parents, Adam and Eve. The other maintains that violence is an intensified form of aggression, which is a basic instinct that human beings share with other animals. However, the expression of aggression among human beings has a more complicated dimension than in lower animals, since their means of survival is known to be much more sophisticated than that of other primates.

It is human beings that organise societies, cultivate fields, build schools, construct markets and plan their government, among other things. And by doing these they fashion a way of life otherwise known as culture that suits them and their environment. This process, unfortunately, has never been known to take any smooth course in the history of human society. It has been characterised by struggles either for power (political or economic) or the desire to preserve cultural identity and/or religious orthodoxy.

Sub-Saharan Africa, like other human societies, has had and continues to have its share of the struggles for self-definition and consolidation. The struggle for self-definition and independence from colonial rule ended about two decades ago. The struggle for consolidation of independence won is stillborn. The quest for political and economic power by the so-called political elite is the cause of the unimaginable degree of violence in that continent. Since the majority of the people are poor and the access to power means access to wealth, the struggle to grab power becomes the only lucrative business in Africa. It is a game without rules. Elections are rigged, poll boxes are removed, candidates are kidnapped, houses are burnt, all

¹⁰⁹ Vickers, J., *Women and War*, London: Zed Books, 1993 10

in the name of politics. Most of the time, religious or ethnic resentments are whipped up just to destabilize the electoral process, when the loss of an electoral post is feared. Religious or ethnic violence is generally camouflaged political violence. Belonging to one ethnic group or religion is in itself harmless. The problem begins when there is political advantage attached to this belongingness. Hence, Mahmood Mamdani in his article “Making Sense of Political Violence in Postcolonial Africa” makes a distinction between ethnicity as a cultural identity and ethnicity as a political identity. While the one is consensual, voluntary and based on a shared culture, he argues, the other is enforced by the legal and administrative organs of the state¹¹⁰. It is in this regard that he blames the colonial powers for some of the cases of violence that still plague Africa even after many years of her independence. Amartya Sen does not see any problem in a person sharing different identities, what it requires is ‘deciding on what our relevant identities are and weighing the relative importance of these different identities. And both tasks demand reasoning and choice’.¹¹¹ This appears to be the only alternative in a multicultural society like Africa.

We observed that women and children suffer most in moments of violence and war, which is the aggravated form of violence. Besides being victims of wars, some forms of violent acts are simply directed against women for being women both in the private and public spheres. This mindset will have to be reversed in order to restore the dignity of man, which cannot be limited to the men. We need each other like Bonhoeffer would say. This needing of each other transcends gender difference, political, religious or ethnic affiliations. We need each other, as persons with dignity and basic human rights. The denial of this to any person or group of persons also in terms of tangible goods or opportunities can only lead to violence. And the hard lesson which history has continued to teach is that violence begets violence. The role which religion can play in Africa, a continent in agony, is that of working to prevent violence. Instead of serving as instruments of conflict and violence, the different religious bodies in Sub-Saharan Africa can be a beacon for dialogue in areas of education, public management, the struggle against poverty and corruption. By doing this, the ideals of religion which includes inter alia being good neighbours, honesty and rendering help to the less privileged will be highlighted as indispensable values for peace and order in the society. Past memories need to be healed and a new path charted for harmonious co-existence of peoples irrespective of their different identities in the twenty-first century.

¹¹⁰ Mamdani, M., Making Sense of Political Violence in Postcolonial Africa. In: Identity, Culture and Politics vol. 3 Nr. 2 December, 2002 1-24

¹¹¹ Sen, A., Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny. op. cit. 24

Part two: The Correlation between Poverty and Violence in Post-Colonial Africa South of the Sahara

CHAPTER FOUR

A BACKGROUND TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF POVERTY AND VIOLENCE IN THE TRADITIONAL AFRICAN WORLD-VIEW

4.0 Introduction

The second part of this work sets out to investigate the relationship existing between poverty and violence in postcolonial Africa, South of the Sahara. But since it is not always easy to evaluate what 'is', without a sufficient knowledge of what 'was', we have opted to take a brief look at the African 'world' before, during and after her contact with the West and the East. To this effect we have divided this part of the work into two chapters. The one focuses on the traditional African world-view, which is very central to our reflection on poverty and violence, since according to Husserl every thematic understanding presupposes a horizon or background; whereas the second chapter focuses on the effect of the early contacts of Africa with the West and the near East. Our concern will be more on the contact with the West, and the East mentioned in passing, because Sub-Saharan Africa, the area of our work, had much more to do with the West than the northern part of Africa which imbibed the Arabic culture very early. It is therefore not an overstatement to say that the division of Africa into north and south of the Sahara was necessitated by these two foreign contacts.

Two crucial questions confront any scholar who wishes to carry out a study on Africans and their world-view. These include whether the north Africans could be truly described as authentic Africans given the early and enormous influence of Arabic culture through Islam. The next is the difficulty associated with generalizing any value(s) for the rest of Africa. In other words, apart from the skin colour, can anything be said to be common to all Africans south of the Sahara. The first question falls outside the scope of this work and may be recommended for further research. The second question, on the other hand, calls for deeper

elaboration so as to provide a broad and solid basis for our subsequent discussions on African value systems.

The peoples of Africa south of the Sahara, also called the black Africans, have diverse ethnic groupings and languages that tend to present more of a heterogeneous than a homogeneous picture to any visitor. But beneath this apparent disparity, the people of this region share many cultural values in common. Such cultural values which cut across ethnic and linguistic diversity, and to which foreigners testify as peculiar to Africans south of the Sahara, include: belief in hospitality, belief in the sacredness of life, belief in community life made manifest in the “communalistic custom of holding land in common with relatives”¹, belief in the sacredness of the physical environment and religious consciousness. We shall, however, limit our discussion here to three of the above mentioned values namely, sense of sacredness of life as manifested in the human person, then the community life, and the respect for the physical environment, as the matrix for both human and physical life. This will be followed by a short reflection on the nature of work in the traditional African society, which will help us to understand why nobody was considered ‘poor’ in the society even in the midst of a paucity of material goods. The aim of this exposition is not to take Africa of the twenty-first century many centuries backwards, rather it is to recapture those human values which are being lost in the present age and the result of which is anything but positive for either the individual or the community.

4. 1 The African Concept of the Human Person

The African concept of the human person is expressed in the belief in the sacredness of human life. Hence African anthropology could be described as religious anthropology. For an African, the human person is not a product of evolution, but a vital force with its origin in the Supreme Being. There are many myths varying from one culture to the other in the whole of Africa that trace the origin of man/woman to a supernatural being. Life is held sacred from conception till death. Even when physical life ceases, the life-less body is treated with honour as could be witnessed in the elaborate burial rites in all African culture. The reason for this is the belief in life after death. In view of this special status which the human person enjoys, acts of violence that involve shedding of blood are abhorred. When they occur, the land which has been desecrated has to be purified through some prescribed rites. According to Amadi, “In

¹ Wiredu, K., *Philosophy and African Culture*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980, 7

many (African) tribes the killing of a kinsman, the antithesis of caring for him, was not only a crime but also an abomination. After the murderer had been executed, his family would have to perform sacrifices and rites to remove the stain of evil and ward off the anger of the gods”.² The unintended killing of a relative or kinsman was punished by banishing the culprit from the clan. However, the life of the person who poses a threat to the community was taken to ensure that peace prevailed. This has to do with those regions in Africa where the belief in Witchkraft is still strong. Killing of the human person was nonetheless ‘permitted’ in times of war between communities or tribes.

The African concept of the human person is further presented in the African *onomatology* (a study of the system of naming) which varies from place to place, but at the same time reflects the underlying affinities running through the different African cultures. Among the Igbos of southern Nigeria, the human person is prized above material things as is designated by the name *Mmadu ka Aku* or *Ndu ka Aku* (‘the human person is greater than wealth’ or ‘life is greater than wealth’). A little play on the word for the human person in the same language gives deeper insight into the status which he or she enjoyed. The word for the person in Igbo language is *Mmadu* also written as *Madu*. The former which is held to be the more correct form is said to derive from the Igbo words for beauty and life which are *Mma* and *Ndu* respectively. Following this linguistic analysis, we could say that life (understood as referring to all living things), without the human person, loses its beauty. When we associate this pattern of thought with the Genesis account of creation, we notice that it was only after the creation of man/woman (the human person) that the expression “God saw all that he has made, and indeed it was **very** good” (Gen. 1: 31) was used. The creation of the other things prior to the creation of the human person was concluded with, “God saw that it was good”(Gen.1: 21).

In his article, “The Human Person and Immortality in Ibo (African) Metaphysics”³, Richard Onwuanibe discusses in detail how the concept of personhood underlines the entire life of the Africans using the Igbos (Ibos) of southern Nigeria as a case study. Two central ideas are highlighted in the article as far as the notion of the human person is concerned, namely “presence” and “passage”.⁴ With reference to passage, Onwuanibe argued that the Igbos are

² Amadi, E., *Ethics in Nigerian Culture*, Ibadan: University Press, 1982 58

³ This article was first presented as a paper at the East Central Conference of the American Catholic Philosophical Association, November 11, 1979 and later published in *Philosophy Research Archives*, Bowling Green State University, Ohio and republished in *African Philosophy: An Introduction*, 3rd edition from where this analysis was made.

⁴ Onwuanibe, R. C., “The Human Person and Immortality in Ibo (African) Metaphysics” In: Wright, A. Richard

not totally materialists in their fundamental views of reality, especially with regard to the human person, judging from their understanding of the human soul (*mkpuru obi*) and spirit (*mmuo*).⁵ He pointed out, however, that even though neither can be identified with the body, they are related to it; hence they bear out the transcendence of the human person from the metaphysical point of view, which cannot be reduced to a materialistic basis.⁶ Similarly, the Igbo conception of the human person involves the notion of presence. What this means is that life, whether that of the self or of the other is displayed and acknowledged through warm greetings. It is therefore insulting not to be greeted. Applying Heidegger's terminology, man-in-world is not merely ready-to-hand, that means functionalized. The existence (*Dasein*) of man transcends the level of a role to be played or its utility. The life of the human person is a form of participation in which a distinction is made between the ontological and the ontic, between humans and animals. To reduce the one to the status of the other is to be depersonalized. The distinction between humans and animals with reference to presence is shown in corresponding attitudes: for one does not greet animals in Africa even if they are highly regarded pets.⁷ Not to be greeted, or merely to be looked at (in terms of the notion of Sartre's 'gaze') is not part of the culture. It is considered a form of depersonalization, an I – It relationship in Buber's terminology; an action which has less meaning among the Europeans. This analysis of presence according to Igbo metaphysics shows the distinction of the human person as subject and not as object. While object-oriented thinking aims at controlling and exploiting the other, subject-oriented thinking feels the demand of the freedom of the other. This reminds us of Kant's designation of the self in this case as 'Transcendental Ego', as pure subject as 'Transcendental Apperception.'⁸

The relevance of the on going analysis is that personhood is a manifestation or presence through a body, but never identifiable with it. And even though it may be difficult to analyze the human person as such, this inability cannot constitute an argument for its non-existence. On the contrary, it serves as an axiom for its 'transcendence' or 'no-thingness' (used here to mean that it is not and cannot be identified with any thing) just like the term dignity, which we shall discuss later in this work. Consequently, the essential greatness of any culture consists in its commitment to personhood and to all that it stands for, such as human rights,

(ed.), *African Philosophy : An Introduction*, 3rd edition, Lanham – New York – London: University Press of America Inc., 1984, 183 – 197.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Kant, I., *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by N. K. Smith, New York: St. Martin's Press, A107, 136.

human aspirations and development. Conversely, a decline in the consideration of personhood is symptomatic of the decline of a culture. The periods of high culture, philosophical systems not excluded, give expression to the transcendence of the human person and his/her dignity, for no culture is essentially materialistic. This implies that a culture which emphasizes materialistic achievements can attain mechanical perfection without an adequate idea of personhood. In African culture, for instance, the transcendence of the human person finds expression in egalitarian spirit, which binds one to all.⁹ The African notion of transcendence is intrinsically bound up with the concept of immortality. Thus, the major problem which confronts the African with regard to poverty alleviation and prevention of violent conflicts often occasioned by the unbridled quest for wealth is how to integrate modern scientific and technological achievements with the traditional values without losing sight of the 'no – thingness' of the human person.¹⁰

For Placide Tempels, the human person in the Bantu philosophy, is '*muntu*'¹¹. The work of Tempels, *La Philosophie Bantoue*, whose motive was to demonstrate the existence of an African philosophy, using the Bantus of the Belgian Congo as a case study, made 'vital force' the key concept for understanding the human person and the entire cosmos in Africa. According to him the notion of force is for the Africans what the concept of Being is for the European philosophers, but while the one can be said to be a dynamic system of thought, the other is static. Tempels' research contains the classical divisions of Scholastic philosophy such as ethics, psychology, epistemology. Although this work has the merit of being the first effort in delineating a path for an African philosophy, it has been criticised as a new version of the theory of the *mentalite primitive*, ideologically motivated, but especially because it pretends that this philosophy is a philosophy of the collective subconscious, an ethno-philosophy.¹² Moreover, apart from trying to open up a conceptual framework for understanding the otherwise very inaccessible magical world of the Africans by formulating an ontology whereby a fundamental interlocking of being and force sustains a dynamic universe, the theory of vital force permits hardly any clear and distinct conceptual determination of the unmediated African world. It is limited to a very small ethnic group and

⁹ Onwuanibe, R. C., op. cit. 189

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ However, a distinction is further made based on the status of the person in the society between '*muntu mutupu*' (a person of middling importance) and '*muntu mukulumpe*' (a person with great deal of force, a very powerful person). We shall return to this later when we shall be considering the relationship between the individual and the community in the African world-view, where the latter plays a vital role in the maturation of the former.

¹² Okere, T., *African Philosophy: A Historico-Hermeneutical Investigation of the Conditions of its Possibility*, Lanham – New York – London: University Press of America Inc., 1983, 1

can equally be said to be guilty of the distortion of language and meaning.¹³ Besides, Temples' choice of the Luba people in the then Congo and now Zaire, using them to stand in for all the Bantu-speaking people spread across Africa south of the Sahara¹⁴, has been criticised as incomplete. In addition, it is to be noted that linguistic unity among the Bantu speaking people does not necessarily mean cultural homogeneity, when we consider the fact that the Bantus in Cameroon behave differently from the Bantus in Gabon, Tanzania, Kenya, Angola or South Africa, where the majority are to be found.¹⁵

The Akans of Ghana exalt the human person by making a distinction between the concrete bodily aspect and the intangible spirit called the *okra*. In his book *The Mind of Africa*, W. E. Abraham explains that, "the *okra* is the guiding spirit of a man, the bearer and instrument of his destiny, that in a man which antecedently to the incarnation takes its leave of God. The *okra* is also that whose departure from the living man means death, and marks the completion of his destiny. It returns to God to justify its earthly existence.... Only human beings have an *okra*"¹⁶. This is similar to the concept of *chi*¹⁷ among the Igbo of Nigeria. Neither the *Okra* nor the *chi* is educable. To fill this gap of educability for the purpose of co-existence in the community, there is the *sunsum*¹⁸. Implicit in this metaphysics of the human person is moral accountability, a certain level of comportment is expected of him/her, because *noblesse oblige*. Abraham corroborates this view in the following paragraph:

From the Akan theory of man it is evident that human personality and character were seen by them to rest on a number of factors and influences; comprising the *okra*, which above all was the ineducable and unswervable element; the *sunsum*, which was educable through precept and a system of punishment and reward, and was the foundation of personal and moral responsibility.¹⁹

¹³ Alexis Kagame wanted to correct this error of distortion of language and meaning by studying the Rwandese language structure as a means of comprehending their philosophy of being, while Mbiti focused on idea of time.

¹⁴ The other major groups in this region being the Hottentots and the Massai; and the Hamitic tribes.

¹⁵ Nkurunza, R. K. D., *Bantu Philosophy of Life in the Light of the Christian Message: A Basis for an African Vitalistic Theology*, Frankfurt am Main – Bern – New York – Paris: Peter Lang, 1989, 30.

¹⁶ Abraham, W. E., *The Mind of Africa*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962 59

¹⁷ The *chi* is an invisible life-force that directs each individual person guiding him/her in the whole journey through life. It is believed that whatever happens to the person in his/her lifetime is determined by the *Chi*.

¹⁸ *Sunsum* is a spiritual substance responsible for *suban*, character, genius, temper and quality. *Sunsum* is therefore educable and moral in its operation.

¹⁹ Abraham, W. E., op. cit. 61

The above separation of the different ‘elements’ that make up man is made for the purpose of study and are not to be taken strictly as entities. The African concept of the human person is holistic. N’daw in his article, “Is it possible to speak about an African way of thought?” argues that ‘the conception of man is different among Africans and, unlike that of Cartesian Europe, is never dualistic or dichotomic. There is never the separation between body and soul found elsewhere’.²⁰

This African view of the human person leads us to a better understanding of the African personality, which generally refers to the manifestation of cultural uniqueness among Africans, as manifested in their behaviour, social norms, customs, values, beliefs, religious zeal, attitudes, explanations of the universe and the supernatural both historically and in contemporary terms.²¹ It is in this vein that Kenneth Kaunda opines that while the Westerner has a problem-solving mind, the African has a situation-experiencing mind.²² This means that the African is immersed in the totality of the social/community life and the strong belief in nature and the ancestral spirits. The being of an African is a being-with.

4. 2 The African and the Community Life

The traditional and unbiased view of the human person in the African context is one that considers him/her as a member of the community. It is in the community that the person is born. In the same community he/she grows up learning its values and ethos. The community accords him/her rights and privileges as he/she advances in age. When he/she dies, his/her final wish is that he/she be buried in the same community, except in the case of women who are married outside their community of birth. In such cases they wish to be buried in the community in which they have become members through marriage. So strong is the sense of belonging to a community that relations could spend a fortune to transport the body of a deceased member who dies in a foreign country in order to bury the remains among his/her own people. The African notion of community goes beyond the living to include the dead invisibly present, and the unborn, who are naturally awaited when couples get married. One of the reasons for such insistence that the dead be buried in their community is to to be found in their strong belief in immortality; another form of existence after life. However, this cannot be

²⁰ N’daw, A., “Is it possible to speak about an African way of thought?” In: *Presence Africaine*, vol. 30, no. 58 1966 38

²¹ Asante, M. K. & Asante, K. W. (eds.), *African Culture: The Rhythms of Unity*, London: Greenwood Press, 1985 193

²² Kaunda, K., cited in: Asante, M. K. & Asante, K. W. (eds.), *op. cit.* 87

compared to the more refined Christian belief in the after-life in heaven, nevertheless it is an aspect of their belief system which shapes the people's lives.

A typical African community consists of families (of course extended families, rarely nuclear) who trace their roots to a common ancestor. Apart from their individual and/or family land, they possess land in common which could be leased to the family units for agricultural purposes rotationally. Both the men and women of a particular age group from the same community come together to form unions for the purpose of assisting one another in farm work. This is done during the planting periods as well as the harvesting periods. Other kinds of work, like helping a new couple to build a house are not excluded. Group work strengthens the community spirit and this is performed joyfully occasionally punctuated by folk songs. The period separating the farming and harvesting seasons is used for social life in the community. Describing the peculiar form of social life in his work on comparative African literature, Egbulefu writes:

In mancher Gegend blasen die Trompeter das ganze Dorf zusammen und die Menge trifft sich (im Freien) zum fröhlichen Spielen, Singen und Musizieren bzw. zur Feier der Nacht und des kunstvollen Handwerks des Schöpfers; die Trommler spielen immer heiter, die Seelen vibrieren mit dem Tempo, es wird fröhlich gesungen, es wird unermüdlich getanzt; auch von Mutter Erde, von der ganzen Natur und ihrem Ursprung wird erzählt, wie es die Ahnen mündlich überliefert haben.²³

The community bond is also strengthened through the celebration of various feasts commemorating different events and seasons. During such celebrations, presents are exchanged among members of the extended family and in the entire community among friends. In his celebrated work already cited, Achebe describes one of those feasts:

Men and women, young and old, looked forward to the New Yam Festival, because it began the season of plenty – the new year. On the last night before the festival, yams of the old year were all disposed of by those who still had them....Yam foo-foo and vegetable soup was the chief food in the celebration. So much of it was cooked that, no matter how heavily the family ate or how many friends and relations they invited from neighbouring villages, there was

²³ Egbulefu, J., *Die Schwarzafrikanische Literatur: Ihre Originalität und das Problem Ihrer Beziehung zu Europa*, Darmstadt: Thesen Verlag, 1981 56

always a huge quantity of food left over at the end of the day.²⁴

The spirit of sharing highlighted in the above passage was not restricted only to the members of the family, but extended to strangers who might be passing by during the celebration. There were no beggars on the street in the traditional African community, as everybody was supported by his/her neighbour to make sure that food was daily afforded. As in times of celebration, the members of the family or community in serious cases, gather in moments of sickness to take decisions on what can be done. There were no modern hospitals, but there were the medicine men who took care of the sick. The primary aim was to save life. The mode of payment was discussed when the patient was cured. In the event of the sick man dying, the close relatives took over the negotiation of what could be paid the medicine man for his efforts. This was, in any case, settled amicably between the two parties. This strong spirit of solidarity made Steve Biko assert that “poverty was a foreign concept”²⁵ in an African community, – and even when it is “brought about to the entire community by an adverse climate during a particular season. It never was considered repugnant to ask one’s neighbours for help if one was struggling. In almost all instances there was help between individuals, tribe, chief and chief, etc. even in spite of war”²⁶

In the foregoing, we see that the community serves as the custodian of the individual and as a result he/she must always struggle to preserve his/her membership in the community. For outside the community, there can be nothing but “void in strong and ever present contrast. Outside this ancestrally chartered system there lay no possible life, since ‘a man without lineage is a man without citizenship’: without identity, and therefore without allies...; or as the Congo put it, a man outside his clan is like a grasshopper which has lost its wings”.²⁷ This strong sense of community is further clarified by Bujo who called attention to the fact that the individual African knows himself/herself to be immersed in the community to such an extent that personality cannot develop except in it and through it. However, this development, he further argues, does not take place in an asymmetrical way but is based on reciprocity.²⁸ In other words, one has the obligation to help build up the community that nurtured him or her. This can take place either actively by performing great deeds that bring honour to the community, or passively by avoiding acts that may damage the good name of the community

²⁴ Achebe, C., *Things Fall Apart*, op. cit., 35

²⁵ Biko, S., *I write what I like*, New York, 1978, 42

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 43

²⁷ Davidson, B., *The African Genius*, Boston, 1969, 58

²⁸ Bujo, B., *The Ethical Dimension of Community: The African Model and the Dialogue between North and South*, Nairobi: Paulines publications Africa, 1997, 182

or even cause harm or sickness to the inhabitants. Everybody's behaviour and ethical action have consequences for the whole community: the good contributes to the increase of life, while evil destroys or at least reduces life.²⁹ Hence, the interpretation of misfortune and sickness, on the one hand, and blessings, on the other hand, is particularly integrated into this attitude toward life and the entire cosmos.

Membership in the community can be 'lost' temporarily or permanently mainly on the grounds of abominable acts like murder or incest. As we mentioned above, a distinction is made between the murder of a kinsman/kinswoman and the murder of a stranger. It is the former that causes the expulsion of the culprit from the community, because his/her abominable act has disturbed the community peace and, if unpunished, would attract the wrath of the earth goddess, *Ala*.³⁰ Closely related to the murder of the kinsman/kinswoman is the murder of the innocent, and then the case of incest. All these acts are destable to the earth goddess and call for immediate reparation, which includes, among other things, banishment from the community, whenever they occur.

Thus the individual who is expelled from the community to save the life of the entire community is more or less a dead person until he/she reunites with the community. The traditional African sees, therefore, no dichotomy between sickness and sin. Most of these views would not be accepted today in the light of Christian ethics of universal brotherhood and the suffering of the innocent. Despite the mentioned short-comings, the African sense of community should be carried beyond the ethnic groupings and even to the wider world, since we all belong to the one human family, a project which the contemporary idea of globalization should aim to actualize.

In summary, we could assert that this sense of community is so deeply rooted in every African that wherever he/she lives in the world, he/she is inclined to seek the company of others. Biko justifies it thus:

We regard our living together not as an unfortunate mishap warranting endless

²⁹ Ibid., 182

³⁰ This is the Igbo name for the earth goddess. Among the traditional Africans, especially the Igbos of eastern Nigeria, the earth was worshipped as a fertility goddess that yielded fruits for the nourishment of man and animals. This function was believed to be disturbed by the shedding of innocent blood, incest or other abominable acts. When this happened a process of reparation was called for, failure to carry it out spelt disaster for the community concerned. The *Ala* was equally regarded as the final arbiter in cases of dispute between two members of the community.

competition among us but as a deliberate act of God to make us a community of brothers and sisters jointly involved in the quest for a composite answer to the varied problems of life. Hence in all we do, we always place man first and hence all our action is usually joint community oriented action rather than individualism.³¹

As much as the positive elements of community life are to be highlighted, it is equally important to note that over-emphasis on these can stifle individual freedom and creativity. Part of the problem of poverty (in the modern understanding) in Africa is certainly not unconnected with heavy emphasis on community spirit. Living in a community is good and a positive sense of community should be encouraged, but room should at the same time be made for personal freedom and individual creativity. It is, however, a point of controversy among scholars of African extraction to determine the degree to which the individuality of the person is influenced by the community. Ifeanyi Menkiti considers the issue of community a very crucial distinction between the African view of the human person and that found in Western thought.³² Placide Tempels' claim that "the individual is necessarily an individual adhering to the clan"³³ is not unanimously accepted. Bujo argues that the position of Tempels in this regard fails to underscore the fact "that African ethics does not define the person as self-realization or as ontological act; rather, it describes the person as a process of coming into existence in the reciprocal relatedness of individual and community, where the latter includes not only the deceased but also God".³⁴ The reciprocal relatedness which Bujo alludes to is not

³¹ Biko, S., op. cit. 177

³² In his article on 'Person and Community in African Traditional Thought', Menkiti argues that whereas status of personhood is attained through a process of incorporation in the community, Western thought defines the human person with reference to such concepts as rationality, will, memory, freedom etc. Without their being incorporated into the community, individuals are regarded as dangles to whom the description of person does not fully apply. Personhood in various African societies is that which has to be attained in direct proportion as one participates in communal life through the discharge of various obligations defined by one's status. It is the carrying out of these obligations that transforms one from the it-status of early childhood, marked by the absence of moral functions, into the person-status of grown-up, marked by a widened maturity of ethical sense, without which personhood is an floating concept. He likens his trend of thought to John Rawls' reference to the general ethical requirement of respect for persons who are capable of a sense of justice as those owed the duties of justice, with this capability, however, construed in its broader sense of potentiality. It is, as Rawls observes this potentiality, which brings the claims of justice into play. And the sufficient condition for equal justice is the capacity for moral personality. The concept of morality, in any case, has its relevance within a given community. Hence the Sartrean concept of the human person as a free unconditioned being is totally unafican. From this perspective we may conclude that the African asserts the ontological independence to the human society, and moves from society to the individuals, the Western view moves instead from individuals to society. It is thus easier to understand why African societies are organized around the requirements of duties, while the Western societies tend to be organized around the postulation of individual rights. Although it may be difficult to advocate for a complete change of mentality with reference to the relationship of the person to the community in Africa, there are a lot of things Africans can learn from the Westerners.

³³ Tempels, P., *Bantu-Philosophie: Ontologie und Ethik*, Heidelberg, 1956, 67; cf. Mulago, V., *Un visage africain du Christianisme: L'union vitale bantu face a l'union vitale ecclesiale*, Paris, 1965, 121

³⁴ Bujo, B., *Foundations of African Ethic: Beyond the Universal Claims of Western Morality*, trans. by Brian McNeil, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2003, 114

to be understood in the sense of active participation only, there is also the subtle and passive relatedness from the unborn and the dead. It is from this perspective that we can understand the contribution of the physical environment to the formation of the African personality within the ambient of the community, as discussed in the following.

4.3 The African and the Relationship to the Physical Environment

The physical or natural environment completes the triadic dimension of the African world-view, the other two being the human and the supernatural worlds. For the African, these three dimensions do not form separate entities, but rather build up a network of interrelationship, which is unbreakable. In the just concluded section, we treated the world of the humans as expressed in the community life, which forms the matrix for individual development and identity. Every community has its myth of origin which is not unconnected to the portion of land the community inhabits. In this way a sort of spiritual relationship exists between the members of the community and the land on which they live and cultivate their crops.

Against this background, it becomes easier to understand the role of the physical environment as a source of sustenance for the Africans south of the Sahara, whose main occupation is agriculture. The expression 'physical environment' is here used to include both living and non-living objects that surround man in his environment. Central to his/her relationship to the physical environment is the land, which is deified and worshipped in most parts of Africa south of the Sahara. It is on land that houses are built to provide shelter for people; food and cash crops are cultivated on the land; both domestic and wild animals depend on the land for their feeding; fruit trees and forests grow on the land. All these make the land indispensable for the sustenance and survival of human life on earth. This natural rhythm is not taken as a mere physical process by the Africans, but as directed by the spirits, who live among men and act as agents of the Supreme Being³⁵. The earth-goddess, also called 'mother earth', takes a

³⁵ The issue of the notion of a supreme Being is very much controverted not only by foreign scholars of African religion and culture but even among African scholars. J. S. Mbiti in his 'Introduction to African Religion' asserts that all African peoples believe in God; a belief which is taken for granted since the contrary was unimaginable (cf., J. S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, London: Heinemann, 1975, 40). The Western encounter with Africa and the difficulty in understanding the African way of life extended to the area of religion, giving rise to such questions as to whether there is an African concept of God. And if yes, what God or which God do the Africans know? Is the African God the real God? (cf., E. B. Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*, New York: Orbis Books, 1975, 55). The dispute on the notion of the Supreme Being is complicated not only by the various names used to designate God, but also by the various rituals of worship some of which are either inadequate or conflicting like the *Nyame* of the Akan, *Olodumare* of the Yoruba and *Chukwu* of the Igbo.

prominent place among these spirits or deities for yielding rich harvest to feed human beings. Next to her in rank is the sky-god, who is responsible for the rains, without which the earth cannot bring forth rich harvest. It is believed among traditional Africans that severe cases of drought, and consequently crop failure was a result of an abominable act (called *alu* among the Igbos of Nigeria) in the community. Hence “according to the myth and the belief, the earth-goddess, *Ala*, sent the drought when the people had sinned against her. It was why the chief was to offer sacrifice to the gods and to the ancestors at the beginning of the year, to ask them to pardon the sins of the people”.³⁶ With the sacrifice offered, the cosmic process took its normal course. Such sacrifices involved the use of animals and some other elements like kola nuts, herbs, etc., which are in turn produced by the physical environment. One observes how the entire range of nature participates in many African rites: “All beings, organic and inorganic, living and inanimate, personal and impersonal, visible and invisible, act together to manifest the universal solidarity of creation”.³⁷

Another dimension to the interdependence between the human person and his/her physical environment concerns the traditional way of healing the sick. Just as the failure of rains is attributed to a serious offence in the community, the African believes that sickness is always as a result of sin, either personal or, in the case of epidemics, communal. To restore the health of the sick person, the medicine man/woman makes use of certain herbs from the forest and other elements like mineral substances and organic materials. The aim of this is to underline the fact that “one can actually remain healthy in a holistic sense only by living in harmony with the whole of creation”.³⁸ As a result of this, “the traditional healer in Africa does not only include the community of the living and the dead into his healing practice, but also uses natural elements like minerals, plants, pieces of wood, animal bones, teeth and hair, etc., in order to emphasize that effective healing is only possible where reconciliation with the entire cosmos has taken place”.³⁹ This African view of the physical world testifies to the saying that nature makes nothing in vain.

The problem with the above view is that such relationship with the physical environment often degenerated to fetishism. It is because of this that scholars have continued to debate

³⁶ Aligwekwe, P. E., *The Continuity of Traditional Values in the African Society: The Igbo of Nigeria*, Owerri: Totan Publishers Limited, 1991, 90

³⁷ Bujo, B., *The Ethical Dimension of Community: The African Model and the Dialogue between North and South*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1998 210

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 211

³⁹ *Ibid.*

whether the traditional African is polytheistic or monotheistic in his/her religious orientation. This discourse falls outside the scope of our work, but it suffices to reason with Nkemnka that the God of the Africans is only one, because of the fact that God is always the God of the community, the people. It is therefore not possible to have more than one God for the same people. The rites of worship may differ from tribe to tribe or from village to village, but they are not different gods.⁴⁰ We recommend that future research on the Africans and their way of life take up this topic. However, we should not lose sight of the contribution such a world-view could make to the contemporary discourse on environmental ethics: the problem of global warming and what should be our proper relationship to nature. It is anachronistic to advocate for a revival of the worship of the earth-goddess in order to increase agricultural produce or to resort to native medicine as an alternative to orthodox Western medicine, but a certain modicum of respect for the physical environment is urgent if our world is to be saved. The world can learn something from the Africans in this regard.

Elaborating on this need, Benezet Bujo argues that the Christian-theological teaching that within the world of creation all creatures depend on each other and ensure the harmony of the whole is very much in agreement with the African world-view. But he laments that with the colossal break-through in technology, “it has become a trivial observation that people indulge in self-destruction by pursuing solely the total domination of the world and the reckless exploitation of nature”.⁴¹ Furthermore, he cautions that “people should be prepared to account for the technical achievement attained so far and ask themselves the question whether nature is really regarded as a co-creature in this process”.⁴² The point being made here is that any form of technological development that neglects to appreciate the sacred dimension of the ecosystem will eventually end up destroying itself and dehumanising the human person. A way out of this disaster is that technology incorporates ecological ethics into its programme, which involves the respect for other cultures and their values. This is important, because it is “the future of those values that promote culture that will shape the future of humanity, since they alone can enable the human person to be a creator – creator of one’s fate, creator of history, and creator of technology in its broadest sense. Only those values that promote culture are the carriers of a promise of Resurrection for humankind, and without them there is no future, not even for technology”.⁴³ If the sole aim of technology becomes how to produce

⁴⁰ Nkemnka, M. N., *African Vitality: A Step Forward in African Thinking*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1999 152

⁴¹ Bujo, B., *op. cit.* 215

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Mveng, E., *L’Afrique dans l’Eglise. Paroles d’un croyant*. Paris, 1985 43

more and how to produce faster in order to satisfy an insatiable consumer-oriented society, the result is that the human person, enslaved by technology, deals with nature and with other human persons as means and not as ends. What matters is profit and the moment humans fail to yield profit, they lose their worth and dignity. This is a form of poverty which, like cankerworm, is eating deep into the fabric of the reciprocal relationship that exists between the human person and the cosmos. Technology and its transfer has to make restoration of the dignity of the human person and not profit its norm. In response to world economic structures, Africans south of the Sahara have been compelled to engage in deforestation as a means of improving their living conditions. This example shows how the previously existing unity between the African and his/her environment has been gravely impaired. Does this represent the idea of work original to Africans? This is discussed below.

4. 4 The Concept of Work as Promotion of Group Solidarity

The traditional African understands work as part of human nature. Hence by doing manual or mental work, he/she performs that function which belongs to man/woman as man/woman. The Genesis account of work as God's punishment upon our first parents for their sin of disobedience: "In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt earn thy bread" is contrary to the African concept of work. According to the African world-view it is not work that is punishment, but the lack of work, joblessness; because by having no work, man fails to carry out that activity which naturally characterises him/her. Thomas Aquinas held that man/woman has a natural inclination⁴⁴ to manual labour and went further to give four goals to which work/labour⁴⁵ is directed as: 'first and principally to obtain food; secondly, it is directed to the removal of idleness whence arise many evils', hence the saying that an idle mind/hand is the devil's workshop. 'Thirdly, it is directed to the curbing of concupiscence; inasmuch as it is a means of afflicting the body and fourthly, it is directed to almsgiving....'⁴⁶

Being agrarian in nature, the traditional African society engaged mostly in farm work principally to obtain food: clearing the field with machetes, cultivating the cleared farmland with hoes, sowing various seeds, weeding the fields and finally harvesting the crops at harvest time. All these forms of work were carried out in groups divided according to sex and age.

⁴⁴ St. Thomas Aquinas, however made a distinction between work before and after the fall of man; whereas the former was characterised by pleasure, the latter was characterised by pain.

⁴⁵ Labour and work are used here as synonyms without delving into the perennial philosophical anthropological debate which classifies only manual activities as labour and mental cum manual engagements as work.

⁴⁶ Summa Theologia, I-II, art. 20

The men had a separate work group from the women. And even among these different groups, there were still further division of the work groups into young and older men; and young and older women work groups. At the age of fourteen a boy or girl is considered mature enough to participate in community activities, hence can join a work group. In some parts of Africa this began even earlier. But the decisive factor was circumcision, which served as an initiation into adulthood. The aim of every work group is the mutual help of the members, the support of other members of the community. Describing the work groups among the Wolof of Gambia, David W. Ames states that “the solution of problems by communal effort, which is common in Wolof, nay African life, is exemplified in the activities of the groups which provide mutual aid in labour and economic ‘insurance’ (or better assurance) for their members”.⁴⁷ Apart from assisting the members to meet their personal needs, the work group enables the members to fulfill heavy obligations of work for their in-laws. In traditional Africa and still in some regions at present, part of the marriage contract involves labour in the fields of the father-in-law. Considering the fact that the family system in most parts of Africa is patriarchal, not much emphasis is placed on the work for the mother-in-law.

Under their leaders, the work groups worked for the entire community whenever the need arose. It formed the nucleus of the labour force on those tasks considered to be the community responsibility, like constructing and repairing rest places in the village squares, clearing bush paths to neighbouring villages and so on. This is mainly done by the male work group. Every young man anticipates contributing his own quota in building up the community and he is naturally proud of this. By so doing he integrates himself into the community into which he was born. It is simply wonderful to witness this where it still exists. Young boys, with joy and enthusiasm amidst songs and jokes, tackle a difficult task until it is completed. Group work of this nature is not paid for, but the members receive acknowledgment from the chief of the community, who occasionally made some presents of goat or ram to them. Within the group, the most hardworking is specially rewarded and respected by the others. On the other hand, jokes are made about the lazy ones, but they are also helped if it becomes obvious that they cannot finish their work. In this way group solidarity is strengthened. Of course there are extreme cases of laziness that defy sympathy from the members of the work group and even from immediate family members. Okonkwo, the hero in Achebe’s “Things Fall Apart” hated his father because he was such a lazy man who, despite the goodwill of his kinsmen in

⁴⁷ Ames, W. D., “Wolof Co-operative Work Groups”, In: *Continuity and Change in African Cultures*, edited by William R. Bascom and Melville J. Herskovits, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959, 224.

lending him seed yams and money, failed to rise up in the society. Unoka, Okonkwo's father was described as 'lazy and improvident and quite incapable of thinking about tomorrow'.⁴⁸

Group solidarity is strengthened also through social functions. Each of the work groups plays a major role in organizing entertainment. Ames in his already cited study of the Wolof work group asserts that, "aside from the feasting, joking, drumming, and singing which accompanies work, the male group often joins that of the young women to have a party. Parties, with feasting, wrestling, and dancing to drums in the village square, are held at night, often immediately after the harvest season".⁴⁹ The entertainment could at times be so organized that members of other villages or communities are invited. In the case of the women, the bride's work group has a recognized role in her courtship and marriage rituals, which range from helping to make public announcement about the engagement to accompanying the bride singing and dancing to her husband's compound after marriage.⁵⁰ Other social activities that pertain to one of the members are also organized by the rest of the group members.

The people of Mossi in today's Burkina Faso have the same work group structure as the Wolof. In his research on the economic changes in the area, Peter Hammond observes:

Much agricultural endeavour is necessarily co-operative. Each farmer is dependent on the assistance of his kinsmen to get his fields seeded, cultivated, and harvested in the short time during which each of these operations must take place. However, the yield from his field remains his own, to be shared only with his own wives and children. Members of the lineage also work in the fields under the specific control of the lineage elder. Although the harvest from these fields is stored in a granary belonging to him, he can be relied upon to share with the members of the lineage if this should be necessary.⁵¹

Hammond's observation that each farmer had total control over the yield from his own field despite the assistance of the work group is an indication that the African sense of community and group solidarity is not to be understood as a form of communism. For communism holds that the full result of labour belongs to the workers and that it is by labour alone that capital becomes fruitful; hence labour has the right to all the returns. Thus, Marx's position here as it

⁴⁸ Achebe, C., *op. cit.* 4

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 233

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 234

⁵¹ Hammond, B. P., *Economic Change and Mossi Acculturation*, In: *Continuity and Change*, *op. cit.*, 243

pertains to capital untenable.⁵² The Mossi farmer relies very much both on the help of members of the work group for the success of his economic endeavour and on their support if his crop should fail.⁵³ And the others can count on his support, when needed. What this means in effect is that he is never alone, neither in times of abundance nor in times of scarcity. The decisions he takes are with reference to this social and economic interdependence, as when he foregoes working on his farm in order to attend the funeral of a deceased kinsman and/or group member. He has made a choice which, considered in the total context of the culture, is equally in accord with his own personal economic interest and for the sake of group solidarity.

The introduction of wage-earning activities and cash crops which followed contact with other cultures has interfered with the traditional connections between family life, work group formation and maintenance, division of labour and property; and then the bond within families are weakened through migrations in pursuit of wages. Not many people are prepared to go into a work group anymore, as the struggle to accumulate capital has taken the upper hand; hence poverty sets in as the weaker can no longer rely on the help of family members. Every form of help which had hitherto been rendered for nothing now has its market price. Labour has to be bought and, in line with the law of economics, the highest bidder has more labour at his/her disposal. The human person is considered now more as some kind of instrument with a work capacity to be exploited at low cost and then discarded. Besides, more attention is paid to the cultivation of cash crops at the expense of food crops, since the making of money has become the principle goal with less attention paid to inter-personal relationship. Man thus now tends to realize his/her worth and dignity in his/her wealth and not in his person. This has brought with it much change in the perception of work and solidarity in African culture. One of the ethnic groups much affected by this change are the Igbos of Nigeria. In his remarks on the receptivity to change of the Igbos, Simon Ottenberg wrote that, “the larger unilineal descent groups, so characteristic a feature of Igbo society, are becoming less important as lineage and clan members leave home on a temporary or permanent basis, as traditional agriculture, normally under lineage and clan control, comes to play a less vital role in Igbo economy, and as belief in ancestral spirits gives way to Christianity”.⁵⁴ Whether this change was complete or not with reference to their belief system is still debatable. Let us look at the African traditional belief system and its role in the economic life of the Africans.

⁵² O'Brien, C. M., *Christian Social Principles*, New York: P. J. Kennedy and sons, 1941, 462

⁵³ Hammond, B. P., *op. cit.*, 245

⁵⁴ Ottenberg, S., “*Ibo Receptivity to Change*”, In: *Continuity and Change in African Cultures*, *op. cit.*, 131

4. 5 African Traditional Religion and the Economic Life of the Africans

The overwhelming religious sense of the African is attributed to his/her world-view that acknowledges the existence of the world of spirits which, though invisible, is not to be separated from the human and physical worlds. The African believes strongly in the existence of spirits. Some of the spirits are good while some are bad. God in African traditional religion is the supreme spirit and creator of all that exists including man. The belief in God is intuitive, hence there are no atheists in Africa. The other spirits are his messengers. The classification and functions of these spirits vary from one ethnic group to another. This is so because most of, if not all, the ethnic groups in Africa each trace their myths of origin to one ancestor, who is central in the African understanding of religion and his/her relationship to other spirits. African traditional religion is “the indigenous religious system and life of African peoples. It developed gradually, without particular founders, systematic doctrines, or written scriptures”.⁵⁵ African religion is fully integrated into the whole life of the people so that it exerts its influence and presence in their world-view. Despite the disparity in the practice of African religion from one African society to another, there are a number of common elements to be found in all of them. One such common element is the centrality of the human person. Since the present work is concerned with man (the term is used generically), we shall consider the vision of man in African traditional religion.

With reference to the position of man in African religion, we affirm with Mbiti that in all the “African myths of origin, man appears first on the world scene as a religious being.... Man does not emerge as a politician, nor as a scientist, nor an astronaut. These other aspects of his being developed later”.⁵⁶ Following this portrait of man/woman, we see how the various stages of his/her existence are marked by religious ceremonies. Right from conception, which is the beginning of new life, the parents and relations of the yet-to-be-born child begin to make preparations in advance. These include not only the material, but also spiritual preparations. There are certain things, according to custom, which a pregnant woman should not do and certain food which she should not eat. But over and above this, prayers are said for her for a safe delivery, not only by the immediate family members but also members of the entire community, because pregnancy is not a private affair just as the child is not a private

⁵⁵ Mbiti, J., *Man in African Religion*, In: *Africa and the West: The Legacies of Empire*, edited by Isaac James Mowoe and Richard Bjornson, New York: Greenwood Press, 1986, 55

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 56

affair. In this regard, the ancestors are equally invoked, since it is believed that they represent the family in the spirit world and would not allow any evil to befall the family. When the child is born, it is given the name of one of the ancestors either from the side of the father or from the side of the mother. In this way, it is assured that the lineage is not terminated, an idea which is reflected in the naming system in some African societies. The Igbos of eastern Nigeria give their children such names as *Amaechina* (literally means may your lineage not be terminated) which is both a prayer and an assertion. The naming of a child after an ancestor and/or a god or goddess at birth establishes a spiritual bond between it and the spiritual world. As the child grows up, the consciousness of having ‘someone’ in the invisible world deepens. The child comes to know that it could turn to such a force in times of difficulty or before engaging on a task. And the older the child becomes, the more sophisticated and ritualised this awareness of a divine person or a divine force becomes. After circumcision or shortly before marriage, the child, now a man, makes preparation for a place of worship, assisted by the father if he is still alive or the oldest member of the family. This process is mainly for male children. The fact that the girl child would eventually marry does not permit her to make any permanent arrangement in her father’s house. Here the mother does it for her vicariously. It is important to note that this effort to relate to the spiritual world is not only limited to the ancestors. Other deities and spirits are worshipped all with the goal of soliciting protection against evil spirits/persons or asking for favours such as many children, rich harvest, long life. And for each of these needs, there is a god who must be invoked. Because of the various forms of worship, which however does not negate the belief in the supremacy of God, the traditional African could be described as syncretic in his/her religious outlook. Bolaji Idowu describes the situation as “diffused monotheism”.⁵⁷ This means upholding the belief in one God at the same time acknowledging the roles of his human or spirit agents.

The African’s belief in the spirits and their influence in his/her life finds expression in his/her contact with nature, which serves as the medium of contact between him/her and the world of spirits. If he/she has found favour with the spirits, it is manifested in nature in the abundance of harvest, good health for members of the family and even distant relations, increase in livestock, protection from natural disaster and so on. If the opposite is the case, that means scanty harvest, serious sickness of family members or distant relations, decrease in livestock, premature death of children; then an enemy or an evil spirit is at work or it is because nature has been offended. The African believes that the human person links nature to God and God

⁵⁷ Cf., Shorter, A., *African Culture: An Overview*, op. cit. 50

to nature. The human person can personify nature, in order to interact with it, to solicit its help or even order it about for the sake of his/her own welfare. But at the same time he/she realises that nature will not obey him blindly. The human person must seek harmony with nature, in order to be sure to reap full benefits from nature. Thus “African religion recognises clearly that if man abuses nature, in return nature will strike back at him/her. In this regard, man is not a master over nature to treat it as he/she wishes. Instead, man is the priest toward nature – soliciting its kindness and expressing respect towards it”.⁵⁸ The danger here is that the human person perpetually lives in fear of trying not to offend nature so as not to incur its wrath. Besides, it is difficult, in times of harvest failure, to determine whether it is as a result of indolence or the revenge of nature for an unrepaired act of violation. Achebe narrates how Unoka, the father of Okonkwo, the hero of the novel went to consult *Agbala*, the oracle of the Hills and the Caves to find out why he always had a miserable harvest, even after he had observed all the rites for planting yams. For an answer, he was told by the oracle that he had neither offended any gods nor his ancestors, but that the problem was with him – he was lazy. This is a version of Caesar’s cry to Brutus that the problem is not in our stars but in ourselves. Thus Mbiti’s description of Africans as notoriously religious is not a compliment, because considered in the above light it is nothing more than religionism and fatalism.

The economic aspiration of every African head of family was to acquire wealth not for its own sake, but to enable him/her to provide food for the family and to attain social recognition. The higher social status one attains in ones’ life time, the more one arose in the ancestral rank. Wealth was measured in the number of barns full of yams that one had, the number of livestock: cows, goats, sheep. The acquisition of wealth depended, as we have seen, on the benevolence of nature and physical prowess. With reference to the former, there are various forms of worship whose sole intention is directed to harnessing nature for the profitable use of man. The African, on the one hand, believed in physical work, for which purpose he/she is equipped by nature with physical strength. There were different forms of trade as well, but not many people were traders. Whether in trading or cultivating the earth, the influence of religion was immense but occasionally abused by the priests/priestesses of the gods/goddesses.

In the section dealing with the African sense of community, we saw that several extended families came together to form a community. Many of the activities in the community took place first at the family level and then later in the larger community. The family is the basic

⁵⁸ Mbiti, J., op. cit. 65

economic unit of the African. The first economic planning and economic activities, ranging from the allocation of plots of land for farming, exchange of livestock and formation of work groups, begin at the family level. The reason for this is that most of the agricultural fields are possessed in common and are rotated among members of the family in the periods of farming. The head of the family unit who is responsible for the family land is also the spiritual head of the family. And although each family is independent of the other, they are still held together by the community bond. The same is applicable to individual members of the family, who although have to cultivate the family land rotationally, have total control over the produce. Considered in this way the family was or is, at least in principle, a self-supporting unit of producers and consumers ideally capable of supplying all its own requirements but, in practice, able to exist only within a community of similar families who help each other in economic and other group-defensive ways.

4.6 Conclusion

At the end of our brief exposition of the traditional African culture before its contact with foreign cultures (Arabic culture through Islam and European culture through colonialism and Christianity), we have presented an overview of how the African perceived his/her world and the values that he/she cherished dearly. Central to this was the African sense of community, which as we saw was a network of relationships existing among the living, and between the living, the dead and the unborn. Furthermore, this relationship was extended to the physical environment, but not to the same degree as with human persons. The former was nonetheless treated with respect since the life of man/woman depended very much on it. Any irresponsible act on the part of man/woman towards the physical environment required expiation to ward off the disastrous consequences that could result therefrom. This was the duty of religion. And this dimension of relationship which was demonstrated through sacrifices served as a bridge between the human-physical world and the spiritual world.

Among the living, the sense of community found expression in family life and in the formation of work groups according to sex and age. Such work groups enabled members to provide support for one another and sometimes for distant relations. The entire community benefited from the work groups as they volunteered to help where they were needed in the community. Apart from assistance given to members in farm work, the work groups provided a strong basis for social interaction among members and with other groups from neighbouring

communities. It was therefore rare to find anybody who was so poor that he/she had nothing to eat. In the event of need, he/she would turn to the members of the family or the community. The poor man/woman became the person who was isolated from the community, where he/she could turn to no one for help. But despite the fact that the human person is deep-rooted in the community, his/her identity as an individual is not lost thereby. The human person was valued above everything else and every other thing was sacrificed to save human life whenever it was threatened. However, the African believed that life did not end with death, but continued after death. And to be able to participate in the life after death, like the ancestors, living a good life was imperative.

Opinions are divided among African scholars as to whether the extended family system and the sense of community are still relevant in our modern technological society. According to Kobina Sekyi “the ideal form of social life for humanity was best exemplified in Africa”⁵⁹, because of the extended family system and the community spirit which made caring for relatives obligatory. For other scholars like H. N. Nwosu and O. U. Kalu, although kinship ties and the extended family system could be said to be the common features of traditional African culture, it should not be considered peculiar to Africans. All traditional societies everywhere based on agriculture or cattle-breeding maintained kinship ties and an extended family system⁶⁰. This means therefore that the phase of kinship ties and extended family system has been overtaken in time and cannot be recommended as a model for contemporary African society south of the Sahara. Nevertheless, it has to be underscored that the value associated with such cultural practices as the respect for the human person transcends time. The problem with cultural change arises when the quest for development neglects the human person as the goal of every development and only pursues development for its own sake. Put in another way, it has the effect of divesting culture of its spiritual aspect. This process is termed *secularization*, and refers to the divorce of culture from the sphere of religion, the turning toward the material world as the only source of explanation for all that happens in the society⁶¹. The idea of progress replaces the idea of meaning to the extent that the spiritual dimension of man/woman is gravely neglected. The unavoidable consequence becomes the treatment of man/woman as a mere material entity. With this mindset, violence sets in without qualms of conscience. This is the worst form of poverty that confronts the modern

⁵⁹ Sekyi, K., A Plea for the African Standpoint, cited by Okonkwo R. L., In: Readings in African Humanities: Traditional and Modern Culture, edited by Edith Ihekweazu, Enugu: Fourth Dimension Pub., 1985, 260

⁶⁰ Ibid., 295

⁶¹ Ibid., 290

man/woman, from which the Africans are not spared. But how did the Africans come to this stage? That every culture is prone to change is a truth we have established in the earlier part of this work, but whether the change is from within the culture or from external factors makes a great difference. Collectively, human beings struggle to master their physical environment and in the process create a social order. A change in the physical environment, or to be more precise, a change in the nature of their struggle, will alter their institutions and hence their mode of life and thought. Their new mode of life and thought will in turn affect their institutions and general environment⁶². This dialectical process of cultural change is possible only when the factors of change come from within. On the other hand, if the fact of cultural change is produced by external factors which fail to take into consideration the already existing cultural values, it meets with resistance and protest.

⁶² Pieterse, C. and Munro, D.(eds.), *Protest and Conflict in African Literature*, London: Heinemann, 1969, 56

CHAPTER FIVE

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN AFRICA'S EARLY CONTACT WITH THE WEST
AND THE NEAR EAST: ITS IMPACT ON THE AFRICAN CONDITION

5. 0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we highlighted some of the central elements of the traditional African way of life as they pertain to the topic of this work. This section will focus on the dialectics of continuity and change that followed the first contact of the African way of life or culture with the cultures of the West and Near East. The understanding of this chemistry of *nova et vetera* is very necessary for the appreciation of the miserable position which Africa south of the Sahara (black Africa) and Africans occupy in the contemporary world scene. Considering the myriad of problems which besiege Africa some questions are inevitable if any new path is to be charted: How much of Africa's condition could be attributed to the Africans themselves? And how much could be attributed to the early and continued contacts with foreign cultures? Where do we go from here?

When we talk of Africa's early contacts with the West and the Near East one thing that has to be borne in mind is that it was not a contact based on a meeting of equals. On the contrary, it was a meeting of an 'inferior culture' with a 'superior' one; a simulacrum of the Hegelian master-slave relationship. Against this background, this initial contact was characterised by mutual suspicion and conflicts culminating in the shameful human trade engaged in by the West, with other Africans acting as agents, and then the era of colonization. The history of Africa's relationship with the West is one that dates back about five hundred years. This history was punctuated by a series of violent conflicts between cultures that were based on different assumptions about the nature of the universe, the purpose of human existence, and the moral values that ought to govern an individual's relationship to the world and the other people who inhabit it¹. The superiority of one culture over the other is impossible to establish since different people have different standards of judgment, which are deeply rooted in their world-view. In comparing two cultures, what is often considered is the means for doing something rather than the thing that is done. The consequence, therefore, is the tendency to judge the efficiency of means to a particular end without judging whether the end itself is good or bad. This was the misjudgement on the part of the westerners at the incipient stage of

¹ Mowoe, J. I. and Bjornson, R.(eds.), *Africa and the West: The Legacies of Empire*, New York: Greenwood Press, 1986, 3

their relationship with Africa South of the Sahara. To what extent this error has been corrected is still an open question. At what point of the relationship between the West and Africa did this feeling of superiority/inferiority begin and what has helped to sustain it? How can this be overcome so as to make room for a normal partnership? This chapter sets out to find answers to these questions and to explain some of the problems that still bedevil Africa, at least nominally, many years after her political independence from the West. We shall consider these issues under three broad phases: pre-colonial, colonization and independence, and post-colonial periods.

5. 1 The Pre-Colonial Era of African Contact with the West

5. 1.1 The Era of Myths and Prejudices about Africa and Africans

The picture painted of Africa and its people in medieval history and geography is anything but positive. Ironically, such presentation which was taken to be the absolute information about the continent and the origin of its inhabitants was created at the time the West or more precisely Europe had little or no contact with Africa. Thus it was information or rather misinformation based on speculations and myths, which engendered prejudice in the subsequent, concrete contacts. In his book *Der dunkle Kontinent*, Michael Herkenhoff admitted of this confusion of information when he wrote that “*eine große Verwirrung herrscht in den Quellen über die Herkunft und Verbreitung der Völker Afrikas.*”² Herkenhoff tried to demonstrate in his book the fact that the knowledge about Africans in the Middle Ages was limited to information gathered from ancient geography and the writings of the Church Fathers. Both of these sources in any case were inadequate, as development at that time did not make room for thorough research. Nevertheless they were treated as final statements about a people who were yet to be known. This great confusion is reflected in the fables circulated in medieval times about the people of Africa and their origin. A Biblical story serving as a basis for such fables was Noah’s division of the earth after the flood among his three sons: Sem, Japhet and Cham.³ These names had meanings which served as description of the people who would come after them. The name ‘Sem’ is said to mean ‘glory’ and referred to the people of Asia; while ‘Japhet’ means ‘expansion’ and designated the people of Europe. Finally, the name of the third son of Noah is Cham (Ham), which means

² Herkenhoff, M., *Der dunkle Kontinent: Das Afrikabild im Mittelalter bis zum 12. Jahrhundert*, Bamberg: Centaurus-Verlagsgesellschaft Pfaffenweiler, 1990, 81

³ Gen. 9, 27

‘sunburn’⁴ and was used for the people of Africa. This last son was cursed by his father to the effect that he and his descendants would be slaves to the other two for his unbecoming conduct. This pericope from the book of Genesis was used as one of the arguments justifying slavery. Other writings that contributed to the negative image of the Africans in the medieval times include the collection of the Roman historian Sallust, who in his own account described the origin and development of the people of Africa in the following words:

Am Anfang bewohnten the Gätuler und die Libyes Afrika. Sie waren rauh und ungebildet, ihre Nahrung bestand aus Wildbret, und sie ernährten sich wie Vieh von Gras. Durch keine Sitten, kein Gesetz, durch keinen Befehl wurden sie regiert. Als aber nach dem Tod des Herkules sein aus vielen vielen Stämmen zusammengesetztes Heer auseinanderfiel, setzten die Perser, Meder und Armenier nach Afrika über und besetzten die Orte an der Küste. Die Perser vermischten sich allmählich mit den Gätulern und bezeichneten sich aufgrund ihrer Lebensweise – sie suchten immer wieder neue Gegenden auf – selbst als Nomades. Den Medern und Armeniern gesellten sich die Libyes hinzu. Diese lebten näher am Meer, während die Gätuler mehr unter der Sonne wohnten, nicht weit von der heißen Zone.⁵

Other sources attribute the derogatory statements about the Africans to the popular assumption in the Middle Ages, that there were imaginary people or the so-called ‘*Fabelvölker*’ (fairy-tale people) existing somewhere in the outside world⁶. These people were described generally as “*monströs, sie differierten jedoch in physischer Erscheinung und sozialen Verhalten von der sie beschreibenden Person. Man zählte zu ihnen Völker, die sich aufgrund ihrer Lebensart oder physischer Unnormalität von anderen Völkern abhoben, kannte aber auch wirklich fabelhafte Völker wie die Blemnyer (Kopfloze)*“⁷. Such stories were already present in the ancient Greek mythologies from the time of Hesiod, that there were mysterious human creatures, but there were not associated at that time with any particular people. Concerning the existence of such beings, Augustine maintained that insofar as they were human beings, these creatures are the children of Adam, therefore had a share in the

⁴ Borst, A., Der Turmbau von Babel. Geschichte der Meinungen über Ursprung und Vielfalt der Sprachen und Völker, 4 vols. Stuttgart, 1957 – 63, 122

⁵ Sallust, Bell. Jugurth. 18, 3: Sed postquam in Hispania Hercules, sicut Afri putant, interiit...In: Herkenhoff, M., op. cit., 83

⁶ The notion of the world at that time was the one where the people who were making the claim inhabited.

⁷ Friedman, J. B., The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought, London: Cambridge, 1981 cited in Herkenhoff, M., op. cit., 140

economy of salvation and should be treated with respect⁸. This teaching of Augustine was altered in the Middle Ages with the already cited story of Ham (Cham), which at this time became widespread with the influence of Isidore of Seville and his doctrine of *Ecumene* or the inhabited earth.

It is not quite clear how these mysterious beings came to be associated with the Africans at the beginning of the Middle Ages. Historical records show that about 3,500 B.C.E., there were already urban cultures, first in Mesopotamia and later in the Nile Valley in Egypt, made possible by earliest agricultural techniques.⁹ These centres were and are still referred to as the cradle of civilization in world history. The German ethnologist and philosopher Leo Frobenius argues to this effect that the earliest civilization, like the earliest humans, appeared in Africa and that the continent contributed to the progress of humanity up to and including the Upper Paleolithic.¹⁰ In fact, stone-age technology in Africa was not notably different from stone-age technology elsewhere. Nor did the early phases of agricultural revolution occur differently in Africa.¹¹ However, one may argue that one of the two centres of civilization already mentioned is located in Africa, north of the Sahara. It is pertinent to note that the region that was to become the Sahara began to dry up, changing from something like the open savannah country that now lies south of the desert, around 2,500 B.C.E.¹² Sub-Saharan Africa was then cut off through desertification from north Africa, which was politically part of the Roman Empire, and became *terra incognita*. The Arabs from north Africa made the first trade contact across the desert with the rest of Africa around 1,000 B.C.E.

Apart from the question of their origin and nature, the next issue that contributed to the degradation of the Africans in the world is the colour of the skin. Coming into the limelight through the European explorers and adventurers, the Africans with a different skin-colour from that of those who 'discovered' or 'invented' them, as some would put it, were regarded as inferior. The black skin became synonymous with things evil and '*assoziierte sich mit ihr auf dauerhafteste Weise die Vorstellung von Teufel, Hölle, Verdammnis, Tod, Trauer, Finsternis, Laster, Unglück, Verbrechen, Schmutz, usw.*'¹³ Unlike his/her origin and nature, which were in doubt in the previous ages, the colour of the black man/woman became a mark

⁸ De civitas Dei XVI, 8

⁹ Mowoe, J. I. and Bjornson, R.(eds.), op. cit. 17

¹⁰ Senghor, S. L., The Revolutions of 1889 and Leo Frobenius trans. by Bjornson, cf., Mowoe & Bjornson 77-88

¹¹ Ibid., 18

¹² Ibid., 19

¹³ Cf., Egbulefu, J. O., Die Schwarzafrikanische Literatur: Ihre Originalität und das Problem ihrer Beziehung zu Europa, op. cit. 107

that set him/her apart from other human beings and placed him/her at a disadvantage more than any other race. Utterances, whether in government policy, in public lectures, literary works or private conversation testify to the humiliating status to which the black African is subjected. Only a few example would suffice to buttress this, think of the policy of “*exterminate all the Brutes*” and all that was involved as documented by Sven Lindqvist in his book that bears the same title. In a rather more particular manner, Joseph Conrad writes that, “the conquest of the earth, which mostly means taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea – something you can set up and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to”.¹⁴ For some others who did concede a human status to the black man/woman, it was not the same as that of the Westerner. Thus Hannah Arendt acknowledges the humanity of the black person, but added that he/she was created to be a labourer, *animal laborans*. Against this background, one finds it easy to understand the age-long controversy as to whether there is an African philosophy. Put in another way, are the Africans capable of speculative thinking? It is probably this question of the full humanity of the Africans, among other things, that allowed the slave trade last four centuries with little or no remorse. How this was possible is the theme of the next section.

5. 1. 2 Thinking Through the Atlantic Slave Trade (1440 – 1870)

The buying and selling of African young men and women as slaves started before the European contact with the Africans in the fifteenth century. However, the difference between this form of slavery and that which was practised by the European merchants consisted in the institutionalization of the trade. As early as the tenth century, Muslim traders had commenced trade contacts with Africans. This was the result of the expansion of Muslim power in West Africa around this time, which made possible the spread of the trade in black slaves northwards across the Sahara and from West Africa. But “gold was the core of this early trade. Other exports played their part, notably ivory, as well as the domestic slaves that figure in every account of medieval trade”.¹⁵ There is no written evidence to show that the buying and keeping of slaves from Africa by the Arab traders can be compared either in extent and manner to the fifteenth century trans-Atlantic slave trade. For instance, “the Cairo papers from

¹⁴ Conrad, J., *Heart of Darkness*, New York: Pocket Books, 1972, 7

¹⁵ Davidson, B., *The African Genius: An Introduction to African Cultural and Social History*, New York: Back Bay Books, 1969, 214

the tenth to the latter part of the thirteenth century often refer to the buying and selling of the slaves for use as servants or as business agents, but it never appeared to be a slave trade of any importance”.¹⁶ This position is disputable when we consider the fact that slavery is officially approved in the Koran, the holy writ of Islam; which equally approves the conversion or killing of non-believers, *the infidels*. In any case, we have decided to restrict our investigation here to the trans-Atlantic slave trade, because of the horror associated with it and the duration of its perpetration, but above all, because of the mark it has left on the psyche of the Africans, many years after it was terminated.

The trans-Atlantic slave trade was started by Prince Henry of Spain, who in the first half of the fifteenth century sent out sailors to explore Africa. This journey was not solely pure adventure as some historians hold, but had economic interest attached to it. Firstly, Prince Henry wanted to find a way of participating in the trans-Saharan trade between the Muslim Arabs and the natives on the atlantic shore of Senegal. Other sources assert that he was motivated by the rumour that there was somewhere a river of gold in Africa that emptied into the sea. Whatever might have been the reason, Thomas Hugh writes that after the initial attempts which met with failure, Prince Henry sent out a group of fifteen seamen on the 8th of August, 1444 to West Africa, who came back with a cargo of two hundred and thirty-five slaves.¹⁷ Thus, the first entrance of Africans into European history came in their status as slaves, serving as an omen to an era of merchandise in human torture and misery.¹⁸ With this, the trade in humans was launched and other people like Bartholomew Dias and Vasco da Gama followed the example of Prince Henry and his seamen.

Black slaves were exchanged by the middlemen for things like mirrors, articles of clothing, guns, beads, brandy, cowrie shells, horses, etc. At the conclusion of the exchange, they were chained together and loaded in the ships as commodities. There were middlemen whose duty was to buy the slaves directly from the natives and then sell to the merchants. As the trade developed with much demand following the discovery of America (the New World), the system of acquiring slaves varied from direct seizure of slaves, rather than their purchase, also called ‘razzias’ – an odious practice of man-stealing to the waging of inter-tribal wars with the aim of getting captives to be sold as slaves. After the raid, the slaves were now gathered at the

¹⁶ Ibid., 214

¹⁷ Hugh, T., *The Slave Trade: The History of the Atlantic Slave Trade 1440 – 1870*, New York: Simon and Schuster Inc., 1997, 21

¹⁸ Igwe, U. T., *Communicative Rationality and Deliberative Democracy of Jürgen Habermas: Toward Consolidation of Democracy in Africa*, Studies in African Philosophy, vol. 3, Münster: LIT-Verlag, 2004, 352

harbours before they were bundled into the ships for transportation onward. Describing the sight of this human misery, Gomes Eannes de Zurara wrote:

What heart could be so hard as not to be pierced with piteous feeling to see that company? For some kept their heads low, and their faces bathed in tears, looking one upon another. Others stood groaning very dolorously, looking up to the height of heaven, fixing their eyes upon it, crying out loudly, as if asking help from the Father of nature; others struck their faces with the palms of their hands, throwing themselves at full length upon the ground; while others made lamentations in the manner of a dirge, after the custom of their country.... But to increase their sufferings still more, there now arrived those who had charge of the division of the captives and ... then it was needful to part fathers from sons, husbands from wives, brothers from brothers. No respect was shown to either friends or relations, but each fell where his lot took him.¹⁹

One of the reasons why this type of treatment was meted out on the black African slaves was the negative image of the story of Noah and his sons, which we already described above. The slave merchants believed that the captives owed their fate to the sins of their supposed ancestor Ham, cursed by his father, Noah, after seeing him naked and drunk. Both Christian and Muslim traditions maintained that the descendants of Ham had been turned black, because of the sins of their father.²⁰ Some Christians like Julian Zulueta and others who engaged in this trade felt they were saving the slaves from perpetual curse and damnation as they organised the baptism of the slaves before they left Africa.²¹ Besides, there was the often but falsely cited sentence from Aristotle, in the first book of his *Politics*, where he asserted that, 'humanity is divided into two: the masters and the slaves; or if one prefers it, the Greeks and the Barbarians; those who have the right to command, and those who are born to obey.' Then he went further to describe the slave as 'a property with a soul'²². In the first instance, it was wrong to apply this statement of Aristotle as a justification for the Atlantic slave trade, because the manner of getting and keeping slaves in ancient Greece and later in the Roman empire was characterised by a certain modicum of respect. There was a certain level of understanding between the slave, or better put the servant, and his master. For instance, it is known that Cicero's slave Tiro was his confidential secretary and was well educated. Apart

¹⁹ Hugh, T., op. cit., 22

²⁰ Ibid., 23

²¹ Ibid., 9

²² *Politics*, 1252b.

from that, the practice of keeping slaves at that time was not unanimously accepted. It was heavily criticised as contrary to nature and interference with nature, hence regarded as unjust.

The major reason, however, why the Atlantic slave trade took such a dramatic turn and lasted for over four hundred years has been attributed to the co-operation of some African kings and chiefs in the human commerce. These leaders or their delegates acted as the middle men for the slave merchants and helped in obtaining slaves either through man-hunt or by inciting inter-tribal wars which provided opportunity for taking some young men/women as captives to be sold as slaves. The gains they were making and the influence they were wielding increased inter-ethnic and inter-clan wars. Equipped with the modern guns acquired from the European merchants, neighbours became enemies. Tribal wars were no longer a matter of bows and arrows, but involved the use of guns; and the more sophisticated the guns became the more people were killed or captured as slaves. Clans that were weak had to solicit the help of other clans with the promise of sharing the booty or the land with them. It is believed that those wars embarked upon for the purpose of enslavement could not be compared to the small inter-clan skirmishes which took place among the natives before the arrival of the Western slave merchants.²³ Hugh argues that the large labour force (there are no existing accurate records) of slaves from Africa would not have been available to the Europeans in the Americas without the cooperation of African kings, merchants and noblemen. Those African rulers were, as a rule, neither bullied nor threatened into making the sales.²⁴ In line with this, is Voltaire's sharp critique that, while it was difficult to defend the conduct of Europeans in the slave trade, that of Africans in bartering each other was even more reprehensible and cannot be forgotten. It is therefore unfair to apportion the whole blame to the European slave merchants, as central as their role was in the inhuman commerce that lasted for centuries. Can this not be likened to the role which the neo-colonialists in governments are playing now by selling the natural resources to some foreign companies and pocketing the money alone? Is it not in a bid to remain in power that some African leaders contract with Western powers to back them up with the promise of buying arms from them to be used against any opposition?

Apart from the demographic reduction, Africans suffered a moral reduction through the slave trade, which has accompanied her history even to the present day and put in question her subsequent contacts with the West and Near East. The slave trade robbed the Africans of their sense of dignity as human persons. They were simply reified. The slave-status dogs their steps,

²³ Basden, G. T., *Niger Ibos*, London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1966, 411

²⁴ Hugh, T., *op. cit.*, 793

even many years after the abolition of the trade. The Africans through their actions tend to confirm the thesis of Egidio Colonna that if people did not have laws, and if they did not live peacefully under a government, they were more beasts than human and therefore would legally be enslaved. This is the human poverty that confronts Africa today, the resolution of which must precede that of material poverty. Caught therefore in this intricate condition of bottled anger following decimation and deprivation, Africans become reactors instead of actors.

The next contact of Africans with Europe after the trans-Atlantic slave trade was the colonial era. This, unlike that of slavery, met with considerable resistance, but the greater power prevailed in the said *civilizing mission of the savages*. What follows is an exposition of what transpired in the period of colonization and the struggle to attain independence with its attendant problems. The expose' is to underscore the cultural schizophrenia which is at the root of the African problem of poverty and violence.

5. 2 The Impact of Colonization and the Struggles for Independence

The end of the trans-Atlantic slave trade did not mean that the contact between the West and Africa was terminated, rather there was only a change in form. Some of the European slave merchants switched over to legitimate trade in other commodities like gold, timber, gum arabic, skins, though some of this trade had co-existed with the slave trade. This continuity makes some scholars argue that the era of colonization did not begin during the late nineteenth century as against those who held that it started with the Berlin resolution for the partition of Africa. Colonization, they maintain, was only an extension of slavery, albeit characterised by a different policy. For the proponents of this latter theory, which Ali Mazrui describes as the "episodic theory of Africa colonialism", "it is a vain venture to seek to limit the colonial period to the 'brief' seventy years between the 1884 Berlin Conference that partitioned and legitimized European occupation of Africa, and the early 1960s, when most of the African countries attained constitutional decolonisation."²⁵ In other words, the incipient phase of colonialism is traceable to the mid-fifteenth century when the European fortune seekers entered Africa.

²⁵ Mazrui, A., *The African: A Triple Heritage*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1986, 16

Inasmuch as our concern here is not the duration of colonialism, but its impact on the peoples' lives, it is pertinent to make reference to the meaning of the term 'colonialism' as a way of reconciling the two positions. The New Pocket Oxford English Dictionary defines colonialism as, "the practice by which one country acquires control over another, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically"²⁶. A colony, therefore, refers to "a country or area under the control of another country and occupied by settlers from that country"²⁷. Thus, the early incursions made by the Europeans as sailors and/or traders may not be described as colonialism in the strict sense of the word, but that does not mean that its impact was less than that of slavery. In colonialism, the Africans were enslaved on their own soil as they laboured to maintain the home economy of the colonizers, and during the slave trade they were taken out of their countries to labour in the sugar and other plantations. Both exercises robbed the Africans of their human worth and dignity externally and internally, bringing along generational racial discrimination and lack of self-confidence and self-esteem. Frantz Fanon captured this vividly, when he wrote that "the disaster of the man of colour lies in the fact that he was enslaved"²⁸. This disaster which Fanon alluded to arises from the deprivation of his cultural originality. It is primarily in this perspective that the impact of colonialism, whose mission was *to civilize the savages*, can be better assessed. How far this mission succeeded is left to the judgment of history.

The official adoption of the German doctrine of the "hinterland" in Berlin on the 23rd of February, 1885 was the beginning of the European colonization of Africa. According to this doctrine, "every nation with possessions along the African coast had the right not only to dispose of territory immediately behind them, but also to enlarge its borders to its own liking, as long as this did not harm the interests of the neighbouring European colony".²⁹ With this declaration at the Berlin conference, the so-called scramble for Africa commenced, spearheaded by England and France, who now overtook Portugal and Spain, who had led the trans-Atlantic slave trade. We had already mentioned that the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade did not terminate the contact between European merchants and their African suppliers, rather the trade commodities were no longer officially human persons. These merchants, who had developed into powerful private companies that assumed political responsibility even before the state intervened, inspired in no small measure the colonization

²⁶ Soanes, C. et. al. (eds.), Pocket Oxford English Dictionary, 10th Edition, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Fanon, F., *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by Richard Philcox, New York: Grove Press, 2004, 10

²⁹ Monti, N.(ed.), *Africa Then: Photographs 1840 – 1918*, London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1987, 23

of Africa. The Berlin conference gave official stamp to what the companies had begun. These companies simply took sovereign power over enormous regions, securing them with their own diplomacy and administering them directly according to laws they themselves made which were later ratified by the government of their home countries.³⁰ There was a gradual metamorphosis of the European traders from explorers and merchants to administrators, from ordinary buyers to masters. The rapidity with which the industrial revolution developed, made the demand for new commercial outlets and cheap raw materials very urgent. These were then provided by the colonies. The colonies were therefore a mercantile creation, essentially formidable organisations of international exchange.³¹ Judging from the foregoing, one could conclude that economic interest was masked in the “mission of civilization” which is often stated as the reason for the European colonization of Africa. Local man power was increased to produce more materials for trade, and tax was imposed on the males to raise money for the home countries of the colonizers. The economies of African countries were shaped to the advantage of the colonial authorities as cash crops like coffee, rubber, peanuts and cocoa were grown for the European markets. In this way the traditional subsistence farming was destroyed. The consequence of this change was that the economies of the respective African societies became completely dependent on the economic development of the urbanized cities of the colonizers to whom they were subjected. Besides, the satellite towns developed by the European traders and later colonial administrators in the colonies became attracted young boys who had to abandon farm work in the villages in search of white-collar jobs in the cities. The villages were thereby robbed of sufficient man-power for farm work. Furthermore, the community spirit created by group work was lost.

The impact of colonialism at the cultural and socio-political levels was much more obtrusive. Every attempt by the colonizers to impose foreign ideas on the indigenous folk met with violent resistance. This resistance began after the Berlin Conference of 1884, where the participating European nations divided Africa by drawing political boundaries on maps. Unfortunately, those boundaries, drawn on largely inaccurate maps, cut apart ethnic groups, kingdoms, and historically linked regions in ways that continue to cause conflicts in Africa today.³² A few examples here will help to buttress this fact, as some of those affected are still at war today, many years after independence. The violent conflicts in Sudan and Rwanda are

³⁰ Ibid., 24

³¹ Ibid., 24

³² Gordon, A. A & Gordon, L. D. (eds.), *Understanding Contemporary Africa*, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc., 1992, 43

not unconnected to the misstep in the political division of Africa. Even where the colonial regimes seemed to have been successfully established, the natives continued to seek for ways to reassert independence, an indication that colonialism was not accepted throughout Africa. The demonstration of the people of Shona and Ndebele against the British in Southern Rhodesia in 1890 and that of the people of Tanganyika, who fought against the Germans in the Maji Maji resistance in 1905 – 1906 are remarkable. Of course in each of these attempts the colonizers with their superior weapons and skill were able to subjugate the natives. The seeds of violence were in any case sown through such battle.

Closely related to the misstep in the political division of Africa was the attempt to impose on the colonized people a system of leadership that did not correlate with their value systems. The rapid change brought about by the industrial revolution, the rise of the larger and richer middle class coupled with the complete reliance on reason occasioned by the Enlightenment gave Europe an overwhelming belief in its own moral and cultural superiority. A master plan was created with which all colonies were to be governed: For the British it was indirect rule, whereas for the French it was assimilation. However, there was no plan that worked for all the colonies. An interesting example of this unresolved heterogeneity is the introduction of the feudal hierarchical system among a race like the Igbo in eastern Nigeria by the colonial authorities and the Christian church. The Igbos, before the coming of the European, had been known to live in strictly democratic and acephalous village units, each one independent of its neighbour in its internal organisation and government. Unlike the Yoruba and Bini in western Nigeria, and the Hausa-Fulani in the north, who had evolved intricate and long-standing hierarchical systems of governance with the “Obas” and the “Emirs”, respectively, at the head of the kingdoms, the Igbo lacked such a structure. The popular saying among the Igbo people that, “Igbo enweghi eze” (the Igbos know no kings) underscores this cultural reality. This was, however, an anomaly for the British colonial authorities, who ignored this and went ahead to create a system of government that could make the implementation of indirect rule also feasible in this region. This foreign imposition of an alien idea and structure into the fabric of Igbo political organization was heavily resisted and led eventually to the well-known revolt of the women of Igboland in 1929, a revolt popularly called the women’s or Aba Riots, the designations referring to the group that championed it and the region where it took place, respectively. Realising their mistakes in the imposition of the feudal structure on a people who were democratic *ab ovo*, the British colonial authority withdrew the artificially created Warrant Chiefs. The modified forms of the same policy proved equally difficult and were

resisted. Commenting on the effects of the absurdity of this mutilation of the African cultures by the European, Margery Perham writes:

In Africa, we are setting heavy burdens upon native institutions which have been weakened by the abnormal strains of the last thirty or forty years. . . . (The Africans) have suddenly found themselves embraced by a world economy and an imperial order. . . their members, yesterday active, independent and self-reliant have passed under the control of foreigners remote in culture from themselves and suffer today a sense of bewilderment and inferiority that diminishes their full human nature.³³

The Christian church was not entirely spared this problem in the creation of parishes and dioceses, as some of the separate village and ethnic groups were merged together as one. This later gave rise to unhealthy rivalries and intrigues among the component groups. Some of them had to leave the mainstream churches to establish their own religious groups in order to assert their own autonomy and allegiance to ancestral ethnolinguistic units, thereby giving rise to the proliferation of churches which has continued till today. It is not therefore surprising that political groupings even after independence follow this trend of preserving the ethnic alliance, which was not destroyed in the aftermath of colonialism. As we saw in the earlier part of this work, violent conflicts were perceived partly as defence of ethnic pride.

One other area that needs to be addressed with reference to the impact of colonization concerns the African personality. There are obvious reasons to believe that the African is, to a large extent, haunted by civilizational synthesis. After seventy-five years of colonialism whose mission in the words of Winston Churchill, was to “give peace to warring tribes, to administer justice where all was violence, to strike the chains off the slave; and to increase in whole peoples their capacities for pleasure and diminish their chances of pain”³⁴; the African is yet to know justice and enjoy a peaceful non-violent existence. Can one say then that the ‘mission’ of colonization is a failed mission? Has this not left the traditional African dangling between the two cultures?

In his second novel, *No Longer At Ease*, a title which was borrowed from a line in T. S. Eliot’s “The Journey of the Magi”, Chinua Achebe described the fate of the African as he/she

³³ Perham, M., *Native Administration in Nigeria*, London: Oxford University Press, 1937, 354

³⁴ Churchill, W., *The River War*, cited in Monti, N., op. cit. 24

struggles to imbibe Western civilization alongside the African cultural values. The hero of the novel is Obi Okonkwo, the grandson of Okonkwo, who opposed the introduction of Christianity in Umuofia³⁵ with the last drop of blood in Achebe's first novel, *Things Fall Apart*. Obi is privileged to acquire a Western education thanks to the generosity of the Umuofia Progressive Union, that contributes to sponsoring his education in England. He comes back from England and he is employed as a civil servant. Obi Okonkwo becomes ambitious and is determined to succeed not only for himself, but also for the sake of his family and the entire community that contributed to sponsor his education. He falls into debt and is subsequently trapped in a plot where he accepts bribes to supplement his salary. Unfortunately for him, he is caught, tried and convicted of bribery and corruption. The elegant life-style in Lagos, where Obi Okonkwo now works is contrasted to the simple village life in Umuofia, where Obi grew up and lived before he left for studies in England. He is lured by the excesses of city life and tries to keep up appearances.³⁶ The people of Umuofia in their bewilderment begin to speculate on the source of such behaviour that was not known in the community. Although the action of Obi Okonkwo is condemned outright, the people associated it with city life brought by Western civilization. The problem here is that of "the moral complications and influences of urbanization" and that "the uneasy moral ambiguities of cultural homogenization were not prepared for. The inevitable consequences of cultural amalgamation, when Africa encountered Europe, were not foreseen. Consequently, Obi Okonkwo's tasting of modernity, imposed by foreign culture, is too much for his immature personality".³⁷ The crisis in Obi Okonkwo's moral life can neither be attributed to Western civilization nor to his traditional Igbo cultural background, where there is no word for bribery and corruption, but rather to his inability to integrate the values of the two cultures. Achebe's point in this novel is to show the conflict that can arise from the meeting of two cultures.

Ayi Kwei Armah of Ghana in his novel, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, paints a different picture of his hero, who is simply designated as "The Man". Like Obi Okonkwo, the man has the privilege of a Western education, though the author does not tell us whether he was sponsored by his community as was Obi. In any case, he is employed to work in a train station in Ghana. Since he refuses to join in the corrupt practices which were in vogue at the

³⁵ Umuofia is a community in Igboland in eastern Nigeria, which Chinua Achebe used as a paradigm in his novel "Things Fall Apart" to depict the clash between the Judeo-Christian culture and African Culture in the early contacts of the missionaries with native customs and culture.

³⁶ Njoku, C. B., *The Four Novels of Chinua Achebe: A Critical Study*, New York; Berne; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1984, 39

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 40

time, he is considered foolish and therefore ridiculed by friends and relatives. He is always compared to one of his classmates, who went into politics, was immediately made a minister, and became very rich. But despite the pressure, the man refuses to get on the bandwagon, he does not want to identify with the usual “everybody is doing it” argument, *mit den Wölfen zu heulen*. The story ends by telling us that the rich politician had to seek refuge in the house of “The Man” when their government is overthrown. The settings of the two novels are different, the one is in the pre-independent Nigeria, the other in the post-independent Ghana, but the common message is that of culture contact, receptivity and resilience. The problem, after all, was not that of the meeting of two cultures, which would have taken place even without colonialism, it was rather that the foreign cultural values were imposed on the natives, who responded in different ways ranging from reluctant acceptance to outright resistance.

The struggle for independence was championed by the few Africans who were educated overseas. It came in a more articulated form than the sporadic resistance and violent conflicts which characterised the entire period of colonization. This resistance eventually caused many Africans their lives. Referring to the steps taken by the natives’ resistance to the colonizers, Churchill described the Africans as “wild peoples, ignorant of their barbarism, callous of suffering, careless of life but tenacious of liberty, are seen to resist with fury the philanthropic invaders, and to perish in thousands before they are convinced of their mistake”.³⁸ To correct the mistake of a primitive method of resistance and a finished plan for self-government, the elites began to write and speak about liberation from the colonial powers. These first African elites and protagonists of African independence who did not apply what they learned in the West became a proof of the adage that you could take a man/woman out of his/her country, but you cannot take the country out of the man/woman. Writing in this regard of the error of the French method of assimilation in Senegal and other French colonies, Adrian Roscoe observed that “faced with men whom they considered barbarians, the French believed it their mission to convert them into Frenchmen. This implied a fundamental acceptance of their potential human equality, but a total dismissal of African culture as of any value”.³⁹ For even though they embraced Western education, the elites were aware that there would be no real Africa if Africa were not independent. These Western-educated African elites had acquired the language of the colonizers and could speak with them directly without any mediator/interpreter, which gave them a certain degree of confidence. Western education was therefore an important instrument that helped to actualise the dream of independence.

³⁸ Churchill, W., op. cit. 24

³⁹ Roscoe, A., *Mother is Gold*, London 1977, 28 cited in Egbulefu, J., op. cit. 114

Two external factors, however, contributed immensely to the liberation of the Africans from the colonial powers. The one factor was the literary works of the Afro-American blacks, who in the early part of the 20th century made a major contribution to the raising of black consciousness. Examples of the scholars who led the literary fight for the restoration of the image of the black man battered through the slave trade include W. E. B. Du Bois whose book ‘Souls of Black Folk’ made a great impact. Then there was the “The Negro Renaissance” with the poet Claude McKay (1891 – 1948), Countee Cullen (1903 – 1946) and Langston Hughes (1902 – 1967) as prominent members. The literary achievements of these people was a stimulus to the African elites in their quest for independence. The next factor was the experience of World War II with the proclamation in 1941 of the Atlantic Charter and the creation of the United Nations Organisation and the declaration of universal human rights a few years after the war. The blacks in America took advantage of this development to form civil rights movements. The ideas contained therein contributed to the new visions of the right to freedom from colonial rule that Africans began to voice. After the war, political parties were formed, the strongest of which were in West Africa, where European settlers were not many. Thus from 1945 – 1960, African nationalist parties led by men such as Kwame Nkrumah, Sekou Toure, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Leopold Senghor and Felix Houphouet-Boigny developed mass support, won local elections and pushed for more political rights and ultimately for independence.⁴⁰ Most of the colonized African countries got their independence between 1957 and 1970, apart from Angola, Zimbabwe and South Africa who became independent in 1975, 1980 and 1990 respectively.

5.3 Post-Colonial Africa and the Legacies of Colonization

The expression “post-colonial Africa” is used here to refer to the period during which all African countries that were under colonial powers attained independence. Of course there were only two African countries that never experienced colonial rule, namely Ethiopia and Liberia. Thus the post-colonial period is a relatively short time for so much change to have taken place especially when we remember, as already mentioned, that South Africa got her independence at the threshold of the second millenium, more precisely in 1990. But it is also within the same space of time that the former Communist countries in Europe were able to develop their countries after the fall of communism. On the other hand, it is quite sufficient a

⁴⁰ Gordon, A. A. & Gordon, L. D. (eds.), *op. cit.* 46

time for a significant change to have taken place when we remember that Ghana gained independence in 1957, the first black African country to do so. When one considers the enormity of joy and great hope that came with independence and the many problems confronting Africa today, a multitude of questions become inevitable as to what the causes for these problems could be. Ali Mazrui articulates the situation in the following words:

Particularly important in post-colonial Africa has been the dilemma of development and the search for an ideology of transformation. The euphoria of the early years of independence has been replaced by the agonies of failure. Political instability is widespread; food production has declined; numbers of refugees are expanding. As the saying goes, the old revolution of rising expectations has indeed been replaced by a new revolution of deepening frustrations.⁴¹

The scapegoat mentality that blames colonialism for every problem in the post-colonial Africa is simply naive and unjustified. At the same time, to argue that the European colonial powers in Africa did not contribute at all to the present African condition would be to shy away from obvious historical truths. Our aim here is to examine to what extent colonialism be could said to be responsible for the problem of poverty and violence in Africa; and to find out why after the assumption of leadership the pioneer presidents of independent African countries failed to chart the right course for the development of Africa. To what extent were/are the African leaders independent in policy making? How are the socio-cultural changes that were brought about by colonialism affecting the human values of the Africans in the post-colonial era? What steps should be taken to reduce the problems of poverty and violence in post-colonial Africa? The point is that the African, through colonialism, was exposed to two ways of experiencing reality, society, authority and myth. The first was the European open culture distinguished by ideologies in rapid evolution and eager for exploration and conquest. The second was the African culture, cut off from the rest of the world and dominated by religion, tradition and magic. The interaction of these polarities serve to clarify some of the difficulties that persist in post-colonial Africa. We shall restrict our examination of these difficulties below to politico-economic dilemma and socio-cultural dependence. The one, because it is the major cause of violent conflicts and poverty; the other, because it is responsible for the loss of African identity.

⁴¹ Mazrui, A. A., “*Cultural Forces in African Politics: In search of a Synthesis*”. In: Mowoe, J. I. and Bjornson, R. (eds.), op. cit. 33 – 53.

5. 3. 1 The Politico-Economic Legacy: A Critique

In the second chapter of this work, in which we dealt extensively with violent conflicts resulting from the struggle for political power, we saw that ethnic interests played a major role in the political development and control of resources in the newly independent states. Political power was virtually tied to economic power, such that to secure political power meant and still means to gain economic power. How did the colonial authorities manage the problem of ethnic differences in their political structures? Why was it impossible for the new African leaders to apply the same strategy? To answer these questions some facts have to be taken into consideration. It is to be noted that the ethnic conflicts were not entirely absent during the period of colonization. The major concern for the ethnic groups, however, was the foreign power and how to be liberated from it. The ethnic differences were more or less submerged during the struggle for independence. Some problems such as those we have already mentioned, included the annexation of different ethnic groups only for political reasons, without regard for the cultural and boundary discrepancies.

Besides, the system of government bequeathed by the colonial authorities, whether in the Francophone Africa or in Anglophone Africa, was a replica of the government of their respective home countries. This enabled them to continue to exercise influence on the politics of their former colonial territories. For example, the encouragement of many political parties in the new independent states by the colonial authorities was meant to divide the ranks of the nationalist movements. It is on record that all the colonial authorities apart from Portugal bequeathed the parliamentary systems of government with multi-partism to African states at independence. Thus, colonial political bureaucracies were transferred to the political elites. Some of the parties were sponsored from the ex-colonial powers with the aim of protecting their interests. The English common law provided the core of the legal system for all the Anglophone countries and has remained so till today. The problem was that there was no effort on the part of the colonial authorities to train indigenous man power for some of these initiatives. And then the imposition of a system of government that did not take into consideration the cultural heterogeneity of the people, simply because it worked in the home countries of the colonial authorities, could only produce more problems. About this arrangement, Charles de Gaulle once remarked that, “it is not certain that the concept of a federation, which replaces in certain areas to a certain extent the concept of colonization, is always very good and very practical, and particularly in Africa – but not only in Africa, for in

fact, that consists in automatically putting together very different peoples, sometimes very different indeed, and who, in consequence do not like it at all".⁴²

On the other hand, the various institutions for the maintenance of law and order like the police and the army bequeathed by the colonial authorities could have been useful, though these were deployed by the African leaders for the advancement of personal interest and perpetuity in power. One noticed that the Africans who assumed leadership of the African states after independence became very despotic in dealing with their fellow Africans. It was a good example of the psychologically proven fact that victims often end up becoming perpetrators (*Opfer wird Täter*). It has been rightly observed that Africa's worst evils in the political domain since independence are the danger of tyranny on the one hand and anarchy on the other. The leaders' constant contact with the colonial authorities served as a confirmation of their legitimacy and made it difficult for a policy without foreign influence to be fashioned. The system resulting from this inability of the first African leaders to cut the political umbilical cord connecting them to the colonial powers is described as *neo-colonialism*. Consequent upon this is corruption spread caused by the leaders's desire to acquire much money that would help them secure their political posts forever, for which they need the services of some foreign agencies. What followed was the takeover of leadership by the military through *coup d'états*, which became widespread in all the countries of Africa in the first two or more decades after independence. The situation in those countries where the military, not trained to rule, had taken the mantle of leadership became anything but peaceful.

At the economic level, colonialism did not bequeath any solid plan for the further development of the continent after independence. As we stated above, the colonial authorities emphasized the production of cash crops to the detriment of food crops in the colonies. The reason was that cash crops supplied raw materials for the industries in their home countries. This was in contradiction to a basic economic rule that industries are sited near the place where raw materials are produced. The rhetorical question that immediately comes to mind is, why were those industries not sited in the colonies where those raw materials were produced? Besides, the monopoly on the machinery for the production of cash crops by the colonial authorities did not give the natives the opportunity to learn how to manipulate the machines for production. What this means is that after independence the colonial masters withdrew their equipment and in places where they were left, there were no technicians to manipulate them.

⁴² De Gaulle, C., 1968 cited in Mazrui, A. (ed.), General History of Africa, vol.VIII, op. cit., 446

This led to the drastic reduction in the production of cash and food crops. To be in tune with the developed world economically meant to increase cash crop production. “Regrettable as it is, it is not surprising in such circumstances that independent Africa pursued, more vigorously than ever before, the development of export-crop production. Scant attention continued to be paid to food production. Thus, between 1960 and 1965, while export crops registered a global 23.3 per cent increase, food crops expanded by only 6.7 per cent.”⁴³ Imperialism was continued on the economic level when colonial Africa emerged into independence with an economy that devoted a considerable proportion of its resources to the production of export commodities for which there was little domestic demand and depended on outside-African countries for the supply of its basic needs, even including most of its food requirements.⁴⁴ It was in line with this that Monti argues that colonization has often been justified in terms of its material achievements, as defined by the West, on the continent, but the humanitarian component really never represented the main incentive. The *Lagos Plan of Action* underlined this systematic neglect of the small-holder peasant farmer and the production of food crops, stating that ‘at the root of the food problem in Africa is the fact that member States have not accorded the necessary priority to agriculture, both in the allocation of resources and in giving sufficient attention to policies for the promotion of productivity and improvement of rural life.’⁴⁵

The inherent logic in these economic twists and turns is that while the former colonies produced cash crops like cocoa, rubber, groundnuts, for the industries in the mother countries (previous colonial authorities) who determined the price at which the raw materials were sold, the colonies (now independent states) bought the finished products from them at a price determined and fixed by them. So whichever way one looks at the economy of post-colonial Africa, it is seen to be completely dependent on the economic policies of the ex-colonial powers. The state of the economy in the countries of post-colonial Africa has been characterised as polarised by the risk of economic dependency on the one hand and the peril of economic decay on the other. While dependency is a truncated capacity for self-reliance, decay is a truncated capacity for development. Thus, any decision on how to help Africa overcome the problem of poverty and hunger should begin with a change in economic policy, which can either empower the African countries by allowing them to determine the price of

⁴³ Adedeji, A., *Comparative strategies of economic decolonization in Africa*, In: Mazrui, A. A (ed.), *General History of Africa*, op. cit., 393 – 431.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 403

their exports or the reduction by transnational corporations of the import rate on goods sent to Africa. This demand of developing countries led to the setting up in 1975 of STABEX that helped to stabilize commodity prices especially of agricultural produce. With this development following the call made by underdeveloped countries after the UNCTAD Conference of 1974, a ray of hope was cast on the demands for a 'new international economic order'.

Another aspect of the economy of the post-colonial African states is the total dependence on foreign experts and technicians. Since the operative rule in every economic venture is to make more profit, there are instances where the desire to get some machines sold have led some companies to give the wrong information to the prospective buyers. The result is that the machines are installed or the project executed without being able to function. An educated and well-travelled police captain in Mali recounts sorrowfully this economic dishonesty in an interview thus:

That is the fault of the West. The West told us to build power stations, bridges, factories, steel mills, phosphate mines. We built them because you said so, and the way you told us. But now they don't work, you tell us we must pay for them with our money. That is not fair. You told us to build them, you should pay for them. We didn't want them.⁴⁶

On the part of the African leaders, it was difficult to find an economic system suitable for the independent African states. Since in time the effort was to dissociate as much as possible from the ex-colonial authority, the leaders were keen on trying to produce something original. Most of the African countries established independent monetary institutions, while some others associated economic decolonization with the desire to direct their societies to socialist goals. This move attracted more stringent economic measures from the West, given the division already existing between capitalism and communism. The most radical socialist strategy of economic decolonization was that of Tanzania and the ideology of *ujamaa vijijini* or village socialism which was based on a policy of self-reliance. This form of socialism, as Julius Nyerere articulated it in his manifesto, was to be based on the traditional values of the village, emphasizing the group and mutual support in contradistinction to the individualistic and exploitative values of capitalism.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Landes, S. D., *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*, op. cit. 504

⁴⁷ Adediji, A., op. cit. 397

But the greatest problem still facing the economies of the post-colonial African states is the corruption of their leaders. It is a verifiable fact that “in Africa the richest people are the heads of states and their ministers”.⁴⁸ Corruption has almost become institutionalised as an avenue for siphoning money out of the government coffers as the inflation of bureaucracy to provide jobs for henchmen increased; the economy is squeezed for its surplus. The greater percentage of foreign aid ends in numbered accounts abroad.⁴⁹ We have already dealt with the problem of the corruption of political leaders in Africa in the earlier part of this work. At any rate, what remains incomprehensible for the majority of the African people is how the same monetary aid which comes from concerned foreign organisations and institutions flows back unquestioned to the foreign banks through the private accounts of the African leaders unquestioned. The real foreign aid should begin with the making of policies preventing African politicians from transferring money from poor countries to their overseas bank accounts.

Finally, it is pertinent to underscore the fact that economic development, like other forms of development in the countries of post-colonial Africa, needs time and planning. It took Europe centuries to achieve a well developed economy, why should Africa be expected to do so in mere decades, especially after the recent distortions of colonialism?⁵⁰ Even the not-too-long economic and technological courtship between Africa and China cannot provide a solution to the African problem because of the disparity in the human and moral values that distinguish the two.

5. 3. 2 The Legacy of Socio-Cultural Change: An Appraisal

European contacts with Africa through colonialism brought a lot of changes to the social institutions and cultural values of the latter. Since cultures are the summation of a people's way of life, and hence carriers of their identity, these changes had great influence on the African peoples' perception of themselves and their values. Some of these changes have contributed immensely to the positive image of Africa in the world history today. For instance, the use of European languages, thanks to colonialism, serves as a bridge between Africa South of Sahara and the West. Armed with this instrument of communication, the African is able to find his/her way everywhere in the world. It has also been argued, on the other hand,

⁴⁸ Ayittey, B. N. G., “The U.N.’s Shameful Record in Africa,” *Wall Street Journal*, 26 July, 1996, 12

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 12

⁵⁰ Landes, S. D., *op. cit.* 507

that this practice interrupted the development of African languages as the speaking of native languages was forbidden in the schools in the colonial days.

Christian missionaries played an important role in establishing schools in every community for the education of the natives. Even in some areas where this was resisted, efforts were made to convince the parents of the importance of Western education for their children and at times incentives were provided. The schools became equally the medium for transmitting Western cultural values. But in some areas, especially in Muslim-dominated regions, Western education was rejected outright as a vehicle of Western values. A typical example of this is the case of the Hausa-Fulani in northern Nigeria, where the British, fearful of upsetting Muslim sensibilities and anxious to make use of the Islamic institutions, discouraged the Christian missionaries' penetration of the north, and also discouraged the introduction of Western education, at least for some time. This development came to be a source of insecurity and regional cleavage between the northern and southern parts of the country. The Muslim-dominated north felt disadvantaged in the Western linguistic and literary skills which became, after independence, the basis of a new intelligensia. It is against this background that one can understand the occasional protest by some Muslims in the northern part of the country against Western education and its values even in the 21st century. The so-called 'quota system'⁵¹ was then introduced by the government to close the gap arising from the difference in the number of educated people in the north and south.

The schools, coupled with the Christian churches as indices of Western civilization had, great impact on traditional Africa that gave rise to the conflict of cultures which influenced, in no small way, the mode of life of the Africans. The most significant impact came from the introduction of a socio-economic order which saw the payment of regular wages to individuals instead of families. Such an arrangement gave the individual a sense of private power, altering the traditional structure and the sense of community. The levying of taxes on him directly which were paid by him personally, his personal accountability for debts which he incurred, and his personal expiation, under the metropolitan jurisdiction, of crimes he committed, the conversion of individuals instead of families to Christianity, the exclusive accountability of the individual conscience to God, all this put together increased his sense of

⁵¹ This is a system for the selection of students to be admitted into the universities in Nigeria, which gives preference to candidates from an educationally disadvantaged regions of the country at the expense of some brilliant students from educationally advantaged regions/zones. It is sometimes used in employment in which case a better qualified person for a particular post is dropped for a less qualified person, because the latter has to represent his/her zone in the particular establishment.

solitariness. He was thus encouraged to think and act more on an atomistic, and less on a communalistic, basis.⁵² These and other similar influences became the dominant theme of African writers and artists in the post-colonial era. We have made reference to some of these authors in the course of this work, like Chinua Achebe in whose *Things Fall Apart*, get an impressive delineation of the traditional culture, its values and its salient characteristics. In his detailed study on the subject of culture contact and conflict, E. N. Obiechina articulates the problem in the following words:

It is the overwhelming awareness that the old traditional culture with its attendant values is breaking up and is being replaced by a new culture with its emergent values which has made culture change the all-pervasive theme in the West African novel. Because novelists share the background of the generality of the people they write about, they feel with them that the culture change is the most important reality of modern West Africa.⁵³

Both the Anglophone and Francophone African elite experienced, though differently, the difficulty associated with the adjustment to the alien socio-cultural mentality while at the same time remaining Africans. And since the elite were the ones that took power after independence, two routes were open to them: The one was to reject in protest everything Western and return to the ancient traditional African cultural values (a form of cultural necromancy), which would be impossible and unnecessary, while the other was to take over all the values of colonialism and pretend to behave like the colonial authority, aping them in everything down to the minutest detail (cultural alienation). The tension between these two poles was felt more among the French-speaking elite than among their English-speaking counterparts owing to the French colonial policy of assimilation. Thus ‘nationalism, whose concrete form is the demand for independence, arose much earlier in English-speaking African countries. This is because British colonial policy did not pass through the detour of assimilation.’⁵⁴ The bluntest epitome of the elite’s cultural dilemma was captured in the article written by Joseph Bipoun-Wum in *Presence Africaine* in the 1970s. According to Wum, the African elite did not emanate from African society rather, it was created to accomplish the colonial design. And in order to play its designated role, the elite had to leave

⁵² Abraham, W. E., *The Mind of Africa*, op. cit. 136

⁵³ Obiechina, E. N., *Culture, Tradition and Society in the West African Novel*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, 263

⁵⁴ Levine, T. V., *Political-Cultural Schizophrenia in Francophone Africa*, In: Mowoe, I. J. & Bjornson, R.(eds.), op. cit. 159 – 173

its own milieu (the traditional socio-cultural values). He further argues that the African elite (a term he sees as a euphemism) must first obtain a certificate of authenticity if it is to be a true elite. What that means is that the elite has to be a product of an internal revolution of the African society and not an extension of colonization. In other words, the African elite has to undergo a cultural renaissance; he/she must become African again while remaining 'civilized'.⁵⁵ A true African elite that has really integrated the Western values with his/her African identity will have to go beyond wearing a suit and tie, acquiring social prestige to offer the African society a model that can influence the masses and give the African a better future. Such a vision of a true elite or what is equally called a 'modern African' must, according to Chinweizu, grow out of the African tradition and must be seen as a revitalizing factor of that tradition.⁵⁶ This would, however, not be an easy task: V. Y. Mudimbe argues that "the humiliating stranglehold which the West holds on Africa (through the elite) is based, supported and propagated by an underlying ethnocentrism of knowledge serving an ethnocentrism of power".⁵⁷

It is, however, in the realm of religion that major conflict was experienced. The two religions of Islam and Christianity after they made their debut in Africa, not only fought each other, but fought together to discredit and eliminate the traditional religion. Even among the different Christian denominations, there were frequent conflicts and rivalry in a bid to win more converts. This led to the loss of societal cohesion as Christians tried to operate their own rival community within the community. At the personal level there were uncertainties in the individual conscience arising from conflicting beliefs and moral codes.⁵⁸ Consequent upon the loss of social cohesion was the disintegration of traditional values due to influences and pressures from the urban, commercial culture. In line with this triple religious heritage, in the words of Ali Mazrui, Nkrumah advocated a synthesis of all the three various religious traditions in his 'Philosophical Consciencism', the aim of which would be to "contain the African experience of Islamic and Euro-Christian presence as well as the experience of traditional African society, and, by gestation, employ them for the harmonious growth and development of that society".⁵⁹ This he believes would enable the modern African society come to terms with the reality of its socio-cultural past and gain strength to face its present

⁵⁵ Ibid., 167

⁵⁶ Chinweizu, *The West and the Rest of Us*, New York: Random House, 1975, 302

⁵⁷ Mudimbe, V. Y., *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge*, Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1988, 45.

⁵⁸ Appiah-Hubi, K. & Torres, S. (eds.), *African Theology En Route*, New York: Orbis Books Maryknoll, 1979, 20

⁵⁹ Nkrumah, K., *Consciencism*, London: Heinemann, 1964, 69

situation. The fact of socio-cultural change is a reality Africans cannot deny, and the manner and mode of facing it is at the same time a task they cannot escape. And when we talk of culture, we are not merely concerned with identity and its many levels; we are also concerned, above all, with a sense of direction and with development; which does not, in any case, mean sacrificing the former for the benefit of the latter. Culture as development in modern Africa has to rediscover those authentic qualities or what Tom Mboya of Kenya calls ‘positive tribalism’, which include the resilience of the Africa heritage, the values of collective responsibility and the principles of sharing, the traditions of respect for the aged and concern for the young, the imperatives of hospitality and the bonds of the extended family⁶⁰. An Africa deprived of these values is the truly poor Africa and any help rendered to the African society that fails to take these into consideration may make Africa materially rich but it will make it humanly poor. The worst form of poverty is anthropological poverty. This was underscored by Benedict XVI, who has constantly warned that a purely economic and technological understanding of progress, to the extent that it fails to acknowledge its intrinsic limitations and to take into consideration the integral good of humanity, will inevitably provoke negative consequences for individuals, peoples and creation itself.

5. 3. 3 Migration as a Consequence of Poverty and Societal Dysfunction

One of the most challenging issues for post-colonial Africa south of the Sahara is the problem of migration. The history of humanity shows that man/woman, through the ages, has always been forced to move from one place to the other in search of better living conditions. Whereas migration was laden with many difficulties in the ancient times as it involved trekking for long distances lasting for many months and sometimes years, the advancement of technology has made migration easier and less dangerous. The world, as it were, has become a global village, and Africa forms a part of this village sharing in its joys and sorrows.

Sub-Saharan Africa has the largest number of migrants in the world. The last United Nations World Population Prospects Report puts the number of migrants from Africa to other countries outside Africa at 16 million at the beginning of the third millenium⁶¹. This accounts for more than half the number of all the world’s migrants. There are also cases of migration within Africa which are not included in this number. The phenomenon of migration in Africa

⁶⁰ *Mboya’s Legacy Still Alive, 40 Years Later*, in: The Standard, July 4, 2009.

⁶¹ United Nations, World Population Prospects: The 2002 Revision, Vol. 1

is very dynamic and complex when compared to other countries. This complexity is reflected in the large number of women who migrate, the issue of brain drain, the extreme cases of human trafficking, and the explosion in the number of refugees.

The causes of migration are attributable to many factors ranging from poverty to social insecurity. Africa's problem of migration hinges on these two factors. With its large population and poor economy, Africa is confronted with an unstoppable exodus of her young men and women to foreign countries, frequently involving the loss of lives on the seas or dying by installment through starvation. The nature of the economy inherited from the colonial authorities which placed much importance on cash crop production and less emphasis on staple food crop production coupled with a disintegration of socio-cultural institutions, has plunged Africa into a miserable condition so that Africans are forced to leave their countries to look for greener pastures. African men and women, both trained and untrained, increasingly migrate as a family survival strategy. The destinations vary from one country to another. While most of the female doctors and nurses from Nigeria go to Saudi Arabia in search of jobs, their counterparts from Ghana are in the United Kingdom and the United States of America.⁶² Like the destinations, the reasons for the migration of trained personnel vary from poor payment to poor working conditions.

The group with the greatest difficulties among the migrants are the untrained young men and women who leave their home countries for other countries in search of job opportunities. While some move on their own initiative, others are lured to move hoping to find something doing in the foreign countries. Some of them end up as drug dealers or if they are women as prostitutes. Additionally, there are still those who are physically forced into leaving their countries of birth. This group consists of those that make up the statistics of Africa's human trafficking and smuggling. The children among them end up as farm labourers and domestic workers, whereas the young women are sold for sexual exploitation or coerced to work in the sex industry. Most of these people in the course of their journey are stranded in Dakar and Morocco. In fact, hundreds of undocumented immigrants and trafficked persons, especially from West African countries, are stranded in Morocco en route to Spain for as long as four years. Most end up living in shacks, and some women give birth under these poverty-stricken conditions. Many others perish during perilous attempts to cross the sea to Spain in rickety

⁶² Adepoju, A., "Trends in international migration in and from Africa", In: Massey, D. S. and Taylor, J. E. (eds.) *International Migration Prospects and Politics in a Global Market*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004

boats. Others who manage to find their way into Europe are often apprehended and deported on arrival or soon thereafter.⁶³

Research shows that parents in some cases are often forced by poverty and ignorance to enlist their children, hoping to benefit from their wages to sustain the family's deteriorating economic situation. Young girls and women abducted from conflict zones in East Africa are forced to become sex-slaves to rebel commanders or affluent men in Sudan and the Gulf States.⁶⁴ The matter is made more complex by the support of the parents, who, lacking sufficient knowledge of all that is involved, persuade their children to join the team of migrants. Besides, the agents whose duty it is to recruit the people paint a very positive but false picture of the destination and the 'work' they have to do. On the whole, African migration is summarized as mostly forced migration and the more the social norms are neglected the more the cases of migration increase. Some scholars have described the situation as a second slavery for Africa and her children. What has happened to the traditional African value of respect for life and the human person? Have the Africans lost their sense of community and group solidarity, which left nobody a beggar in the traditional society?

5. 3. 4 Post-Independence Africa and the Dialectics of Foreign Aid

Post-independent Africa is, as we have seen in the above analysis, economically dependent on the West either as producers of the goods that are then marketed in Africa, ranging from foodstuff to every article of clothing or as major buyers of raw materials, from agricultural produce like cocoa to crude oil and other minerals. And since the basic economic law the world over is to maximize profit and minimize loss, it becomes difficult to understand how a trade relationship organised in this form can be of benefit to Africa. If a trade relationship with the West, characterised by imbalance as it is, cannot help Africans come out of poverty, it is much more difficult to see how foreign aid can provide a solution to the problems of poverty in Africa. In the early part of this work, in which we dealt with poverty, especially the section dealing with 'leadership and foreign policy', it was shown that most of the purported aid to Africa remains unfulfilled by most of the countries that make the resolutions. It ends up in much talk and less action. For some of the countries that resolve to really assist, such aid comes with conditions which at times do not reflect the needs of the people. The same thing is

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

applicable to the international organisations and institutions. Even when it is tagged a loan, the interest required to service the loans are always unbearable. Be that as it may, the whole of Africa seems to have no other option than to rely on foreign aid.

It is difficult to reconcile the number of years that have gone by since most African countries got their independence with the claims made by countries or institutions with reference to assistance to Africa in its present deplorable state of poverty. Two incompatible factors may account for this condition: The first is that the West does not render sufficient assistance to enable Africa to become economically independent. The second is that Africa has become addicted to foreign aid to the extent that it has become incapable of standing on its own feet economically. In other words, imported economic empowerment for Africa has turned into impoverishment. It is in this context that I would paradoxically classify foreign aid as a contributing factor to the poverty in Africa. A ten-year old child who is still being carried by its mother is certainly *behindert*. Africa in her bid to liberate herself from the shackles of poverty in the face of foreign aid is either *behindert* or *verhindert*.

5. 4. C o n c l u s i o n

The above exposition shows that the early contacts of Africa with the West and the Near East were characterised by struggles, whether it was in the era of the trans-Atlantic slave trade or during colonialism. These two events have in no small measure contributed to the perception and position of Africa and Africans across the world today. These were painful experiences from which the Africans have yet to recover, not only because they were profound, but much more because they have given rise to consequences which have continued to follow them wherever they go and often affect their reactions to life and its problems. Africans have to accept these uncomfortable aspects of their history and learn to live with them. To behave as if these never took place is to deceive oneself. At the same time, to spend the whole time ruminating on their historical past, *an die Vergangenheit angekettet* as it were, is to refuse to grow with time. After all, there is scarcely any country or continent of the world without its historical wounds and regrettable past.

On the other hand, we saw that for the West to pretend to assist Africans while equally making them economically dependent through market policies that give no room for Africa's participation on the international exchange, amounts to a contradiction. Furthermore, the poor

image of Africans based on myths, which was presented to the wider world by the European colonial authorities and which continues to be spread through the media, needs to be corrected. This is the first step towards the restoration of self-esteem and self-confidence in the Africans themselves, without which poverty and violence can hardly be overcome. For instance, David Hume's assertion in his essay 'on national character' is completely untenable today. Hume in this essay had written:

I am apt to suspect the Negroes to be naturally inferior to the whites. There scarcely ever was a civilised nation of that complexion, nor even any individual eminent in action or speculation. No ingenious manufacturers amongst them, no arts, no sciences. On the other hand, the most rude and barbarous of the whites, such as the ancient Germans, the present Tartars, have still something eminent about them...Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen...if nature had not made original distinction betwixt these breeds of men...⁶⁵

This and similar philosophical prejudices like that of Hegel, who wrote that there is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found in the Africans, hence all thought of reverence and morality must be laid aside in dealing with them.⁶⁶ Kant, in his essay, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* (1764) had documented that the Negroes of Africa by nature have no feeling that rises above the trifling. These utterances can no longer serve as parameters for determining the relationship between the Africans and the West. If they were used in the past to justify slavery and/or colonialism, it is absurd to still hold tenaciously to unscientific and unverifiable statements meant to denigrate the Africans. The perpetration of such calumnies can only lead to conflicts and violence which may not be limited to Africa, but may spread to other parts of our highly interconnected world. In this regard Hans Küng writes:

It has become increasingly clear to me in recent years that the one world in which we live has a chance of survival only if there is no longer any room in it for spheres of differing, contradictory and even antagonistic ethics. This one world needs one basic ethic. This one world society certainly does not need a unitary religion and a unitary ideology, but it does need some norms, values, ideals and goals to bring it together and to be binding on it.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Hume, D., *An Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth in Opposition to Sophistry and Skepticism*, 1770, cited in Igwe, U. T., op. cit., 358

⁶⁶ Hegel, G. W. F., *The Philosophy of History*, trans. by J. Jibree. New York: Dover Press, 1956, 93

⁶⁷ Küng, H., *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic*, London: SCM, 1991, XVI

Africans have to make their own contributions to these norms, values and goals through their many humane cultural values in a fast growing mechanised world. But we have seen that the major problem of the post-colonial African countries has been the inability to integrate the triple heritage of traditional African, Euro-American and Muslim Arabic values. It is in this synthesis that the future of Africa depends, for it is in the knowledge and consciousness of its past that an identity can be formed, which is very important for charting a new path to the African future. This path is one that will bring to the awareness of Africans both the leaders and the led that African problems of poverty and violence must not necessarily be solved *a l'occidentale*. That is why our historical exposition serves as a 'creative memorial'. It is not intended to reproduce the hates, the violence, and the corruption which characterise our past.⁶⁸ For as Küng states in the above-cited section, there is a need to put aside differences and seek those things that are common and that can advance the solidarity of humanity. Hence the third and last part of this work takes up the idea of human dignity as the way out of abject poverty and violence. The term 'dignity' is to be understood in this regard as something unique to every individual, but at the same time relational. Our world has sufficient resources to sustain its population if there is a just distribution of the goods of the earth.

⁶⁸ Uzukwu, E. E., *A Listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches*, New York: Orbis Books, 1997, 20

Part Three: The Problematic of the Discourse on the Dignity of the Human Person vis-a-vis the Challenges of the Social Problems of Poverty and Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa Today

CHAPTER SIX

A RE-APPRAISAL OF THE THEOLOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL ARGUMENTS FOR THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL QUESTIONS

6.0 Introduction

The debate on the dignity of the human person, both as a concept and in practice, remains controversial today. Thanks to the discoveries in the natural and the human sciences, the mysteries which surrounded man/woman and the world in ancient times have been very much illuminated. Almost every bit of the human constitution can be studied and described. The knowledge thus gained has been of immense help in the control of diseases that endanger human life and has equally assisted in providing better standards of living. On the other hand, this knowledge, equipped with empirical data about the human person allows the human person to be considered solely as a material being, thereby affirming the doctrine of evolution at the expense of that of creation.

On the social level, the degree of violence, torture, fear, injustice, intolerance, in toto man's inhumanity to man continues to re-awaken the question of who the human person is and what life is all about. The question of the value or worth of the human person calls for a re-study, because the notion of human dignity is not a mere abstraction fit for the entertainment of philosophers, it is the standard of measure for how men/women should treat one another in every social setting. It is in this context that we can understand Etienne Gilson's assertion that 'morality is normality'. Hence, for a rational being to behave without reason or against it, is to behave not exactly as a beast, but as a beastly man/woman, which is worse: for it is proper that a beast acts as a beast, that is, according to its nature, but totally unfitting for a man/woman, because that means complete negation of his/her nature and therefore of final destiny.¹ As plausible as this argument may appear, it is partial, for it reduces human dignity

¹ Gilson, E., *Unity in Philosophical Experience*, 272 – 274, cited in Edward P. Cronan, *The Dignity of the*

to activity, which is the second level of its comprehension. Furthermore, the logical conclusion that arises from Gilson's argument is that the human person can lose his/her dignity. This is contrary to the teaching of the Church that sin or bad behaviour inflicts a wound on the human dignity but does not destroy this dignity. The primary level then is the fact that *it is*, that means it is inseparable from the being of every person. It is the nature of the human person. For just as it is impossible to think of light without its brightness, it is unimaginable to think of a human being without dignity. But what does it mean to talk of human nature? What makes human beings different from other animals? Does the presence of 'intelligence' in some higher mammals make them share the same worth with human beings? Does the claim to superiority of the human person empower him/her to treat other animals and the entire creation arbitrarily or are there some basic rules that govern the human persons in their relations to one another and to the entire creation? Our task here is to re-appraise the traditional but ever valid understanding of the dignity of the human person and to show how the crisis in the society, especially with reference to the social issues of poverty and violence, is always an extension of the crisis in the interpretation of the dignity of the human person. It is our conviction that a clear recognition of the proper human values, without the old mistake of exaggeration, would require a sharp and positive picture of the position and worth of the human person as the crown of creation and the only creature in the image of his/her Creator. This task is imperative, as the survival of our society and the human species depends very much on the rediscovery of our dignity as human beings irrespective of colour, culture and creed. This entails, among other things, to determine what the dignity of the human person rests on as well as the responsibility which this imposes on us and what hope we have in a world where war and terrorism have made life cold and dull.

The preceding chapters of this study dealt with the social problems of poverty and violence situated in the context of the African experience of slavery and colonialism, and of course their extension in neo-colonialism in the post-independent African states. The following chapters will focus on the concept of the dignity of the human person, the respect for which can guarantee peaceful existence in any human society, and the disregard of which will continue to give rise to human impoverishment and violent conflicts in Africa. Our study of the dignity of the human person is carried out mainly with reference to its ethical implications for the human person as a social being that realizes the meaning of life in co-existing with others.

6. 1 The Concept of the Dignity of the Human Person as a Dynamic Reality

The term ‘dignity’ which comes from the Latin *dignitas*, is perceived both as a gift and an obligation. Human dignity is a gift, because it does not depend on human achievements, rather it is freely bestowed on every human being by the Creator. On the other hand it is an obligation, because as the basis on which humanity is constructed, there are certain expectations from all human beings as carriers of this dignity, which however do not determine it. With reference to this second dimension, human dignity is very dynamic. What this means is that, unlike the first dimension, which is static, unique and unchangeable, it is capable of appreciating or diminishing in worth. This dynamic perspective of the dignity of the human person corresponds to that which is psychologically and ethically designated as personality and character, respectively. Human dignity is that quality which differentiates all human beings from all other living beings. Other expressions that help to explain the term ‘dignity’ include ‘worth’ and ‘value’, but unlike the former the latter can be used to qualify non-human objects, even non-living things. For instance, we can talk of the worth of an automobile or the value of a house. In each of these cases, what is implied is the price or cost of the said object. It is the satisfaction to be derived therefrom that is at stake. The human person, on the contrary, has a worth, value and dignity which is unique and priceless. And it is for this reason, that every person has a special and irreplaceable relationship to his/her Maker. In this singular relationship to his/her Creator and other creatures of his/her kind, he/her demonstrates dignity. Thus the notion of the dignity of the human person is to be understood as purely normative and never descriptive. It is not a characteristic of the human person, it is the substance of his/her being human; that which is every human person’s *due* whether as subject or as object. Hence it is inherent in every human being in so far as he/she is human.

On the relationship between price and dignity, Kant wrote in his *Foundations to the Metaphysics of Morals* that in the kingdom of ends everything has either a price or dignity. That which has a price can be replaced by something else, that is, its equivalent; but that which is so exalted such that no price can be placed on it and for which no equivalent can be found, is said to have dignity.² Furthermore, he differentiates the two by stating:

² Cf. Wolbert, W., *Der Mensch als Mittel und Zweck: Die Idee der Menschenwürde in normativer Ethik und Metaethik*, Münster: Aschendorf Verlag, 1987, 14

Was sich auf die allgemeinen menschlichen Neigungen und Bedürfnisse bezieht hat einen *Marktpreis*; das, was auch ohne ein Bedürfnis vorauszusetzen, einem gewissen Geschmacke ... gemäß ist, einen *Affektionspreis*; das aber, was die Bedingung ausmacht, unter der allein etwas Zweck an sich selbst sein kann, hat nicht bloß einen relativen Wert, d. i. einen Preis, sondern einen innern Wert, d. i. *Würde*.³

Kant, however, extended the notion of dignity to two important human acts, namely fidelity and good will. By doing this, he was addressing the obligatory dimension of dignity as already alluded to above. Fidelity and goodwill (*Wohll wollen*⁴) have their worth in themselves and each man should strive after them more than after happiness. The typical terms employed by Kant to elucidate the dignity of the human person and distinguish it from the worth of material things are 'means' and 'end'. The human person has dignity, because he/she is '*bonum in se*' as opposed to material things that are '*bonum utile*'. Thus it is never permissible to merely use a human being to attain some end or purpose. The dignity of the person is very foundational and bound up with interrelatedness to other human persons and to the rest of creation.⁵ But the problem with this position is that human dignity is then perceived as something that can be acquired or merited. Secondly, Kant did not point out how one can regain this dignity in the second dimension when it is 'lost' through infidelity and lack of goodwill. This however does not minimize the importance of Kant's teaching, since the dignity of the human person behooves him to act in a proper manner corresponding to his/her noble status. Only in this way can we understand the human person as the *imago Dei*. Besides, for us to understand better the contributions of Kant to the meaning of dignity, we have to take into consideration his distinction of man as *homo noumenon* and *homo phaenomenon*. Thus his explanation of the *Menschheit-als-Selbstzweck-Formel*,⁶ is of importance to our discussion of dignity as something that is relational in nature. This

³ Ibid.

⁴ What is meant here is the traditional 'amor benevolentiae', which we as human being owe each person. This is in contrast to 'amor complacentiae' which arises out of instinct and which is not directed to every person.

⁵ Kelly, K. T., *New Directions in Moral Theology*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993, 28

⁶ Kant explains the concept of humanity as end in itself using four examples, viz: (a) *Verbot einer Selbsttötung aus Unlustgefühlen*, (b) *das Verbot in betrügerischer Absicht die Rückzahlung eines Kredits zu versprechen*, (c) *das Gebot, die eigenen Talente zu entwickeln*, und (d) *das Gebot, gegenüber der Notsituation anderer nicht gleichgültig zu bleiben*. (cf. Immanuel Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, 429, 14).

dimension was clearly brought out in the fourth example cited in the foot note which admonishes us not to be indifferent to the needs of our fellow human beings.

The dignity of the human person is to be understood as a donation. For both the adherents of the Judeo-Christian doctrine of creation and of the theory of evolution tend to be unanimous on the singular point that the human person did not make himself/herself. It is therefore preposterous to talk of the dignity of the human person without reference to the source, which of necessity has to possess dignity in its plenitude in order to extend it to others. We shall now turn to the traditional philosophical and theological arguments for the dignity of the human person, a dignity which underlies the basis of social life, and which does not create privilege among human beings, but is valued for all human beings.

6. 1. 1 The Judeo-Christian Foundation of the Dignity of the Human Person

According to the Judeo-Christian tradition, the dignity of the human person is traceable to the fact that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God. And this dignity is recognised as belonging to every human being by virtue of his/her nature as a human person. The concept of human beings as images of God therefore becomes the point of departure for understanding the Judeo-Christian teaching about the dignity of the human person. The Book of Genesis has two passages which express this view, the citation of which we consider pertinent to our discourse. The first account of creation in the book of Genesis:

Then God said, “let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth”. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.⁷

This passage, also called the priestly account of creation, is the better known and more widely quoted of the two accounts. The second account which contains the same truth proceeds from another perspective of the same event. The major point that distinguishes this account from the first account is the conspicuous omission of the fact that God created man in his image

⁷ Genesis 1: 26 – 27 (RSV)

and likeness. The next omission to be noted is that of the creation of the human person as male and female. This second account is recorded in Genesis thus:

These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.
In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of field had yet sprung up for the Lord, God had not caused it to rain upon the earth and there was no man to till the ground; but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground – then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put man whom he had formed.⁸

We leave the exegesis of both texts to biblical scholars, but suffice it to say that the two accounts agree on the main point that God created man. While the first states that man/woman were created in the ‘image’ and ‘likeness’ of God, the second reports that God breathed into his/her nostrils the breathe of life. This act makes explicit the chemistry of our life which depends on this breath, the loss of which leads to death. The Christian’s claim to the dignity of the human person is based on the fact that every human being bears a ‘piece’ or a ‘part’ of God. The human person in the God-given dignity becomes the *Stellvertreter und Partner Gottes* in his creation thanks to the gift of the high status and privilege of being created in the likeness of God.⁹ This dignity perdures to the extent that the human person understands himself/herself as the likeness of God. This likeness is not a *quality* of the human person, it is what it means to be human. It transcends human feeling, thus the human person cannot define his/her being as that of beasts and assert, ‘sentio, ergo sum’ (I feel therefore I am), nor can this be limited to human thinking alone leading to the Cartesian error of ‘cogito, ergo sum’ (I think, therefore I am). The error in this latter position is that Descartes exchanged what the human person is for what he/she can do (Gnade mit Leistung¹⁰). But Descartes’ ‘cogito ergo sum’ can also be interpreted as an affirmation or rather an acceptance of oneself, a recognition of ones existence that is fundamental. The human person in the words of Friedrich Dürrenmatt is, however, not a ‘thinking animal’, he/she is a human being. In other words, whatever he/she is capable of doing, cannot be used as the criterion for assessing this dignity, since it is a gift from God, but it needs at the same time a response on the part of the recipient. This

⁸ Genesis 2: 4 – 8 (RSV)

⁹ Begrich, G., *Menschwürde im jüdisch-christlichen Dialog*, In: Brose, T. & Lutz-Bachmann, M. (Hrsg.), *Umstrittene Menschenwürde: Beiträge zur ethischen Debatte der Gegenwart*, Berlin: Morus Verlag, 1994, 106

¹⁰ Ibid.

interpretation leads to the placing of more emphasis in the expression that the human person was created ‘in the likeness of God’ than ‘in the image of God’. The reason for this emphasis is to direct more attention to the obligations that are expected from the person, even though we have asserted that the non-fulfilment of these obligations does not deprive the person of dignity.

The New Catechism of the Catholic Church corroborates the Biblical story of creation of the human person and asserts that ‘the dignity of the human person is rooted in his creation in the image and likeness of God; it is fulfilled in his vocation to divine beatitude’.¹¹ With this passage from the Catechism a new perspective is introduced in the understanding of the dignity of the human person as that which ‘shines forth in the communion of persons, in the likeness of the union of the divine persons among themselves’.¹² Following this dimension, the ‘likeness of God’ concerns more the spiritual aspect of the human person than the material aspect, even though the human being is a unit that cannot be separated. But what is often meant with the expression that man/woman is ‘created in the likeness of God’ is the inherent capacity for moral decisions coupled with rationality and freedom. It is the capacity which is able to transform *similitudo Dei* into *capax Dei*. The human person is not only a likeness of God, he/she is capable of God. This does not, however, mean that the human person out of pride strives to be like God as it is recorded in the account of the fall of our first parents, where the serpent told them that they would be like God if they ate the forbidden fruit. On the contrary, it is to be understood in the sense of being ‘perfect as our heavenly father is perfect’.

The dignity of the human person theologically considered obliges him/her to treat not only his/her fellow human beings, but also the animals and the whole of creation with respect. In this way every man/woman demonstrates his/her dignity which is rooted in his/her creation in the likeness of God. A rabbinic tradition narrates a legend according to which Moses was called by God because He had seen how tenderly he took care of the sheep entrusted to him; for whoever could show such affection to the animals would certainly be able to lead the people of God out of slavery from Egypt.

St. Thomas Aquinas distinguishes among three forms of dignity proper to the human person. The first is the dignity human beings have by virtue of being made in the image and likeness of God. In other words by simply belonging to the human family, every human person has

¹¹ CCC, 1700

¹² CCC, 1702

this dignity as explained earlier in this section. The second is the dignity that they have as beings who know and love God by conforming to his grace, but in an imperfect way as sojourners in this life. At this level every human person by virtue of being endowed with dignity has the duty to fulfill the obligations which the status demands of him/her. Both his/her decisions and actions are expected to correspond to his/her dignity, which is the foundation, *agere sequitur esse*. Lastly, there is the dignity of the human person as a being now living in complete union with God, and this is the dignity of the blessed.¹³ The three distinctions of dignity could better be understood when we realise that Aquinas' concept of ethics is essentially bound to theology as demonstrated in his famous theological work, *Summa Theologica*. This *opus magnum* is divided into three parts.¹⁴ The first deals with God as the origin of all things; the second concentrates on human acts by which rational creatures turn to God; while the third focuses on Christ and the sacraments, which provide a means to attain the third form of dignity. Karol Wojtyla writes that "because of this dignity a human person is a good toward which the only adequate response is love".¹⁵ The theme of love as an adequate response to the dignity of the human person was continued by him as Pope John Paul II in his Encyclical, "Redemptor hominis", where he argued that man/woman is a being that is love-oriented, such that without the real experience of love and without his/her loving himself/herself is unable to find himself/herself and so remains a puzzle to himself/herself. The perfect form of this love is clearly depicted in the life of the son of God.

The most radical and intimate love of God made manifest in Jesus' saving mission is that which reveals man/woman to himself/herself. This is the human dimension of the mystery of salvation, and in this dimension the human person discovers the greatness, the dignity and the worth which is fundamentally united with his/her being human.¹⁶ To see the human being through the eyes of Christ, the encyclical continues, reveals those things which are deeply human such as the search for the truth, the unquenchable thirst for the good, the hunger for freedom, the desire for beauty and the internal voice of conscience.¹⁷ These are the human values that form the basis of Christian anthropology and are indispensable for living together in the society, as John Paul II clearly said.

¹³ STh, I-II, q. 93. a. 4

¹⁴ Pope, J. S. (ed.), *The Ethics of Aquinas*, Washington D. C: Georgetown University Press, 2002, 30

¹⁵ Wojtyla, K., *Love and Responsibility*, trans. by W. Willelts, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1981, 412

¹⁶ *Redemptor Hominis*, 10

¹⁷ RH, 18

Two factors are essential for the discussion of the theme human dignity, viz reason and freedom, but dignity cannot be reduced to either of them. We shall now consider the relationship between reason and freedom on the one hand and the dignity of the human person on the other, as echoed in the philosophical traditions of the various ages. Next, we shall try to demonstrate the possible moral consequences of identifying human dignity with reason and freedom. Of course, it is pertinent to underline the central position which reason and freedom occupy in the discussion of human dignity, but we equally know that the human person has different phases of development, during some of which the existence of reason and freedom are not clearly demonstrable, although they are latent. Besides, the human person may be impaired in his/her actions as a rational and free being, but this does not destroy the dignity. Then, there are other philosophical approaches that consider the human person as completely determined, in the sense that human activities are considered purely dependent on biological stimulation of the neurons and the entire nervous system.

6. 1. 2 The Philosophical Arguments from Reason and Freedom

The point of departure for the philosophical arguments for the dignity of the human person is the understanding of man/woman as a free and rational being, *animal rationalis*. The background for this understanding is the capacity which the human being has to organise his/her life based on personal decisions. This singular ability is clearly demonstrated in the organisation of human society. Since its beginning among the ancient Greeks, philosophical ethics has taught that the possession of reason, and the fact that all his/her actions are rationally determined, is that which distinguishes the human person from all other animals. Thus, Socrates (470-399 B.C.E) describes the principle of action according to reason as the highest form of morality. He went further to assert that he would follow reason or wisdom, and consequently dissociated himself from the status quo of simply acting according to tradition or obeying the biological drives. Socrates would later interpret the injunction from the Delphic Oracle, ‘man know thyself’, as the admonition to act in accordance with reason. The possession of reason, and freedom became for him the unique and peculiar property by which the human person¹⁸ is to realise himself/herself through his/her actions. This is not to be understood as a form of individualism, since for Socrates and his contemporaries the highest good was to be found in the laws of the city-state (polis).

¹⁸ Rager, G.(Hrsg), *Beginn, Personalität und Würde des Menschen*, Band 32, Freiburg/München: Karl Alber Verlag, 2009, 343

Aristotle (384-322 B.C.E.), who raised ethics to the status of an independent philosophical discipline¹⁹, arguing along the same lines as Socrates maintained that what distinguishes the human person from other living beings is not only that he/she lives, but that he/she has the capacity to organise his/her life to attain an end. This end, which for Aristotle, is the same as the Good is happiness. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he dealt extensively not only with the nature of the end to which every human action is directed, but equally with the fact that the human person is equipped by nature to strive to that end, he called *eudamonia* (happiness). With the help of reason the human person is able to know what is essential for his/her life and then aided by freedom he/she would be able to make the right choice and execute it, all with the aim of attaining his/her end, *telos*. Otfried Höffe points out that Aristotles' teleological ethics is sometimes confused with Utilitarianism in the modern ethical debates. Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, the proponents of this theory hold that the goal of every human endeavour is to maximize pleasure for the greatest number of people. Aristotles' *eudamonia* cannot be equated to Utilitarianism, the tenets of which was later contrasted by Kant's deontological ethics.²⁰ Despite the difficulties that arise in interpreting and contextualizing the *Nicomachean ethics* in our contemporary epoch, the ethical legacy of Aristotle, more especially as it concerns the hierarchy of good/goal, has to be acknowledged.

Freedom (*eleutheria*), according to Aristotle, is central to life in the *Polis*, where the good of the city should be protected by every citizen. Paradoxically, the city of Athens at the time of Aristotle had both free citizens and slaves. The co-existence of slaves and free men was not considered a problem at the time, because most of such cases was based on agreement. Could this mean that there are two forms of dignity, namely the dignity of the free citizen and the dignity of the slave? Can one really talk of the freedom of the slave? Of course, to talk of the dignity of the slave is self-contradictory, since freedom is the basis of human dignity. On the other hand it is not plausible to argue that a slave has no dignity as a person. This has often led to the evaluation of Aristotle's doctrine of freedom as mainly political freedom which had little to say about freedom of the will, which is metaphysical.

It was the Stoic philosophers who later conceived the normative status of the human person as essentially constituted in his/her rational nature. The two important principles of this rational nature are the principle of ought/duty (*Kathekon*) and the principle of conscience (*Syneidesis*), which should give human actions their unique and peculiar characteristic even though they are

¹⁹ Ibid., 344

²⁰ Höffe, O. (Hrsg.), *Aristoteles: Die Nikomachische Ethik*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995, 7

sometimes subject to error. It is, however, not clear how this position is to be reconciled with the Stoics' teaching on determinism.

It was, nonetheless, in consideration of the Stoics' understanding of the inherently rational nature of man and the ability to fulfill his/her duty in accordance with his/her conscience that influenced Cicero (106-43 B.C.E.) to first make use of the term 'dignitas' not only, "*um im traditionellen Sinn die Würde zu bezeichnen, die einem Menschen aufgrund des sozialen Ranges zukommt, den er erworben hat, sondern um die herausragende Stellung (excellentia) zu kennzeichnen, die dem Menschen kraft seiner Natur innerhalb des Kosmos eignet*"²¹. For the first time among the ancient thinkers there is an explicit reference to dignity as something valid for all human persons with no conditions attached.

Thomas Aquinas as we already pointed out above, conceives the dignity of the human person as closely connected to freedom, which for him is fulfilled in law, more precisely the natural law – *lex naturalis*. For Aquinas, the natural law is the form of participation in the eternal law peculiar to human persons as rational beings. Human act, *actus humanus*, is possible because the human person is free, argues Aquinas.²² However, he recognises the fact that the *instinctus naturae* and the *instinctus gratiae* can affect human willing directly, according to the nature of the will.²³ Aquinas' position on the freedom of the will and the effects of original sin is a synthesis of Aristotelian philosophy and Augustinian tradition, even though his position is moderate when compared to that of Augustine²⁴. The summary of Aquinas'

²¹ Ibid., 345

²² Aquinas, T., STh, I-II, 1c. Cf. also Baumann, K., The Concept of Human Acts Revisited: St. Thomas and the Unconscious in Freedom, In: Gregorianum 80, 1, 1999, 147 – 171

²³ Ibid., I-II, 6, 1 ad 3, 9, 6; 10, 4

²⁴ Augustine taught that the sin of Adam affected the human will so gravely that man/woman is incapable of choosing the good without the grace of God. According to him original sin destroyed human nature completely and enslaved the will to the extent that there is no other remedy except from God. This position of sparked off controversy as to what role freedom can play in the activities of man. For if the fate of man/woman is completely determined by God, then the concept of free will is irrelevant, but if he/she is able to choose what he/she wants and strives to realise it, then the freedom of the will was not completely destroyed by original sin. To resolve this problem, Augustine distinguished between *liberum arbitrium* (freedom of choice) and *libertas*. While the former was not destroyed by original sin as man/woman still exercised his/her of choice in daily life, the latter, *libertas*, which consists in man/woman's affirmation of his/her origin in God, who is love, was lost through sin. The fallen man/woman, the sinner, no longer does anything out of love but of selfish interest. The only way out of this situation is the grace of God. Pelagius, who continued this line of thought from Augustine, while acknowledging the distinction between *liberum arbitrium* and *libertas*, argued that *libertas* was not concerned with man/woman's relationship to God, but was to be understood as simply the embodiment of human nature. It is possible for the human person to will and to become that which according to nature he/she should be. In any case Pelagius did not explain further what this nature consists in. Cf. also the debate between Erasmus, the humanist, in his '*De libero arbitrio*' and Luther, the theologian and reformer, in his '*De servo arbitrio*'.

concept of freedom is based on the principle that the human person from nature strives towards the good. This could be interpreted as part of his heritage from the classical philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, where the whole of nature is designated as acting towards an end (*telos*). For Aquinas, every living thing from its nature strives towards its *bonum conveniens*. What characterises the human being in his/her striving to attain that end is the intellectual knowledge, *the ratio*, whose formal object is the common good. Freedom therefore does not mean arbitrariness but is realised in the ordered pursuit of the good enlightened by reason. Laws are made to protect the common good from individual arbitrary acts, which are an abuse of freedom. Aquinas talks in this regard of ‘*regula et mensura*’²⁵. Reason plays a very crucial role in freedom, because it points out the means to be chosen so as to attain the *summum bonum*, which is equally the *finis ultimus*. Thus a man/woman whose free choice and actions are guided by reason fulfills his/her dignity and ultimately attains his/her goal. Two main objections could be raised against Aquinas’ teleological ethics: One is the notion that the human person is by nature conditioned to strive after the good, which does not leave much room for freedom. The other is the futuristic comprehension of the goal of ethical acts leading to a form of ‘postponed transcendental utilitarianism’. It is difficult to generalize this form of teaching in our fast-moving and multi-cultural world. Nevertheless, we have to underscore the position of Aquinas on the common good, for the protection of which laws are made. Laws, *nomos*, are not opposed to freedom, but help to guide and direct freedom from arbitrariness, since laws for Aquinas are the ordinances of reason for the common good promulgated by one who has authority. Freedom simply put is the freedom to do good. This for Aquinas is founded in God, who,

...als die erste Ursache aus göttlicher Freiheit uns in unsere menschliche Freiheit versetzt, seine Geschöpfe „freigegeben“ hat und zugleich das letzte notwendige immer und in allem angestrebte Ziel unseres Wollens und Handelns, daher auch die letzte Norm für unsere freie Wahl der Mittel zum Ziel ist.²⁶

This corroborates the thomistic understanding of the dignity of the human person, as already discussed above, which finds its fulfilment in the life of the blessed. On the question of what could be taken as a common basis in a discussion with people who do not share the same belief like the pagans and the muslims, Aquinas observed that since there is no common ground for discussion in the area of faith, what remains as the basis for dialogue becomes then

²⁵ Ibid., STh. I-II, 90, 1c

²⁶ Coreth, E., Vom Sinn der Freiheit, Innsbruck – Wien: Tyrolia Verlag, 1985, 50

the general notion of man/woman as a rational being from nature²⁷. And nature here is understood as “constituted in a teleological sense, oriented towards an end, designed in keeping with a plan and definition”²⁸. It is partly this interpretation of nature that altered the direction of the debate on human freedom in the modern and post-modern periods. Equipped with such philosophical systems as rationalism, empiricism, idealism, existentialism and the enlightenment project – which demanded unlimited freedom of reason on the one hand, the modern and post-modern era broke away from the traditions of the medieval age in its understanding of freedom. Internal freedom, otherwise called subjective freedom or freedom of the will was questioned owing to the triumph of natural science that conceived the world and man as reducible to mathematical entity. On the other hand, external or objective freedom gained acceptance in social and political structures. The concept of freedom became more abstract, having no more connections with concrete situations. Hence ethical, social and political norms were regarded as binding and therefore opposed to human freedom. Without intending to stretch the historical discussion further, it suffices to briefly highlight the positions of Locke and Kant as key figures on these polarities as they pertain to the central theme of our investigation. The reason for selecting John Locke and Immanuel Kant for separate discussion in this work is to show the two aspects of looking at freedom, which are relevant for the interrelationship of persons in the society. Locke represents what I may describe as the *outward form of freedom* of every individual living in a society where other individuals are found. What this means is that in pursuing my goal, care should be taken to see that I do not harm others or prevent them from pursuing their individual goals. Moreover, the pursuit of my individual goal should not take precedence over the common good. Since it is not always easy to act in this way, Locke opined that Laws be used to check abuses in this regard. Kant, on the other hand stands for the *inward form of freedom*. By this I mean that ability of the individual, assisted by education, to come an awareness of his/her dignity as a person, who is expected to act according to his/her conscience and at the same time to acknowledge same in the other person. Here we recount the two things that fill Kant with awe, the starry heavens and the voice within. Thus, the ideas of the two philosophers, if put into practice could help to alleviate poverty by demanding a just distribution of goods and prevent violence by reciprocally acknowledging the worth and uniqueness of every person in the Sub-Saharan Africa. What now follows is a brief survey of the doctrine of Lock and Kant on the subject of freedom and dignity, and the corresponding basic human rights.

²⁷ Aquinas, T., De Veritate, quaestio 18, art. 6ff

²⁸ Schockenhoff, E., Natural Law and Human Dignity: Universal Ethics in an Historical World, trans. by Brian McNeil, Washington, D. C: Catholic University of America Press, 2003, 4

(a) John Locke (1632 – 1704)

The English philosopher, John Locke introduced the concept of ‘person’ into the discussion of freedom and human dignity at the beginning of the modern era. Locke maintained that morals and rights are to be understood as referring to acts which are determined by laws. In other words, the subject to which a moral or legal act could be attributed is that being that can consciously initiate its own actions and which could be held responsible by law for the same actions. It is only the human person that qualifies as such a being. According to Locke, to say that the moral subject is a person is to say that he/she is capable of acting freely and consciously and being held responsible for his or her actions. It is in this perspective that the human person is said to be free. Self-consciousness plays a very central role in the Lockean understanding of person and dignity. Parting ways with the traditional notion of substance, Locke described the term ‘self’ which he sometimes uses in place of ‘person’ as, “that conscious thinking thing which is sensible, or conscious of pleasure and pain, capable of happiness or misery, and so is concerned for itself, as far as consciousness extends”.²⁹ Personal identity and hence dignity for him is founded on consciousness and not on the traditional concept of substance of either the soul or the body. And this consciousness is nothing other than the repeated self-identification of oneself.³⁰ It is as Hans-Georg Gadamer says, a distinguishing of oneself from oneself.³¹ The dignity of the human person, in the context of the foregoing analysis, consists in the fact that being equipped with reason, consciousness, memory and concern for the future, it serves as a basis for all men/women having the same interest on their future happiness and striving towards it.³²

The influence of his father, who was a country lawyer and a captain in the Army, can be seen in Locke’s use of legal terms, especially with reference to the status of the person. It has to be pointed out that the emphasis on self-consciousness as the core of the human person and therefore of his/her dignity is very restrictive. Going by this measure, a part of humanity is by implication denied human dignity, because of an absence of self-consciousness either because these persons are not fully developed or because they are deprived of their dignity through sickness. What then is the status of the unborn, the mentally deranged and the aged suffering dementia? Are they no more to be considered as human persons? Besides, Locke failed to account for how two different states of consciousness in the same person can be evaluated, as

²⁹ Locke, J., *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689) edited by Roger Woolhouse, New York: Penguin Books, 1997, 307

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 308

³¹ Gadamer, H. G., *Wahrheit und Methode*, Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1965, 239

³² Rager, G., *op. cit.* 349

in the case of sleep or accident, which temporally deprives one of one's consciousness. However, we have to understand the context of Locke's liberal thought, which was mainly to oppose authoritarianism, both on the level of the individual person (his father, for example) and on the institutional level. Furthermore, he wrote to explain the nature of the civil society, which unlike the Hobbesian state of nature, provided man/woman the favourable conditions to freely pursue life, health, possession which constitute the basic rights. His thoughts, according to some authors contributed to the birth of the Enlightenment and shaped its ideals especially with reference to socio-political organisation. Locke elevated the role of Law as a necessary instrument in keeping the society together. What this means is that the first step towards the prevention of violence in any society is to have good and enforceable laws. The same can also help in forestalling corruption and oppression which give rise to poverty. Sub-Saharan Africa has much to learn from Locke with reference to the making of just and enforceable laws. But since laws alone cannot keep a society together without proper education for the citizens to realize the need for peaceful co-existence, it is imperative to help the individual in the process of self development. It here that we shall explore the contributions of Kant.

(b) Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804)

Kant's understanding of freedom and hence of the dignity of the human person is based on the individual's ability to respect the humanity which is found in every person. Hence his formulation of the imperative that this humanity, whether in one's person or in that of the other, should never be treated as a means but as an end. In other words, the freedom with which the human person is endowed demands that he/she uses it to do good. Like Locke, Kant made use of the concept of the person as a subject of rights to elaborate his teachings on freedom. In the introduction to the *Metaphysics of Morals*, he writes of the Person as the subject to whom actions could be attributed as one capable, whereas moral person is the freedom of a rational being subjected to moral laws. But the said laws are not external laws, rather they are generated by the subject itself. It is a fact of reason and an intellectual certainty that every human person has a claim to or at least feels a certain sense of moral obligation. Freedom for Kant is freedom only if it is conceived as the fundamental self-determination of the will. Self-determination of the will means that one does not allow one's will to be determined by anything other than reason.

By elevating self-determination or autonomy of the will above heteronomy, Kant charts a new course for the understanding of freedom. Kant ascribes the autonomy of the will to that aspect

of reality which he designates as the *Noumenon*, otherwise called thing-in-itself. Unlike the *Phaenomenon*, the thing-as-it-appears to us, the noumenon is not subject to the physical laws of necessity. It is so to speak a law unto itself, but never to be regarded as arbitrary. Consequently, Kant argues that we can attribute freedom only to things-in-themselves, not to things as they appear. So, given the arguments that we must think of ourselves as free, we have to suppose that we are free as long as we are 'in ourselves' but at the same time subject to empirical causation as 'appearances'.³³ Reason is what constitutes the human noumenon. And since reason is required if we are to be able to derive actions from laws, the will is nothing else than practical reason, not speculative reason. This postulation, which conceives human freedom as transcendental as introduced by Kant, has its merit in the fact that it is not conditioned by anything not even the object of the will. In this way, the human person as *Zweck an sich selbst* (end in itself) is rescued from discrimination based on social status. Furthermore, the arguments of Kant in favour of freedom put to rest the long debate on freedom and determinism.

However, by attributing freedom only to the noumenon, the intelligible world, Kant created an unbridgeable gap between the intelligible world and the experiential world. It is more or less a revival of the Platonic world of ideas which Aristotle attempted to resolve through his matter and form doctrine. Descartes then brought this back in the duality of *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. For this position, Kant's concept of freedom has been criticised as transcendental and almost unrealisable. Besides, the great emphasis placed on self-determination and autonomy of the will leaves no room for the manifestation of heteronomy as experienced in the upbringing of children and the legal organisation of the society and its institutions. Thus laws, morality and the state are perceived as limitations to freedom. Hegel for whom freedom is "*Bei-sich-sein*"³⁴ criticises this assertion and opines that freedom which is limited by law, morality and the state cannot be freedom but arbitrariness. Since spirit and freedom, reason and freedom are the same, freedom is essentially reasonable freedom. Law and morality, Hegel maintains, cannot be limitations to freedom, but favourable conditions for its realisation. It is interesting to note how he distinguishes two aspects of freedom that, "*der Mensch an-sich ist frei, doch muss er 'für sich' frei werden*". The one is a precondition for the other. The laws of the state guarantee the freedom of the individual in the second sense by helping to check

³³ Kant, I., *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* transl. by Thomas E. Hill Jr. and Arnulf Zweig, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 143

³⁴ Hegel recapitulates through this expression the ancient teaching on freedom which goes back to Aristotles' *hautou heneka* (to be what one is), Thomas' *in seipsum* (self-possession), Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* (I think therefore I am) to Kants' *Zweck an sich selbst* (End in itself).

arbitrariness in society. Hegel's absolute spirit, in any case, has no space for individual freedom and can only lead to totalitarianism.

The contemporary philosophical debate on the freedom of the human person and hence of his/her dignity does not only have to contend with opposing philosophical systems such as materialism and evolutionism³⁵ but also with the findings of neuro-psychology, molecular biology and genetic engineering. According to these branches of study and new research³⁶, the hitherto accepted truths about the human person like freedom, ratio, conscience, etc are reducible to neuronal processes of the human person; hence the concept of dignity is obsolete and irrelevant since it cannot be scientifically established. Although this work does not intend to explore these areas as they fall outside the scope of our investigation, it should be stated that the consequences of such relativism can be dangerous for human society. To permit the use of human embryos for research, the cloning of animals and humans, the eugenic selection of humans and is undue interference with the nature and dignity of the human person. This can only lead to what Karl Polanyi described as the transformation of the human society into a market society. Scientific research is to be promoted, but limits have to be set if the integrity of the human person is to be assured. The human person is more than the sum of its parts.

In concluding this section, we underline the necessity of good laws if the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa have to stop the looting of their resources by a few and if the prevalent cases of violent conflicts must be controlled.

6. 2 The Dignity of the Human Person and the Social Questions

Human society is the arena where the dignity of the human person is acknowledged or disregarded, protected or abused, defended or violated. It is not relevant here to delve into the theories of the origin of human society. However, it is an existential fact that the capacity to live in a society is central to the dignity of the human person. Hence, the Aristotelian dictum that whoever is incapable of living in a society is either a god or a beast; the one because he is self-sufficient and lacks nothing, the other because he is irrational and cannot form an

³⁵ Materialism as a philosophical system holds that everything is matter and that there is only material reality. The human person is constituted of the same elements as other material things in the world and is subjected to the same physical laws. Materialism gave rise to other systems such as positivism championed by Auguste Comte (1798 – 1857) and evolutionism of Charles Darwin (1809 – 1882), which served as a bridge between spirit and matter and led to another revolution of the image of man.

³⁶ The Libet Experiment which demonstrates that the decision to act in a particular way is determined in the brain half a second before the action is consciously ratified. In other words, what appears as a process of decision making is nothing more than a confirmation of what has already been decided physically.

association. Of course we know that some lower animals form an organised society with well-planned and assigned roles, but that does not make them a human society. They are simply being driven by instinct and not reason. Besides, none of them could, like the human person in the society, assert itself by saying, “I am”. The human person is the only creature endowed with the capacity for self-assertion and self-transcendence, and can thereby enter into association with his/her likes. The dignity of the human person is at the centre of social life. The society does not confer this dignity, rather it has the duty to acknowledge and safeguard it.

According to Pius XI, each human being is called by God to become a member of the human society. As a means for the self-realisation of the human being, society should be the promoter of human values so that the human being can be assisted by the society to reach his or her purpose in life³⁷. There is no human society without human persons. And the continued existence of every human society is dependent on the continued existence of the human persons. The society helps to form the human persons and the human persons build the society. It is this reciprocity that guarantees a stable society.

To be able to fulfill its role, the society consists of institutions (political, economic, social, cultural, etc.) whose goal is the achievement of human development by promoting the common good. Experience, however, shows that this does not always function harmoniously as the struggle to control the institutions and the distribution of goods and opportunities creates tension between groups, and between individuals and institutions. The pastoral constitution of the Church in the modern world sees the human struggle in our contemporary society as a struggle for the formation of a new humanity in social life. It bemoans the imbalance between the claims of group living and the needs of individual reflection and contemplation.³⁸ The human person as an individual and as a member of society craves a life that is full, autonomous, and worthy of his/her nature and dignity as a human being; he/she longs to harness for his/her own welfare the immense resources of the modern world³⁹ so that the society in which he/she finds himself/herself can create the proper conditions.

But the moral question of how one should conduct oneself in the face of loss or deprivation of social goods remains controversial. Since the dignity of the human person flows from God and to do good is to act in accordance with this dignity, it is much more the one who does evil

³⁷ Acta Apostolica Sedis (AAS), 29 (1973) 79 – 80

³⁸ Gaudium et Spes n. 8

³⁹ Ibid., 9

that tarnishes his/her God-given dignity than the one who suffers it. The story of the biblical Job provides some lessons as to what should be the proper attitude for the Christian when confronted with the loss of material goods. However, it is pertinent to point out that the case of Job was not as a result of social imbalance or deprivation. But the bottom line is that he suffered loss of health and property, which is at the heart of social questions.

6. 2. 1. Suffering and Dignity: Lessons from the Story of Job

There are two versions of the story of Job or rather two parts of the same story. The first part of the story is that commonly referred to as the ‘Testament of Job’ in the Hellenistic-Jewish context in the first century before the Christian era. In this work, an effort is made to provide an explanation for the suffering of Job, namely that he pulled down the temple of an idol when he was a king. The suffering of Job described in the canonical book of Job is understood then as a revenge to this act of “desecration”. What is significant in the first version, that is the testament of Job, is that an angel warns Job in advance of the trouble that he will bring upon himself, if he tears down the temple, but also promises retribution at the “consummation of the age” (4:7-11). Job responds by affirming, “till death I will endure. I will not step back at all” (5:1). Unlike his canonical counterpart, this Job gives expression to the view that, as a righteous man, there awaits for him in the next life a reward that will more than compensate him for his losses in this life (18:8; 33:3-9).⁴⁰ From a lay perspective, the testament of Job seems to be in conformity with what one could expect in an ordinary life situation. It is easier to imagine a man suffering so grievously for doing something, no matter how insignificant, than for doing nothing. However, our study is based on the canonical Job, who is presented as having suffered innocently. Let us now see how the background and motif of the story influenced its canonisation.

The Bible begins the story of Job thus: “There was once a man in the land of Uz called Job: a sound and honest man who feared God and shunned evil.”⁴¹ Without intending to go into the biblical exegesis of this first sentence and the entire story, it is pertinent to note that Job’s place of birth is located outside the territory of Israel. Uz is found somewhere south of Edom (Gen. 36:28), and here are to be found the Edomites who are the descendants of Esau, the twin brother and enemy of Jacob, therefore of Israel. In this sense the story is supposed to be a

⁴⁰ Smith, B. D., *Paul’s Seven Explanations of the Suffering of the Righteous*, New York: Peter Lang, 2002, 20

⁴¹ Job 1:1 (Jerusalem Bible)

lesson for the Israelites. It could have also been that the author wanted to present a pagan in a good light, as in the story of the good Samaritan (Lk. 10:29). Like his place of birth, the name Job (*'iyyob*) is found in various forms outside of Israel. It probably means, “where is my father”⁴² which to the ears of an Israelite sounds similar to *'oyeb* which means “enemy”.⁴³ But since the name of a person is not considered as important as that of his fatherland, the location of the place of birth of Job outside the territory of Israel gives the story universal validity. This point is crucial to our understanding of the problem of the suffering of the innocent and the proper psycho-social attitude to it.

The second part of the verse describes Job as “a sound and honest man, who feared God and shunned evil”(1:1b). Barry Smith writes that the term ‘righteous’(*tam*) is used to designate a person who habitually obeys God. Although not perfect, the righteous at least wholeheartedly strives to be so.⁴⁴ This recalls another Biblical saying that the righteous man falls seven times a day, but from his sins the Lord delivers him.⁴⁵ In addition to being called “a man of integrity” – a description that emphasizes the internal coherence of his personality – Job is also said to be “honest” (*yashar*).⁴⁶ With these religious and ethical profiles, Job’s innocence in relation to God and to his fellow human beings is confirmed.

The text went further to describe Job as a man of great wealth. There is a nexus between the integrity of Job, his fear of God, and his opulence. The psalmist similarly says: “How happy is he who fears the Lord...he will have riches and wealth in his house”.⁴⁷ It is therefore remarkable to note how Job during his suffering maintained his integrity even though he lost his wealth. His integrity is independent of his wealth.

There are two scenes to the real temptation of Job. The first scene takes place in the heavenly court, where the plot is agreed on; and the other is on earth, where the execution of the plot takes place. It is God who announces that Job is a different man from all others, of whom he is proud. Satan⁴⁸, a name which means accuser, objects to the motives of Job’s works, which

⁴² Schökel, L. A. Diaz, J. L. S., *Giobbe*, Commento teologico e letterario, Roma: Edizioni Borla, 1985, 112

⁴³ Ibid., 112

⁴⁴ Smith, B. D., op. cit. 3

⁴⁵ Prov. 24: 16

⁴⁶ Gutierrez, G., *On Job: God-talk and the Suffering of the Innocent*, trans. by Matthew J. O’Connell, New York: Orbis Books, 1987, 4

⁴⁷ Psalm 112: 1-3

⁴⁸ The Satan is an obstacle, opposition on one’s way to do good. It could be used to refer to the fallen angel also called demon, or to human principle opposed to God’s plan. As far as the story of Job is concerned, Alphonso Schökel observes that *il satan non e’ un’ affermazione teologica, bensì un personaggio funzionale nella storia*.

he says are not for nothing. The author captures in this objection the religious *Weltanschauung* of the time that was reward-oriented, a view which the friends of Job corroborate. God contests this point as far as the person of Job is concerned and gives him (Satan) the permission to test Job, saying “all he has is in your power, but keep your hands off his person” (1:12). The second scene of the temptation takes place on earth. With the conclusion of the dialogue between God and Satan, Job receives the news of the death of his sons and daughters and the loss of all his possessions (1:13-19). Job does not reproach God. He is the rich man whom Ben Sirach describes as blameless, because he does not go chasing after gold (Sir. 31:8). In Job 2:3 God openly proclaims the innocence of Job amid his sufferings. He chides Satan for achieving nothing and provoking Him to ruin Job. Satan feels that by attacking directly the person of Job, he would win, and again requests permission. This permission is now granted. Job falls ill, afflicted with malignant ulcers from the soles of his feet to his head, “he sits among the ashes” (2: 7-8). He is now a sick as well as a poor man. To the death that is at work in his flesh, there is added social death, for at the time persons suffering from incurable illness were cast out of the society. A factor that contributed to this attitude was the conviction that poverty and sickness were a punishment for the sins of the individual or family.⁴⁹

Then there was the solidarity visit of the three friends of Job – Eliphaz of Teman, Bildad of Shuah, and Zophar of Naamath (2: 12). Their intention was to share in the suffering of their friend and render some assistance. They sit with him on the ground for seven days and seven nights, but never speak a word. At the end of the seven days and seven nights, it is Job who breaks the silence by cursing the day he was born (3:1). Worthy of note is the repeated use of the numbers three and seven in the story of Job. Earlier on we read of seven sons and three daughters of Job, followed by similar numbers referring to the animals, and lastly the same pair of numbers three and seven – three friends, seven days and seven nights. At any rate, the numbers three and seven stand for perfection in Biblical numerology. The action of the three friends is quite significant. The first step towards assisting one who is suffering is identifying with the person’s condition.⁵⁰ Somehow it is therapeutic, when such gesture like that of the three friends elicits some words from the sufferer. The spoken word generally gives one an idea of where to begin and what to say. Sometimes those suffering need only the presence of friends, fellow human beings, to be able to express their grief. An unexpressed grief can lead

(Schökel, L. A. Diaz, J. L. S., op. cit.116)

⁴⁹ Gutierrez, G., op. cit., 10.

⁵⁰ Cf., Matt. 25: 35 – 40.

to depression. When grief is given expression, the problem is to some degree resolved. This is the phase in which suffering finds a language of pain and lament, according to Dorothee Soelle. For as one begins to speak, to emerge from passivity and utter helplessness, the isolation is gradually broken.⁵¹ It is a step towards the integration of what cannot be changed. The social teaching of the Church lays great emphasis on the need to show solidarity with the suffering and disadvantaged. This may include, but is not confined to material help, as the three friends of Job demonstrated in the foregoing story.

From Job, we learn the proper attitude to the transient things of this world. The text presents him as a righteous and prosperous man. In other words, his wealth came solely as a result of his industry was not a product of deceit. He was an upright man, but still had to suffer. Instead of cursing the Lord, he praised him, "...Jahweh gave, Jahweh has taken back, blessed be the name of Jahweh" (1:21). The undeserved suffering of Job is not the last instance of such suffering. All of human history is replete with cases of undeserved suffering. And not only is that to be found in the pages of history, but are recurrent issues of the human society. The drama of Job, unfortunately, is continuously replayed. It comes in various forms and evokes a cry of lament that no moral person desires to hear but which no moral person can ignore. Whether it is the everyday violation of human rights, murder, the gory experience of the slave trade, the torture that we find so blameworthy in the Jewish holocaust of World War II, the humiliation of races regarded as inferior, discrimination against women, especially women who are poor, systematic social injustice, a persistently high rate of infant mortality, exiles and refugees, terrorism of every kind⁵² – the person of Job comes to mind. However, Job reminds us that suffering whether personal or social should not be an excuse for doing evil. Eye for eye makes the world blind sang a popular musician some decades ago.

Furthermore, the patience of Job may be relevant to a fast-moving society that wants to see the positive result of everything *hic et nunc*. The need to wait for God's *kairos* is important in every condition of suffering. This point is missed by most of the people who suffer. The immediate situation beclouds reason and makes it impossible to project into the future. It becomes difficult to think of the silver lining that is to found behind every cloud, or to accept the reality that the night is followed by the day, and that Good Friday is followed by Easter

⁵¹ Newsom, A. C., The book of Job, In: The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes, vol. 4, Nashville: Abingdon, 1996, 372.

⁵² Gutierrez, G., op. cit., 102.

Sunday. That the predicament was not the end of Job's story is described in the final verses of the book of Job (42:7 – 17). God redoubled Job's lost riches and restored his health.

6. 2. 2 Dignity and the Social Teachings of the Church

The Church teaches that the dignity of the human person, as we have shown above, is rooted in the fact of his/her creation in the image and likeness of God, and that the human person realizes this dignity to the extent he/she reflects the image of God in all his/her doings here on earth, since the goal of all his/her endeavours is to be with God, his origin and goal, *Herkunft und Zukunft* (Rahner). However, the social realities sometimes constitute a great hindrance for the human person in his/her bid to lead a life worthy of this dignity. The social teaching of the Church therefore, tries to transmit the proper attitude to be adopted in the face of such social problems. It attempts to provide answers to such existential questions as to what should be the role of a Christian in times of war; how should a Christian in politics conduct himself/herself in matters of public interest while keeping his faith; to what extent should a Christian trader obey market rules that are incongruent with Christian ethics; is it at all part of the mission of the Church to work for the change of economic or political policies in a country.

The Church's response to social questions has followed different patterns in the course of history depending on the nature of the social problem peculiar to the period. But in all, it is the person and message of Jesus Christ that provide the paradigm. For his part, Jesus offered no specific economic or political message; instead he proclaimed the coming of the kingdom of God and the redemption of people from sin. The toil and suffering that marked the lives of most people, especially the poor, was not the ultimate reality. There was another superior reality of grace and redemption, joy and love.⁵³ To the young man who ran to him appealing for his intervention in a case of inheritance between him and his brother, Jesus replied, 'who appointed me your judge or the arbitrator of your claims' (Lk 12: 13). On the other hand, he called on his apostles to provide food for the hungry crowd instead of sending them away to look for food. He identified himself with the hungry, sick, naked, imprisoned saying that what was done to any of these was done to him. This ambiguous legacy on things concerning social issues has remained unresolved, hence giving rise to a turbulent life for Christ's followers. We have already devoted a reasonable portion to this theme in the earlier part of this work

⁵³ O'Brien, J. D. and Shannon, A. T., op. cit. 2

dealing with poverty. Thus it is not exigent to revisit it here. However, it is important to delineate two streams of thought that have polarized Christians as far as social questions are concerned. These streams could be referred to as the *idealist* and the *realist* camps.

For the idealists, what is expected of Christians is a life of gospel simplicity like that of Francis of Assisi, denouncing the things of this world and the arrogance of the rich and powerful. They argue that the Church should be discouraged from getting involved in the business of the world, since that is opposed to her mission, namely that of educating Christians on their call to an ethic of perfection by the revelation in Christ of a God who is love.⁵⁴ This position rests largely on a view of the experience of the Church in the later Middle Ages, was an economic institution of prime importance. The result then was less emphasis on the proclamation of the Gospel.

The realists, on the other hand, hold tenaciously to the fact that alleviating the social conditions of the people is the very core of the Gospel. To back up their arguments, appeal is made to the life of Jesus and the early Christian community, which practiced a heroic ethic of uncompromising love, sharing what they had with one another. The problem with this position is that it creates the danger of reducing the mission of the Church to social work. Consequently, the salvific message is equated to material well-being. This is the error of Protestant socialism following the Reformation in Europe and some versions of liberation theology in Latin America. Neither the idealists nor the realists taken separately have represented the human person, who is both spirit and flesh, correctly.

Catholic social teaching steers a middle course combining relevant elements from the two groups, at the same time guarding against extremism. At the basis of this teaching is the principle that individual human beings are the foundation, the cause and the end of every social institution.⁵⁵ And this principle stems from Christian anthropology, namely that man/woman made in the image and likeness of God was raised by the Incarnation to a dignity beyond compare such that the Son of Man is in a certain way united to each man/woman.⁵⁶ Because of this dignity the human person cannot be treated as an instrument or reduced to an anonymous entity in the human society.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 6

⁵⁵ John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, 1961 nr. 219

⁵⁶ John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, 1980 nr. 37

On the level of praxis, the Church demonstrates solidarity by sharing with the poor and less privileged through her charitable organisations, and encourages others to do so. There are innumerable centres for justice and peace all over the world established with the goal of defending the voiceless and mediating in times of conflict. The poor and the marginalized would have certainly been worse off without the Church. Apart from her not unlimited resources, which makes it difficult for her to reach all those in need, the Church is prevented from operating in some countries. This lack is taken care of by the writings of the Popes, which are often in the form of appeals to the secular powers on the need to recognize and defend the dignity of human persons especially, the poor and marginalized. The purpose of the Papal social encyclicals is *inter alia* to provide guidance on rights and responsibilities in the light of the dignity of the human person. We see this in all the social encyclicals from Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (1891), whose motive was to defend the human right to private property as an aspect of dignity expressed in a man's/woman's remunerative labour, to Benedict XVI's *Caritas in Veritate* (2009), which drawing extensively from Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio* (1967), addressed the truth of the human person as a being created out of love and called to love. The catch-words of the encyclical which form the title, love in truth, describe the activities of the human person, whether the individual or as a group in the society where he/she lives. Even beyond the individual sphere, social institutions be they political, economic, scientific or technological, should have it as their obligation to promote the good of the whole person.

Benedict XVI in the mentioned encyclical went further to appeal to those responsible for aid programs to pay more attention to the training of human resources, which are the true capital and the growth of which can guarantee a stable future for the developing countries.⁵⁷ He equally appealed to the developed countries to create economic policies that will make it possible for the developing countries to participate in the international markets. The problem of the developing countries is to be found in nothing so much as in the connection between poverty and unemployment. In many cases, the poor are the result of the infringement on the dignity of human labour owing to the limitation of its possibilities, such as unemployment or under-employment, which leads to the deprivation of the right and reward of the person and his/her person.⁵⁸ Work⁵⁹ is an expression of the dignity of the human person in the society,

⁵⁷ Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 2009, nr. 58

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, nr. 63

⁵⁹ The kind of work meant by the pope is one that is freely chosen, which enables the working man or woman to take part in the development of his/her community, to meet the needs of the family and send his/her children to school. It is a kind of work to which the worker is not forced and which gives the worker sufficient

since it is at the same time the expression of the being of each individual man or woman in the society. But the Pope warns equally that help should never be limited only to the material aspect but should also include the spiritual growth of the person, because the human person is a unity of body and soul.⁶⁰ While appealing for the material assistance of the person, the Church primarily occupies herself with the spiritual advancement of the human person. In this connection we can understand the often cited statement of the Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon that the unique contribution of the Orthodox Church to the European integration process is the experience of the Divine Liturgy. For during periods of occupation, which resulted in ecclesiastical censorship, educational prohibition and the thwarting of public outreach, the Liturgy alone has prevailed as a means for the preservation of the faith and the prosperity of the faithful. By preserving the faith, the person is saved, and by prospering the faithful, the community is safeguarded.⁶¹ What this means is that the support of the state is indispensable if dignifying living conditions for the human person are to be created. This brings us to the role of the state in the protection of the fundamental human rights.

6. 2. 3 Dignity and the Challenges of Basic Human Rights

One of the most controversial aspects of human dignity in the social context concerns its relationship to the basic human rights. This controversy arises on the one hand in tracing the foundation of the dignity of man/woman to his/her creation in the image of God in a pluralistic society, where the belief system is diversified. On the other hand, there is no consensus in many societies on what constitutes the basic human rights, the existence of the international human rights organisation notwithstanding. Any discussion on the theme of human rights invokes a chain of questions: What does 'human rights' really mean? What are the components of the rights of the human person and what are not? From what source(s) do they derive their force? Are such rights due to every human person irrespective of age, gender, social status, colour or creed? Should they be understood as valid at all times and in all places or are their interpretations subject to varying and various contexts? What is the relationship between human dignity and fundamental human rights in a multi-cultural society?

room to his/her own person, the family and enables him/her to find his/her spiritual roots, guarantees a worthy wage.

⁶⁰ Ibid., nr. 76

⁶¹ Dobrijević, I., *Solidarity and Social Justice: The Mission of the Serbian Orthodox Church Towards European Integration*, In: Gabriel, I. and Gassner, F. (Hrsg), *Solidarität und Gerechtigkeit, Ökumenische Perspektiven*, Stuttgart: Matthias Grünewald-Verlag, 2007, 158 – 173.

In discussing the rights of the human person, we are referring to the relationship of the individuals to one another and to the society/state. It is a relationship which obliges the state both to acknowledge and defend the basic rights of her citizens as individual persons endowed with dignity, and to demand that individuals respect such rights reciprocally. The dignity of the human person serves therefore as the foundation for such mutual interaction which the laws of every independent state are meant to define and safeguard. Although the term human dignity has philosophical and theological origins, it is applied legally to designate the difference between human beings and other living things in the society. In the words of Ronald Dworkin, dignity is a philosophical and theological “concept”, with a legal “conception”.⁶² But whereas philosophy and law can postulate the dignity of man, it is only theology that can provide its metaphysical foundation. Thus, to talk of the rights of the human person without at the same time alluding to its metaphysical foundation in the dignity of the human person is tantamount to a *contradictio in adjecto*. Without much ado about the theological/metaphysical legitimization of human rights, the concrete exercise of the rights of the human person is always laden with a lot of problems the evidence of which are to be found in history.

Two positions on individual-state interactions can be delineated. The first is the liberalist position that pays much attention to personal rights, according to which the individual must not be prevented from exercising his/her rights, but helped to this by the state. This view is justified by the argument that the individual predates the state. The second position defends the interests and power of the state under the auspices of protecting the common good, at times to the detriment of individual rights. The concept of human rights follows these positions with the former defending a naturalistic conception of human rights, while the latter supports the positivistic outlook.⁶³ It is the tension between these two positions that is the subject of human rights which has a long history in theory whose roots are to be found in the American and French revolutions of the 18th Century that sought to create national polities based on broadly shared human rights. Then later on this attempt to define laws broadly based on human rights continued at the international level with the founding of the United Nations Organisation in 1945 following the events of World War II. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations on 10th December, 1948⁶⁴ was to serve as an official

⁶² Dworkin, R., Unenumerated Rights: Whether and How Roe Should be Overruled, University of Chicago Law Review 59, 1992, 381 – 432.

⁶³ The naturalists define human rights as conferred on man by God, founded on divine law and discernible by human reason, whereas the positivists deny any supernatural origins of rights restricting them to the society.

⁶⁴ The Universal Declaration on Human Rights was very much influenced by the principles of America's

acknowledgment of the struggle to project liberalism into a realist world – a world dominated for several centuries by sovereign states and their collective interests and characterised by abuses. Paradoxically, the countries that championed the universal Declaration of human rights still have to contend with several cases of human rights violation. Be that as it may, the principles contained in the Declaration provide a basis for both interpersonal and inter state-relationships that could be applied anywhere in the world.

From an operational perspective, human rights involves the equal protection of individuals as well as group rights in a polity. A former U.S. Secretary of State defined human rights in a broader context to include:

- The right to be free of violations of the integrity of the person. Such violations include torture; cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment or punishment; and arbitrary arrest or imprisonment. They also include denial of fair public trial, and invasion of the home.
- The right to the fulfillment of such vital needs as food, shelter, health care, and education.
- The right to enjoy civil and political liberties; freedom of thought, religion, assembly, and speech; freedom of the press; freedom of movement both within and outside one's country; and freedom to take part in government.⁶⁵

It is remarkable to notice the order in which Vance articulated human rights. To begin with the freedom from violations of the integrity of the person, before mentioning the fulfillment of vital needs such as food, shelter, health care and education, is of much importance. It shows the central role that human dignity, which we can also translate as human integrity plays in the application of human rights. The fact that the other person has dignity/integrity like myself independent of his/her possessions and/or achievements has to be acknowledged as the basis of other rights. Benedict XVI in the already cited encyclical writes in this regard, "*I cannot*

Independence Declaration of 1776, and the Bill of Rights of 1791 which was amended nine times in a bid to accommodate the interest of all citizens and all parties. The essential elements of the two documents which were incorporated and elaborated in the universal declaration include the right to life, liberty and the right to strive after happiness. Even with all these modifications and clarifications some countries like China, which not only did not sign, but allowed circa 30 million lives to perish in famine between 1958 and 1962 during Mao's regime in pursuit of state sovereignty (cf., Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts: China's Secret Famine*, London: J. Murray, 1996). Despite the criticisms from Asian countries that there is too much western emphasis on civil and political rights, and not enough attention to the social, cultural and economic aspects of human rights which after all is the commonly agreed end product (cf., David P. Forsythe), there is a new basis for cooperation between the international community and the states which goes beyond war and trade to human rights.

⁶⁵ Vance, C., Law Day Address on Human Rights, In: Donald P. Kommers and Gilbert D. Loescher (eds.), *Human Rights and America Foreign Policy*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press

give what is mine to the other, without first giving him what pertains to him in justice“.⁶⁶ To this end, Starck articulates the essential duties of the state as comprising the guarantee of peace, and the assurance of freedom and social equality.⁶⁷ Where this fails, the result is what President Roosevelt decried, namely that aggression grows out of deprivation and persecution.⁶⁸ It boils down to the fact that the state can only make the living together of human persons possible through its laws, since *Ubi societas, ibi ius*. It is from just laws that security arises, from security curiosity and from curiosity knowledge, which leads to development. However, the enforcement of the law by the state sometimes conflicts with individual human rights and dignity in some regions of the world, like the controversial moral issue of torture and capital punishment deployed as a means of protecting the common good.

The next crucial challenge to the issue of human dignity and human rights is the liberal concept of rights as a malleable and evolving notion. There is no doubt that new human rights norms would have to be adopted and new meanings read into existing documents, as new threats to human dignity emerged. By making the cloning of animals possible, science led us into a new debate on the ethics of cloning and the corresponding laws. The same thing applied to the freezing of sperm and delayed *in vitro* fertilization of the human egg⁶⁹ and the most current issue of stem-cell research. Threats to human dignity change with time and place. International human rights standards, as a means to ensure minimal standards of human dignity, change as well. In the midst of the flux on this central question of dignity and human rights, there is a process of debate in an effort to retain what is still sound and valid, and to make changes as moral and political judgments dictate.⁷⁰ Here the Church's position is clear.

Without intending to repeat the position of the Church which we have stated above, it is important to underline the fact that for the Church the value of the human dignity cannot be compromised for whatever reason. This dignity does not refer to an abstract nature, but to concrete or ontological beings that are unique and irreplaceable.⁷¹ What this implies for the social life of the human person is that he or she must be treated as a human being and never as

⁶⁶ Caritas in Veritate, nr. 6

⁶⁷ Starck, C., Menschenwürde als Verfassungsgarantie im modernen Staat, JZ 36, 1981, 457 – 464, In: Vögele, W., Menschenwürde zwischen Recht und Theologie, Op. Cit., 379.

⁶⁸ Townsend, H. and Douglas, B., Friedrich D. Roosevelt and the Creation of the UN, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997, 56

⁶⁹ With reference to which the assertion of the daughter of the blind Seer, Teiresias, in Seneca's version of the Oedipus tragedy could be applied: *Natura versa est, nulla lex utero manet* – Nature is distorted, hence the womb is no longer governed by any laws.

⁷⁰ Forsythe, P. D., op. cit. 49

⁷¹ Stagman, D., “The Implications for Theology of the Acting Person”, The Thought of Pope John Paul II: A Collection of Essays and Studies (Roma: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1993), 216.

an object. The human person is and remains the goal of all social activities and the subject of the inalienable human rights.⁷² The dignity of the human person and his/her basic rights constitute the central framework of relational experience even in the emergence of a new humanism which has given rise to a new social structure and a new anthropology in the world.⁷³ The creation of a conducive and humane society is therefore imperative if the dignity of the human person is to be realized. This involves not only distributing material things justly, but creating opportunities to enable the people to develop themselves and contribute to the good of the entire society. Although there may be disparity in the possession of material goods within a society as a result of the disparity in the physical and intellectual endowments of people, this should not constitute a basis for the violation of the rights of persons. The Church cannot preach the Gospel without defending the rights of the human person, because human rights flow from human dignity, which is a Gospel value.⁷⁴ Addressing the Third General Conference of the Latin-American Episcopate in Puebla, John Paul II outlined the areas where human rights and hence human dignity can be infringed upon thus:

Human dignity is infringed on the individual level when due regard is not had for values such as freedom, the right to profess one's religion, physical and mental integrity, the right to essential goods, to life... It is infringed on the social level and political level when man cannot exercise his right of participation, or when he is subjected to unjust and unlawful coercion, or submitted to physical or mental torture.⁷⁵

It is not easy to separate the discourse about the dignity and rights of the human person in the social context from the mission of church *ad gentes*. Therefore the Church as mother and teacher has to continuously provide counsel in subject-related matters. Besides, the Church's human rights teachings should be able to create dialogue between diverse religious believers, so that the moral dilemmas of a religiously pluralistic and increasingly secular society could be collectively tackled. For in the end, it is not the state, but the Church that provides the legitimacy for the doctrine of the dignity of the human person and human rights, since its foundation is traceable to God after whose image and likeness⁷⁶ the human person is made.

⁷² Les moines de Solesmes, *Le droit à la vie dans l'enseignement des papes : Volume 4, Sable sur Sarthe : Abbaye Saint-Pierre de Solesmes*, 1981, 16.

⁷³ Julio de la Torre, *L' emerge di un nuovo umanesimo e la Gaudium et Spes, L'etica tra quotidiano e remoto: Studi di etica sociale in onore di G. Mattai*, Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 1985, 25-37.

⁷⁴ John Paul II, *Message to the Secretary General of the United Nations on the XXXth Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, In: AAS 71, 1979, 121.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, *Esta hora to the Third General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate in Puebla*, In: AAS 71, 1979, 198.

⁷⁶ There is a dimension to the concept of image and likeness being propagated by some scholars, according to

6.3. Conclusion

In this section we focused on the notion of the dignity of the human person as the pivot on which every discussion about man/woman rotates. Two central dimensions to this concept were explored, namely, the essentialist approach and the existentialist approach. Whereas the former considered dignity as a given, valid for all human beings, the latter concentrates on its realization. Even though the approaches cannot be treated independently, the essentialist approach corresponds to the Judeo-Christian tradition and the existentialist approach corresponds to the philosophical view. However, Thomas Aquinas' three-stage conception of dignity attempts to unite the two positions. According to him, the dignity of the person as rooted in the image of God is not something static, rather it is goal-oriented, and this goal is the life of the blessed. Reason and freedom to which philosophy appeals as the core of human dignity are hollow, if they do not enable the human person to discern what is good and true and to choose the same; and the highest good is God himself.

The revolutionary thought of Kant in his categorical imperative led to the birth of a new humanism whose aim was to regain the central position of man in the history of humanity. That the human person is an end-in-itself and should never be treated as a means to an end is the main message of Kant's moral philosophy. It is the self-worth which the human person possesses that distinguishes him/her from other living beings. Such an intrinsic self-worth consists for Kant in the freedom and autonomy of each individual person. How the individual autonomy is to be upheld in a society where other individuals live and work without conflicts, in the absence of an external law, heteronomy, was however not explained by Kant.

The social context provides a basis for the juridical and political understanding of the dignity of the human person as that which is realized in the recognition and defence of human rights. The society is the arena where human dignity can be recognized and defended. It is also the

which a differentiation is made between the nature of the human person as "Abbild" and "Vorbild". In other words, when we talk of the creation of the human person in the image and likeness of God, does this refer to what he/she is or to what he/she should be. But the answer to this seemingly difficult question is to be found in the connection between creation and salvation. What God did at creation, which was disturbed through the fall of man was restored through his son Jesus Christ. Thus we do not talk of two creations, but one, and the salvific work of Christ. Redemption is never to be understood as an after-thought on the part of God but rather a restoration of what was damaged by the sins of our first parents. The original plan remains the same, but each person, owing to the effect of the Fall, will now have to struggle through his/her deeds to appropriate that which Christ has won for us through His suffering, death and resurrection. It is illogical in this context to separate what man/woman is from what he/she should be, while the one presupposes the other intending to say that both are the same.

topos where this dignity can be infringed upon by omission or commission. The state does not grant human dignity, its duty is to recognize and defend it through its rules and laws. In interpersonal relationships, respect for the dignity of the other person has to be underlined with a clear-cut distinction between *meum et teum*, to make peaceful co-existence possible. Both the church and the state are stakeholders in the affairs of the society, but while the one has a goal which transcends the material well-being of the human person, directing his/her gaze to the things of heaven, his/her real homeland, the latter is principally concerned with worldly matters. The story of Job was presented with its moral lesson that the loss of material goods, even the loss of health, is not a sufficient reason to do evil, as the latter leads to the 'loss' of dignity more than the former. Hence poverty and the quest for material possession cannot and do not justify violence. The visit of his friends served as an impulse for Job to find meaning in his situation. This is what the Church recommends in her call for solidarity.

However, since as a member of the society, the human person can expect certain things as a privilege, like the visit of Job's friends, there are others which he/she should demand as a right. We tried to explore the development of the concept of human rights, purposely neglecting to delve into the theories of the origin of society, as that falls outside the scope of our work. Rights are due to the human persons, because they are endowed with dignity. The idea of rights is therefore employed according to Franck 'as a defense against abuse of power everywhere'.⁷⁷ Thus, it is difficult to discuss human rights without reference to human dignity, which is held to be universal.

Whether considered theologically, philosophically, legally or otherwise, one central element running through the various conceptions is that the word dignity is a relational concept. It is that 'humanness' which I appreciate and value highly in myself, which the other person expects that I appreciate and value in him/her, and vice versa. When considered from its source, the term dignity makes one aware of the fact that one is not a product of chance, but that one owes one's being to a greater Being, God. And any attempt to understand human life which falls short of its source and goal ends up making it a walking shadow, a tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury signifying nothing.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Franck, M. T., "Is Personal Freedom a Western Value?" In: American Journal of International Law 91, 4 (October, 1997), 593 – 627).

⁷⁸ Shakespeare, W., Macbeth, Act 2, Scene 5.

What can the relational notion of the dignity of the human person contribute to the reduction of poverty and violence in the countries of Africa, south of the Sahara? What are the points of agreement/disagreement between human dignity as a relational concept and communitarian ethics? Can the notion of relationality provide a new basis for interpersonal relationship in a pluralistic society like Africa with her triple heritage of Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion? In what ways can the term relationality be integrated in the programme for the furtherance of civil, basic and human rights⁷⁹? Is it possible to talk of human rights and human dignity in a society where more than 90% of the population are ignorant of their rights because they lack education? Is not the first step towards the protection of one's rights the knowledge of those rights? Could it be that the overwhelming ignorance of what constitutes human rights among the ruling and the ruled has led to the impoverishment of the ruled by the rulers, and unleashed violence in much of Africa and other developing countries? Is the road to solving or at least reducing poverty in Africa not through education for all?

The following chapter introduces us to a broader consideration of the term relationality or encountering the other as lived human dignity, which forms the crux of the African community spirit and Christian anthropology.

⁷⁹ The three terms, civic, basic and human rights are often used as synonyms, however there is a subtle difference between them. Civic rights refer to those rights accruing to person in his/her status as a citizen of a particular country, whereas basic rights are the rights due to a person living in a country but not yet a citizen of that country. Human rights on the other hand are those rights which flow from the dignity of the human person; they are inalienable and universally valid for every person irrespective of age, sex, or social ranking.

CHAPTER SEVEN

AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO THE PROBLEMS OF POVERTY AND VIOLENCE BASED ON THE AFRICAN WORLD-VIEW AND CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY

7.0 Introduction

In the previous chapters, we tried to analyse the nature of the phenomena of poverty and violence as experienced in Africa south of the Sahara, paying attention to the possible natural, human and historical causes. In the penultimate chapter, we dwelt extensively on the notion of the rights and dignity of the human person. Since the social problems of poverty and violence center on man/woman, who is by nature a social being, but whose goal of existence transcends the society, it became necessary to underscore the indispensable role of human dignity in discussing social issues. The human person is a being endowed with dignity, because of his/her creation in the likeness of his/her Creator. The rights and duties of the human person derive therefore from his/her dignity. It is the duty of the society/state to recognize and protect these rights, even though the state cannot grant them.

Our aim in this section is to survey another approach to the social issues of poverty and violence as far as the African world-view and Christian anthropology are concerned. What lessons can be derived from the African values and the Christian anthropology that could help in the reduction of the discussed problems? To be able to answer this question, we shall first of all try to highlight some of those ethical values in the African world that are almost being forgotten, but whose recovery could help in combating the twin problems of poverty and violence. Then we shall present the elements of Christian anthropology as the paradigm of what the human person is expected to be as epitomized in Jesus Christ, the God made man. We shall be doing this in the conviction that any attempt to provide a solution to the problems of poverty and violence that does not take into consideration the ethical norms, which of course are rooted in the dignity of the human person, remains inadequate. And these norms are present, albeit in shadowy forms, in all cultures of the world, African culture inclusive.

A re-examination of those traditional African values here and their contribution to the African quest for identity in a plural and progressive world is pertinent. The Africans have to embark first of all on a journey of self-discovery and self-definition before a meaningful effort towards development can take place. The beginning of every development, as it is said, is the

development of the mind. This exercise has to begin with the givens. By this we mean those things that an African can say of himself/herself of which he/she is proud like the respect for life and the sense of community. This is the way I understand the view that African problems can only be solved by Africans. Perhaps it is equally important to find out whether there is a correlation between the level of poverty experienced in Africa today and the individualistic, self-centred modern society, the influence of which the continent is not immune to.

Subsequent to this, we shall take a brief look at some tenets of Christian anthropology, which serve as the only links that connect Africa to the rest of the world on a more or less equal basis. The awareness of the dignity of the human person, which stems from his/her creation in the image and likeness of God, has a two-fold message for the Africans on the one hand, and for the rest of the world in their relationship to Africa on the other hand. For the former, it means to leave the circumscribed African world and begin to think more globally. And for the latter, it is a clarion call to unite and fight human problems as a human family, irrespective of where these problems are found. This will involve in more concrete terms such specifics as aid, environment, migration and the ethical basis for globalization.

7. 1. The African Sense of Community and the Challenges of Poverty

7. 1. 1 Traditional Community Model and its Limitations

In the section dealing with the traditional African values and worldview, we saw that the respect for life and deep sense of community occupy primacy of place. The concept of community, as already explained, incorporated God, the ancestors, the living and the unborn. Of course, only the living constituted the visible members of the traditional community. The other members were invisible, but played a vital role in the religious and moral behaviour of the community. Members of a particular community traced their origin to a common ancestor and were held together by socio-cultural bonds expressed in meals and conscious avoidance of evil deeds. The community spirit was lived in its intensity in the villages, where the people, bound together by their natural religion, defended another form of civilization, which though modest in its material achievement was proud of arts and moral values.

The crucial question is whether it is still reasonable to advocate for a community way of life, as was obtained many centuries ago, in our modern complex society with its mega-cities. The city as opposed to the traditional community is larger and highly diversified. Here the

individual disappears in the anonymous group, sometimes ending up in isolation, and morality becomes more of a private than public matter unlike in the community where he/she is the son/daughter of so-and-so, or a member of this or that family. The fact that one is known strengthens the sense of identity and makes it feasible to ask and render assistance. We have to admit that this age has passed. This is so, because the advancement in information and communication technology has made it possible for every part of the world to be in touch with all other parts, from Jakarta to Geneva; Hamburg to Honkong and from Tokyo to Tripoli. Be that as it may, there is something positive about the community spirit that will have to be retained if Africa is to emerge from her poverty. And that is what I call 'community sensibility', which is not only required for Africans alone, but valid for other regions since the world has become one. Put in another way, technology and communication have brought human beings in our modern society together thereby making them neighbours, but they are yet to made brothers and sisters. The latter can only be achieved through a sense of community, which is opposed to radical egoism and pursuit of self-interest. There is the need to develop this idea of the community further before discussing how this could be demonstrated concretely.

7. 1. 2 The Christian Community Model as More Inclusive

The definition of community that serves our purpose in this section is one which involves notions of diverse people sharing common geography, interest, faith and hope¹. This form of community allows people to act as private individuals much of the time, but also guarantees them the possibility of exercising their individual commitment, attachment, and civic obligations to the entire group. As a result, the concept of the community as axiological and normative is emphasized much more than is the ontological. This is better expressed in Cardinal Wojtyla's analysis of participation and community in *The Acting Person*. Wojtyla explains the meaning of participation in two steps, focusing first on participation with respect to the person's action and, second on participation with respect to the person's subjectivity. What this implies is that community does not deprive one of one's individual freedom, but gives it expression, since it is through the personalistic value of action that the individual comes to grips with the necessary subjective dimension of the common good. And this subjective dimension of the common good carries a normative obligation for communities to

¹ Weber, M., *The Sociology of Religion*, Fourth Edition, trans. by Ephraim Fischhoff, Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1991, 60.

conduct action in such a way that it fosters the self-fulfillment of persons.² The value and significance of participation consist in its role as a check both against ‘individualism’, which arises when the individual sees himself as the supreme good and regards others as limitations, and ‘objective totalism’, which subjects the individual to the collectivity in an unconditional and coercive manner. The common good which binds the individual to the community and vice versa, demands commitment and self-sacrifice on the part of individuals, because it is only through their commitment to it that they can fulfill themselves in action.

We have already treated the concept of common good in the earlier part of this work, but it is important to note the place which Wojtyla gives it in the discourse on the human community. His analysis of participation and the community simultaneously manifests the dynamic nature of the common good and its intrinsic dependence upon human virtue. The human community has two dimensions which complement each other. The one is the interpersonal dimension, which occurs when the *I* and the *thou* reciprocally affirm the dignity of the other. The other is the social dimension that denotes a relationship in which persons act together in pursuit of a common good. The latter dimension cannot be realized if the former is not fully experienced. In the social dimension of community, the interpersonal element is only indirectly indicated, while the multiplicity brought about by the relations of persons is directly brought into focus. All the activities which take place in the social dimension of community are related to a single value, the common good, which includes the requirement that confirming the personal subjectivity of each must be one of the goals of communal action.³ The community is responsible for the interaction of persons, who in turn have the obligation of building up the community by working together for the common good in the spirit of justice.⁴

Notwithstanding its merits, the limitations of the model of African community presented by Bujo as a basis for communitarian ethics become obvious vis-a-vis the foregoing discussion.

² Wojtyla, C., *The Acting Person* cited In: Beigel, G., *Faith and Social Justice in the Teaching of Pope John Paul II*, New York: Peter Lang, 1997, 24.

³ Beigel, G., *Faith and Social Justice in the Teaching of Pope John Paul II*, Op. Cit., 29.

⁴ Without the intention of going into an elaborate discussion of justice, it is exigent to point out that the concept of social justice originated from (mis)interpretation of Aquinas’s notion of legal justice (STh, II-II, q. 58, a. 6, ad. 4). According to Aquinas, legal justice is the form of all justice, which may be differentiated into distributive and commutative justice. While the one regulates the relationship of the whole (the state or the community in our case) to the parts (the individuals), the other regulates the relationship of the parts (individuals) to one another. Some scholars, however, separate legal justice from distributive and commutative justice and assign it the role of regulating the relationship of the individuals to the state. In other words, it is concerned with the duties of the parts to the whole in the form of obedience to the laws. Of course, we know that the differentiation of these forms of justice can easily be made theoretically, but the concrete application is very controversial and inconclusive. However, our concern in the work is more with community (*Gemeinschaft*) than society (*Gesellschaft*).

Since the African idea of community, according to Bujo, is based on a common ancestor who founded the community or clan,⁵ it is susceptible to exclusivity and instead of widening the human family ends up in radical atomization. The tendency not to treat any person outside a particular ancestor-circle as a person is not ruled out. And within a particular region where many ancestor-based groupings are found, struggle and rivalries can hardly be controlled. What this means is that there is the need to search for an all-embracing foundation for the understanding of community as a solid framework for ethical thoughts and behaviour.

Recent studies by African theologians such as Nyamiti, Bujo and Uzukwu, would not want that the idea of ancestor be erased completely, instead they project Jesus Christ as the ancestor per se, who through his life death and resurrection brought mankind new and full life (Jn. 10: 10). The Christian communities gathered at worship, whether at the parish level or the diocesan level, anywhere in the world, are drawn together by Jesus Christ, their common ancestor and primogenitor. There is the awareness that all who have been admitted as members of the body of Christ through baptism and who share in the mystery of the incarnation and resurrection have mutual obligations to one another. The Christian community model is therefore broader than the traditional African community and is at the same time open to more growth. This community is regulated by the law of Jesus Christ, the ancestor, which is the law of love (Jn. 15: 17). This love is not restricted to only the members of the community, but extends to ‘the other sheep that are not of this fold’ (Jn. 10: 16). The objection may be raised as to the fate of those other people who do not share the Christian faith, but live in the same community. The response to this objection is to be stated categorically following the teaching of the Church that what is truly Christian is equally truly human. In other words, the saving message of Christ is not alien to any person.

An expression which brings out clearly the form of this Christian community is John Paul II’s “communion of persons”, *communio personarum*. This expression designates “the type of community proper to human beings, which involves interpersonal affirmations of the dignity of the other and a corresponding social consciousness that aims at the common good while respecting the subjectivity of each member of the ‘we’.”⁶ The entire Christian anthropology is based on this fact and is the fulcrum of Christian ethics and the social teaching of the Church. The formulation of the common good emphasizes particularly the good of interpersonal communion, which is indicated as the basic ethical task of human beings. The communion of

⁵ Bujo, B., *The Ethical Dimension of Community*, op. cit. 54

⁶ Beigel, G., op. cit., 61

persons is characterised by its anthropological, Christological, ecclesial and universal dimensions. This insight shows that any partial approach to the communion of persons or the community and common good is unacceptable. It is with reference to this that John Paul II in his encyclical on human work, *Laborem exercens*, paved the way for a new understanding of human relationship to work. He argued that “the basis for determining the value of human work is not primarily the kind of work being done, but the fact that the one who is doing it is a person”,⁷ citing Christ’s own work as a carpenter as revelation of the full subjective value of work. With this new perspective, the very basis of the ancient differentiation of people into classes according to the kind of work done was abrogated.

Thus we can see from the interaction between the communion of persons and the common good the anthropocentric foundation for the theology of the preferential option for the poor. However, we are aware of the heated debate which this has generated both within the church and in the secular society. Since the theological perspective of the option for the poor always involves analyzing the phenomena of poverty and oppression, and uncovering the underlying structural causes, it is mostly perceived as tending towards Marxist ideology.⁸ Furthermore, it is judged as an insufficient theology, being limited to historical praxis as its source neglecting thereby theology’s dependence on revelation. The position of the Church on the question of the preferential option for the poor, which is also part of the theology of liberation is clearly outlined in the two documents *Libertus Nuntius* (1984) and *Libertatis Conscientia* (1986). Our position on the matter as far as the goal of this work is concerned is that of a ‘fusion of horizons’, borrowing the expression of H. G. Gadamer. The Christian community (recipient and subject of theology), understood as a communion of persons, is a family, and as in the natural family, is regulated by mutual respect and concern for one another irrespective of the diversity in roles and functions of the members. The promotion of the common good goes *pari-passu* with personal well-being.

⁷ John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, nr. 6

⁸ The expression is commonly used to refer to the promotion of class struggle. Marx himself, however, admits that no credit is due to him for discovering the existence of classes in modern society and the struggle between them. What he accepts as his contribution in this regard is proving that the existence of classes is bound up with particular historical phases in the development of production. Secondly that the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat; and that this dictatorship itself constitutes the transition to a classless society (Cf. Letter to J. Wedemeyer, March 5, 1852; Marx-Engels Werke, Berlin, 1962, 28: 507f). Lenin corroborates this by asserting that those who recognize only the class struggle are not yet Marxists, rather a Marxist is one who extends the acceptance of the class-struggle to the acceptance of dictatorship of the proletariat (V. I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution* (1917), New York, 1943, 30).

This model of community as expounded and expressed in Christian anthropology provides a medium for the reduction of poverty and violence in Africa south of the Sahara both from within and from without. What now follows is an attempt at using the above discussed principles of Christian community as communion of persons to help in providing solutions in some selected areas of the peoples' life, which, as we have pointed out, would include both internal and external interventions if any meaningful impact is to be made.

7. 1. 3 Contextual Internal Application of the Principles of Community Spirit

There are vital areas where the principles of community as communion of persons could be applied if a change is to be brought about in the poverty conditions in Africa south of the Sahara. This requires a two-dimensional approach. The first dimension has to focus on the role of the Church in projecting the idea of community as communion of persons, both in her lifestyle and teaching. It is expected that as the originator of the concept, the Church, should in her leaders and members demonstrate concretely the meaning of communion of persons in the effort to reduce poverty and violence. The second dimension concerns the political dimension, which as we have seen in the historical analysis of the nature, causes and effects of poverty and violence in the first part of this work, is the origin of most of the social problems in that part of the continent. With regard to this latter dimension, we shall limit ourselves to only three areas which we consider very fundamental and relevant to our objectives. These areas are improving governance and preventing conflicts; investing in people; and reducing aid dependence and strengthening partnership.

(a) The Role of the Church as Communion of Persons in the Existential Solidarity with the Poor and the Oppressed: An African Perspective

We have seen that the notion of community is one of the most important values that African culture has in common with Christian theology. But whereas the one limits the membership in this community to sanguine relationship based on a common biological ancestor and founder of the clan, the other leaves it open to all men/women of good will, who confess their faith in Jesus Christ, the son of God and are baptised. Those who fall into the second group form a new community known as the Church and are bound together by a common mission, namely that of the founder. Since the role of the Church in any society is that of a leaven, her approach to the social problem of poverty is very crucial to the entire society in which she

finds herself. The Church in Africa is not only a young Church, it is also a poor Church, sharing as it were in the poverty of the people of the continent. The African Church struggles with the dialectics of the relationship between theory and praxis, teaching and life, which is a peculiar problem that confronts the Church at its beginning anywhere in the world. As a result of this, the temptation to reduce the Church to a social institution concerned primarily with the material well-being of the people is always there. This has to be avoided. At the same time, to remain indifferent to obvious cases of material deprivation, because 'his kingdom is not of this world', is to treat a serious matter with kid gloves. The question is not so much about what is taught concerning the new community that is the Church, but more about how the new community is lived as a communion of persons. Are people really integrated into this community so that they feel welcomed? Is the tie among members which the new community promises strong enough that the members are not tempted to go back to the traditional community? How is the life-pattern of the leaders of the new community a source of consolation and solace to the poor and deprived? Can the secular society take an example from the life of the Church with reference to issues concerning the right attitude to wealth and poverty? Is the Church in her leaders and members a reference point of a mutual and peaceful co-existence in a society torn apart by conflicts and violence?

The Church in Sub-Saharan Africa, especially in its leadership is tending regrettably towards the critical observation of J. B. Metz that the Church has become bourgeois, at least in its mentality and its language, in its formation programs, in the values behind its decision making, in its lifestyle, and in many other ways. The source of this tendency is the fact that the African Church according to Uzukwu inherited clericalism from the early missionaries.⁹ In this model of the Church, the priest is perceived as a symbol of power. When he commands, the people have to obey, not only among his Christians, but even among other Christian denominations and non-believers. With the training he received and the above-average material well-being he enjoys in a social context where most of the people are poor, it is often difficult for the Church leader to condescend to the level of the poor either in his ministerial or social functions. In his research on the conflict between the Igbo frame of reference and the European-Christian frame of reference as it is played out in the life of Igbo seminarians, C. J. Uzor tried to establish the extent to which societal ideals can affect the institutional ideals of priestly formation and to point out the areas of conflict.¹⁰ The problem may not be attributed

⁹ Uzukwu, E. E., *A Listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches*, op. cit., 120

¹⁰ Uzor, C. J., *Living Between Two Worlds: Intrapersonal Conflict Among Igbo Seminarians in Nigeria*, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation in Theology, University of Innsbruck, Austria, 1999, 192.

to the program of formation alone, but also to the changing values in the society where the seminarian finds himself. If this conflict fails to be resolved and the candidate is ordained a priest, both the priest and the ministry to which he has been called naturally suffer. The incongruity resulting therefrom is manifested in the areas such as the priest's attitude to temporal goods, which includes, on the one hand, the acquisitive tendency, the sheer desire to have money, things and titles; and on the other hand, the use of money or the things acquired, that is, the display of wealth and affluence.¹¹ The same thing applies to the struggle for and the exercise of authority which is directly opposed to the disposition of the founder, the Son of Man, who did not come to be served, but to serve. The question is whether this type of atmosphere can lead to real community life and the communion of persons that should follow it. Of course not. On the contrary, it brings about avarice, discontentment and conflict among the faithful. For the poor who hoped for a refuge in the Church community, there is simply little or no room for them, as the Church mirrors the society from which they seek to escape.

It is against this backdrop that the clamour for existential solidarity with the poor becomes imperative if the transforming message of the Gospel is to bear fruit. It is only in this way that the prevailing ethos of selfishness can be countered. Such solidarity is imperative, because:

It seeks to be a visible statement that theology is a faith-based scientific enterprise in the service of a world of fraternity and human dignity, without which God's design to create human beings in the image of his Triune life is frustrated. By the same token, it seeks to unmask the greed that lies behind the comfort and pseudo-culture of the privileged.¹²

This is first the responsibility of the priest, as theologian and articulator of the faith of the Church, to remind the Church community under his charge of what it believes and what it is called to be, namely the servant and the sacrament of a renewed humanity that gives thanks to God. In our times, this will consist principally in the Church facilitating by example the emergence of a new quality of human solidarity possible only on the basis of simplicity of lifestyle.¹³ Here the people naturally look up to the spiritual leader, since the best manner of teaching in matters of faith and morals is not always by words but by lived example.

¹¹ Okeke, U. C., *Expectations of Life as a Priest: A Comparative Study of Igbo Catholic Diocesan and Religious Seminarians*, Rome: Gregorian University Press, 2003, 74.

¹² O'Brien, J., *Theology and the Option for the Poor*, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992, 81.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 82.

There is no gainsaying the fact that the priest and the faithful have a vital role to play in their solidarity for and with the poor for their mutual enrichment in the truth. By living an austere life, the African priest in his community can and must learn from the poor, in their particular experience of God, which not only complements his academic knowledge but acts as a corrective to overvaluing it. This knowledge is in principle more primordial and privileged, since the poor and marginalized are the primary recipients of the gospel (Lk. 4:18f). The priest, in spite of his academic qualifications, is present to the poor and the oppressed first as a learner. Therefore, seeking to read the book of their experience requires genuine solidarity. For, the world of the poor, unlike the academy, is a ‘culture of silence’ where the people have never been allowed to speak for themselves, where they have deeply internalized the prejudice that would mark them off as inferior. To speak for the poor is first of all to speak with them; to speak with them is to create conditions under which they can speak for themselves. This can better be achieved in the Christian community lived as a communion of persons under the guidance of the priest-theologian. In the real sense of the word, there can be no theology that is not a reflection on ecclesial faith; and there can be no ecclesial faith without *koinonia*; but there can be no *koinonia* if there is no solidarity with the poor. Only an ecclesial situation that exists in function of the rights of the poor to express and celebrate their experience provides the basic material for theological reflection on the Church community as communion of persons, because anything less than this neglects not merely one element of the Church, but its most significant element.¹⁴ Hence the role of the Church is inevitable in this perspective of living out its mission and in overcoming the anthropological poverty of the materially poor within the church community.

The recently concluded second African Synod of Bishops (6th – 25th, October, 2009) under the theme, “the Church in Africa at the Service of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace” stressed the need for a convinced and convincing personal witness on the part of all the members of the Church. One of the areas where this is to be demonstrated concerns life in the community with particular attention paid to the dignity of women and the support for the underprivileged. If ‘the joys and hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age’ are also those of the followers of Christ, then the principle issue for a theological concept of the Church as communion of persons is certainly how to deal with poverty and oppression. The necessity of this cannot be overemphasized if the role of the Church as a custodian of morality in the transformation of the society is to be retained. For the African, for whom the society is not an

¹⁴ Ibid.

entity existing outside man but a web of relations and interactions between man and God, man and man, and man and nature, this is indispensable. The human person has the obligation by the nature of his/her ontological existence and connectedness to manifest this spirit in his/her activities.

The large number of the members of the official churches makes personal contact difficult in some regions, which has given rise to the proliferation of pentecostal churches with the promise of more solidarity among members. This is a pastoral problem and we prefer to leave it to pastoral theologians but we have to say that there are already small Christian communities beginning in some dioceses as a way of strengthening personal contacts and mutual assistance, which is one way of reducing poverty among members.

(b) The Socio-Political Dimensions of the Principles of Community Spirit

As vital as the role of the Church community may be in supplying the needs of the poor and marginalized by way of solidarity and as a means of preventing crime, the effort remains subject to the socio-political context. Of course, in discussing the importance of the community as a communion of persons, the aim was far from suggesting it as an alternative to the functions of the society or state. On the contrary, it was to show how better the state or society can function if at the community level members appreciate one another for what they are – human beings endowed with dignity and destined for a common mission. When this is realized, social institutions and governance will be positioned to realize more effectively their goal, which is the good of all persons. A system of governance formulated in view of the human community as a communion of persons will have a broad base for more participation and be accountable. Opinions of the citizens will be considered with regard to major decisions.

Improving governance and preventing conflicts is what Sub-Saharan Africa basically needs. For, given the widespread civil conflicts, enormous costs are imposed on the region's meagre resources and already heavy debt. These conflicts do not stem from ethnic diversity as it is commonly assumed. Rather, in a pattern found around the world, these conflicts are driven by poverty, under-development, and lack of economic diversification, as well as by political systems that marginalize large parts of the population. But conflicts at the same time perpetuate poverty, creating a vicious circle that can be reversed only through special development efforts. Genuine development is, however, human oriented.

The problem with government in Africa is traceable to some factors among which is the cultural dilemma that besieged the continent after the colonial era. The nature of the dilemma consists in having to make a choice between the traditional form of leadership and modern democracy and, of course, being ready to accept whatever consequences either choice entails. Furthermore, majority of the political parties in the Sub-Saharan Africa suffer the inherent flaw of addressing the urban proletariat, the small tradesmen and the civil servants, which is a tiny section of the population, whereas the majority in the rural areas are neglected.¹⁵ As a result of this fundamental mistake the parties produce candidates, whom Fanon describes as “spoiled children of yesterday’s Colonialism and today’s governing powers, who oversee the looting of the few national resources.”¹⁶ We have dealt extensively with the different traditional leadership forms in the earlier part of this work. It is still difficult for the African leaders to end the traditional leadership forms and embrace modern systems of governance. And what accounts for this type of behaviour is that some political leaders fail to consider their position as that of service to the community of persons, who make up the state. Until the awareness is created, that both the leaders and the led form an integral part of the communion of persons, it is hard to envisage a solution to the problem of governance. Jürgen Habermas’ model of moral consciousness and communicative actions¹⁷ may be an alternative route for Africans in a quest for an effective governance. But this presupposes a society where the majority if not all are literate. This brings us to the next point, which is the need for universal education, if Africa is to combat poverty and reduce violent conflicts through dialogue.

Investing in people through education is very essential for accelerated poverty reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa. Many African countries are unfortunately caught in a trap of high fertility and mortality with a low level of education especially of women (less than one quarter of poor rural girls attend primary school), high ratios of dependents, and low savings. Education has an inestimable role to play in the development of the individual and society anywhere in the world. It remains the best investment that any country can make for its citizens and from which it can later reap abundant fruits. An educated man/woman has wealth in himself/herself, so goes an ancient adage. The form of education, *ex-ducare* (to lead out) that we are talking about here refers to that of liberating the individual from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge, which includes among other things the capability to set

¹⁵ Fanon, F., *The Wretched of the Earth*, op. cit. 64

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 12

¹⁷ Habermas, J., *Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns*, vol. 2, Frankfurt a. M, 1987, 145

priorities. Francis Bacon calls it liberation from idols¹⁸ or personal and social prejudices. Apart from this, the number of years spent in schools and colleges help to reduce early marriages for girls and juvenile delinquency on the part of the boys.

But the next issue with respect to the problem of education in Africa concerns the exodus of the few educated Africans to foreign countries in search of greener pastures, the well-known 'brain drain'.¹⁹ This is sometimes caused by the unfavourable policies of the government that fail to acknowledge the role of education in nation building by denying the academically trained commensurate pay. In some cases, the know-how of the intellectuals is left untapped for partisan reasons. On the harm this attitude is doing to Africa, Afolayan writes:

There is no qualm that an unquestionable co-dependency does exist between variables of education, cultural production and social reproduction. The zapping away of products and sources of education in a society will certainly eat away the stability of the society.²⁰

In an article published in *The African Monitor*, Biruk Girma explained how brain drain costs Africa \$4 billion dollars annually. According to him, citing the report of Kemal Deris, the UNDP administrator, at the 11th international conference of the ILO, 'to fill the human resources gap created by brain drain, Africa employs up to 150,000 expatriate professionals'.²¹ Statistics show that some of the countries with high percentage migration of professionals have poor economy. For example, 70 % of educated Somalis live outside the country, and 60 % of all Ghanaian doctors trained in Ghana since the 1980s are said to have left the country.²² But the irony of the situation is that those professionals who have left their countries for greener pastures abroad are either underutilized or in some cases unutilized, and so their talents if not they themselves will sometime be buried in the wasteland. The literary icon, Nobel laureate, Wole Soyinka, describes them as 'members of a wasted generation'. However, there are those who have made their marks on the international scene like the computer wizard, Philip Emeagwali of Nigeria, whom ex-US president, Bill Clinton described

¹⁸ Francis Bacon used the term "idols" in major work *Novum Organum*, to refer to certain prejudices which can obstruct the acquisition of real knowledge. Bacon's idols are mental fixations rather than physical symbols. These include: Idols of the tribe, idols of the cave, idols of the marketplace and idols of the theater.

¹⁹ The expression brain drain refers to large scale emigration of individuals with technical skills or knowledge, it is normally due to conflict, lack of opportunity, political instability or health risks. It was coined by the Royal Society to describe the emigration of scientists and technologists to North America from post-war Europe. It occurs more often in societies that need to desperately hang onto such indispensable manpower.

²⁰ Afolayan, O. M. (ed.), *Higher Education in Post-Colonial Africa: Paradigms of Development, Decline and Dilemmas*, New Jersey: African World Press Inc., 2007, 328.

²¹ Girma, B., Brain drain costs Africa \$4 billion annually, In: *The African Monitor*, Thursday, March 4, 2010

²² Afolayan, O. M., op. cit. 328

as ‘one of the great minds of the information age’, for designing the fastest computer known to the world at the time. On the other hand, it is not certain that the likes of Emeagwali could have had the same opportunity had they stayed in their countries of origin. Hence, some consider the phenomenon of brain drain as a dividend of globalization.

In any case, what we are saying is that there is a good number of trained personnel who are forced out of many countries in Africa to seek a better means of existence outside their fatherlands, because of unconducive socio-political conditions. Their services are so much needed in different areas of specialization, and they could contribute through their talents and collective efforts to the reduction of poverty and advance development in Africa. This is the result of the individual and materialistic tendencies encouraged by Western liberal democracy infiltrating into Africa, which has destroyed the traditional egalitarian society with its security system, whereby the haves took care of the have nots through certain accepted institutional frameworks. The community spirit has to be regenerated and revived.

The next point concerns the reduction of dependence on aid and the strengthening of partnership. With reference to this, there are two levels to be clarified. On the level part, dependence is to be considered as an internal factor, since it is the disposition of the leaders and the led that make room for the perpetual in-flow of aid. The other aspect of aid dependence which concerns foreign assistance will be treated later in this section. Coming back to the point, the community spirit, which demands that individuals assist one another, is sometimes exaggerated. A peculiar situation exists, for instance in a family of twelve, where only one person is working to support the other members of the family for an indefinite period of time. And it is not that the others are too young to work, some may even be older than the one working. Nevertheless, they expect that their needs be met. The situation is taken for granted that even the dependents demand such assistance as rights. Of course, this is one of the sources of conflicts in many families and communities. Yet much more disheartening with reference to this practice is the tendency of many dependents to live beyond their means. Unlike in many countries of Europe where a person leaves the parents’ house at eighteen in order to be self-dependent, an African, even at the age of fifty lives with and receives everything from his parents. The matter is different with women, who have to leave their parents earlier to be married. Thus this dependence syndrome has to be addressed if poverty is to be reduced. Certain lacks have to be endured at some points of one’s life to enable the individual to attain maturity. The same is applicable to the family, community, and state. If

the people of Sub-Saharan Africa want to overcome poverty, they will have to adopt some internally self-imposed measures which demand sacrifices on individual lifestyle. All the countries of the developed world had their own desert experience before they reached the promised land. The most recent emerging economic world power, China, has its own story.

7. 2. Sub-Saharan Africa in the Context of the World Community of Persons

To discuss the problem of poverty and violence in Sub-Saharan Africa, whether from the point of view of their causes or possible solutions, is to explore the position of that part of the continent in relation to contemporary world order. How do other issues of world interest affect Sub-Saharan Africa? To what extent are the internally self-articulated plan of action against the scourge of poverty subject to external factors over which the Africans have no control? Can the current world order be assessed based on any other standard apart from material progress? If yes, where does the African come in, and if no, how does the African fit in? Is Africans' dependence on foreign aid helping to combat poverty in that continent or is it increasing it? Where does Africa stand in the on-going discussion on globalization and environmental degradation? We do not intend to provide answers to all these questions, but it suffices to have them posed for further reflections. Our attention, nonetheless, will be directed to the last three that have to do with Aid, globalization and climate/environmental change.

7. 2. 1. A Critique of Africa's Aid dependence and the Cost of Debt Services

Africa is generally described as the world's most aid-dependent and independent region. To be more exact, the area that is commonly meant by this assertion is Sub-Saharan Africa, since North Africa shares only geographically the fate of Africa in this regard. Such foreign aid flows annually into Africa either as officially approved by the government of the donor country or through non-governmental organisations. One wonders whether Africa could do without aid as 'the average African country derives between 15 and 30 percent of its budget through aid'²³. There are several opinions today as to whether the continued support for Africa should not be stopped to enable the Africans to find the solution to their own problems themselves. The proponents of this view argue that most aid does more harm than good to the Africans. On the other hand, recent studies of world-wide aid come to the conclusion that aid

²³ Kpundeh, S. J., *Democratization in Africa: Africa View, Africa Voices*, Washington D. C : New Academy Press, 1992, 62

is inevitable for developing countries, but the way it is handled needs to be modified. Before delving into the moral intricacies of this apparently simple act, aid, it is pertinent to clarify its concept.

The word ‘aid’ refers to help or support; food or money given to a person or country in need. It is similar but not identical with the word ‘grant’, which means a sum of money given by a government or public body for a particular purpose. In any case, we shall apply the term here to cover financial grants, the free supply of goods and services other than for military purposes, and loans given at less-than-commercial rates of interests.²⁴ However, a broader understanding of aid usually includes the rendering of military assistance, and the granting of loans at commercial interest rates. This is sometimes classified under the category of debts. We have noted that aid to Africa come from two main sources²⁵, namely as a government package and from voluntary agencies such as Save the Children Fund, Christian Aid and so forth. Although the total amount that comes from the latter is said to be only one-tenth of government aid, it is viewed as more effective in terms of reaching the poor to whom it is directed. This brings us to the problems associated with the flow and management of aid.

The difficulties associated with the flow of aid to Africa range from its insufficiency when compared to the problems it is meant to solve, to the type of aid Africa receives – military hardware, capital-intensive projects, salaries to professionals hired by donor-countries – which are seen as not very useful, because they come in the tactical and not strategic categories of aid. Most aid to Africa, it is believed, falls, as a matter of fact, under tactical category. What this means is that such aid usually facilitates the drain on resources and encourages capital flow. On the other hand, the donor-countries maintain that there is no point in rendering assistance to corrupt governments that have shown very little desire or ability to use public resources for the public. However, some donors are alleged to become corruptors as they collude with corrupt leaders in transactions that are not transparent. In this case, aid is given and siphoned back by corrupt leaders to the donor country. Any meaningful assistance to the tropical African countries, we dare to reiterate here, should begin with the control of capital flow either from the corrupt leaders or their external collaborators.

²⁴ O'Connor, A., *Poverty in Africa*, op. cit. 142

²⁵ The third type of aid to Africa comes as emergency aid, which may not be treated here as a stable source, since such emergency situations are not regular events. The kind of emergency situations that attract foreign aid in this regard includes natural disasters such floods and drought both of which lead to famine.

The third and most difficult problem concerns the aid process, which often impinges on the sovereignty of African nations by dictating, imposing or otherwise predetermining the content of projects. The leaders of aid-dependent countries feel that the donor countries impose a lot of condition that make it impossible for them to exercise their sovereignty. But one would not expect the donor countries to keep on pouring money into countries whose leaders are not ready to use the aid for the good of the poor masses. That would be equivalent to throwing one's pearls before swine. African leaders have to accept the reality that donors will continue to press for political and economic reforms as a precondition for aid, where such reforms are called for.

The issue of debt and debt-servicing poses much more of a problem than that of aid in tropical Africa. In the first instance, the countries or institutions concerned set stringent conditions that are difficult to meet. Then there is the huge amount which has to be paid annually or bi-annually, as the case may be, to service the debts. In the face of such arrangements, it is hard to understand the co-existence of aid programmes meant to improve the life of the poor people in tropical Africa and the huge amount that those countries have to pay to service their external debts. For even though it would not be easy to grant debt forgiveness, it is be unreasonable and unethical for donors to demand that African countries continue to use disproportionate amounts of their resources for debt servicing.

Both aid and debt have made great and unquestionable impacts on the lives of the Africans south of the Sahara, especially in the areas of productivity, employment and better living standards. On the whole, the people are materially better off than they would have been without aid and debt. However, in very many cases, the economic benefits have been far smaller that would have been expected. Hence, instead of helping to alleviate poverty, it creates and reinforces dependence. It is in this direction that something has to be done if the aim of aid to Africa is to liberate the people from poverty and create better social conditions. Considered from the side of the donor countries, it means raising the amount sent as aid to Africa and granting loans without interest. On the part of the recipient countries, it involves ending corruption and allowing the aid to reach the poor masses. This is possible only if the human community, be it at the state, national or international level is understood as a communion of persons, where what affects one affects the other. And it is only in this perspective that the process of globalization can yield its expected fruits.

7. 2. 2. The Meaning of Globalization for the African Poverty Condition

The term ‘globalization’ has come to occupy a central position in contemporary language. Although it is a word that has many connotations, it denotes originally the process by which businesses start operating on a global scale. Globalization, therefore, has the sole aim of increasing the connectedness and interdependence of the world’s markets and businesses. Globalization, as a programme that is still in progress, has made a dramatic impact in the last two decades, as technological advances make it easier for people to travel, communicate and do business internationally. The two main driving vehicles of the globalization process are the advances in the telecommunications infrastructure and the rise of the internet. And the major justification for it is that the connection of economies to other economies leads to increased opportunities for all as well as increased competition, which makes agents of production more efficient. This position is espoused by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the World Economic Forum (WEF), which are great supporters of globalization.

The anti-globalization groups, on the other hand, argue that certain groups of people who are deprived in terms of resources are not currently capable of functioning within the increased competitive pressure that will be brought about by allowing their economies to be more connected to the rest of the world. Examined closely, one observes that this group is not opposed outright to the goals of globalization, rather it pleads that certain basic conditions be fulfilled if the prospective aims are to be realized. It was in line with this appeal that a group of NGOs in the developed countries considered debt cancellation for the third world countries at the beginning of the Millenium to be a moral issue and called on all concerned countries to act accordingly. If Africa is to benefit from the process of globalization, economic policies of the developed countries, which are said to discriminate against exports from Africa, would have to be revised. Subsequent to this, an international financial system that discriminates against traders and entrepreneurs from Africa²⁶ needs to be corrected. For, since globalization has the increase in competition as one of its objectives, there should be a fair playing field for all the participants in the game. To neglect these aspects is to cut Africa off from the rest of the world and reduce it to a status which President Benjamin Mkapa of Tanzania described as ‘having no image beyond geography, no identity besides colour and no decency except flags... worse it will end up competing to do the master’s urging in the neighbourhood.’²⁷ Africa, for

²⁶ Kieh, K. G. (ed.), *Africa and the New Globalization*, Surrey – England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008, 31

²⁷ Mkapa, B., Address at the Nwalimi Nyerere Foundation, April, 2002

its own part, needs as a matter of urgency the reconstitution of the nation states which will be based on institutional reforms as a preparation for the current process of globalization.

At this juncture, it becomes pertinent to evaluate the morality of globalization as a process geared towards the increment of opportunities and the enhancement of competition in business. Scholars of economics are divided as to whether it has any need of ethics, since economics has its own method and laws which permit the optimum combination of means for the maximization of output together with the minimum use of scarce resources.²⁸ The Church teaches that even though the aim of every economic activity is to some extent the making of profit, nonetheless the theorem that the fundamental purpose of economic activity has to be 'profit and domination' must be rejected completely.²⁹ This is the error of liberal capitalism, the social effects of which are strongly felt in our contemporary society.

As important as the making of profit is to every economic venture, it can only lead to socio-economic injustice³⁰, if it is made the primary purpose of any economic enterprise. Globalization faces the danger of being reduced to socio-liberalism and utilitarianism by merely emphasizing profitability and the maximization of produce. Utilitarian ethics, when examined in the light of the demands of universal justice and Christian faith, is always found wanting. The Church's position on this matter is clear and simple, namely that the ultimate and basic purpose of economic process, including globalization, "must be the service of man, and indeed of the whole man, viewed in terms of his material needs, the demands of his intellectual, moral, spiritual, and religious life. And when we say man, we mean every man whatsoever and every group of men, of whatever race and from whatever part of the world."³¹ This is the task that challenges globalization as far as Sub-Saharan Africa is concerned. And to the extent that this task is accomplished, to that extent will it be meaningful to that part of the Continent, otherwise it will become an ideology.

Another aspect of the process of globalization pertinent to the theme of our work is the cultural dimension. One expects that what is meant by globalization from the point of view of

²⁸ Peschke, H. K., *Christian Ethics: Moral Theology in the Light of Vatican II*, Vol. 2, op. cit. 716

²⁹ *Gaudium et Spes* 64

³⁰ A typical example of this is the scandals of 1988 surrounding the dumping of toxic wastes from Europe in African countries, which are not equipped to cope with, but who were constrained by poverty to accept the dumping of such poisonous material at a ridiculous price of \$ 2. 5 per tone at the risk of human and animal lives. The same thing happened in 2003 in Ivory Coast when Holland, at the end of civil war in that country, brought several tones of toxic materials and deposited there, again at a very negligible sum.

³¹ *Gaudium et Spes*, 64

culture is to create an avenue whereby many cultures of the world could be made accessible to as many people as possible, so as to enhance interaction and dialogue. In other words, to create a cultural pantheon, where peoples of the earth will be able to identify by name what is native to them, a *Kennzeichen*, while at the same time appreciating those of others. This is a wonderful idea. But if on the other hand, the *Leitmotiv* of cultural globalization is to propose a monoculture for all people, then it is bound to fail. The reason is that there would be no room for dialogue between cultures, as all will be lumped together into an amorphous cultural context, deprived of cultural identity. Benedict XVI criticised this as a kind of commercialization of cultural exchange which has the danger of *kulturelle Verflachung*, which will eventually lead to the distortion of the basic questions of life.³²

7. 2. 3 Environmental Degradation/Resource Control: Its Impact on Poverty Alleviation and Prevention of Violent Conflicts

The relationship of the human person to his/her physical environment, like his/her relationship to fellow human beings, has been a controversial issue in human history. The question of how and to what extent man should make use of created things for his/her need is as old as man, but has assumed a greater weight in recent times owing to several factors such as increase in population, far greater demands on nature's resources and growing contacts among peoples. For instance, the clearing of farmlands by fire and large-scale deforestation were already practised in earlier human history. However, the damaging effects at the time were restricted to the locality. With the rapid increase in industrialization in the second part of the 20th century, there was an acceleration of environmental constraints destruction. Now the effect could no longer be confined to a particular area.

Two positions are to be discerned with respect to the issue of environmental destruction and the exploitation of natural resources for human needs. The first of these goes back to interpretation of the Biblical passage in the account of creation where the Creator empowered the human person to take control of the earth and exploit it for his/her use. The protagonists of this position argue that, Christianity, by making man/woman the master of the created order, invested him/her with an unlimited authority and dominion over it. Hence the human person is conceived as the centre of the world, whereas in actual fact he/she should be viewed as part of nature. Alfons Auer criticises this accusation as ironical since right from the period of the

³² Caritas in Veritate, 26

Enlightenment, Christianity has been accused of a mentality which distrusts the natural sciences and stands in the way of the progress they promote.³³ But as we have already pointed out above, the exploitation of nature is as old as mankind. For there was the exploitation of nature even where Christianity did not exist. The Bushmen of Australia who lived by hunting exterminated all large animals in their environment. The desertification of North Africa is partly attributed to intensive grazing of animals and imprudent cultivation.

The second group, inasmuch as it is not opposed to the use of the environment and its resources for the benefit of man, argues that such use should be guided by moderation and prudence, since what affects nature affects the human person also. Nature, they contend, should not be regarded as mere raw material at the disposal of the human person for his/her use, for whatever constructs and purposes that are useful, challenging and pleasing.³⁴

It is against this background that the impact of globalization on the problem of environmental degradation/resource control in Africa can be appraised. The first decade of the new millennium has seen Africa's problem of poverty and deprivation increase and at the same time witnessed an unprecedented increase in the rate of exploitation of the continent's environmental resources and agro-ecological degradation with the inevitable consequences of violent conflicts. The events of the oil-rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria is known all over the world, where the Shell Oil company is inflicting serious damage on the environment – a threat to the lives of the people. Arable lands have been destroyed by oil spill-over, and rivers polluted. The situation may have contributed to the attention which has been paid by other continents to the effects of ecological degradation on the African peoples. A similar situation is played out in the Democratic Republic of Congo that is rich in natural resources used for the manufacture of mobile phones and other electronic equipment and.

Two variables are responsible for the continuous environmental degradation through the exploitation of natural resources in Africa. The one is the transnational organisations that need these resources. The other is the corrupt system of government that cooperates with the foreign organisations to exploit the resources without corresponding compensation with the further result of a grave threat to sustainability in the management of the environment. According to John Mbaku, the two variables have a common root, namely the colonial

³³ Auer, A., *Umweltethik. Ein theologischer Beitrag zur ökologischen Diskussion*, Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1984, 206.

³⁴ Peschke, K. H., *op. cit.*, 748

structures which annexed African lands and established colonies out of them with the hope of exploiting the resources of the captured territories and providing raw materials for the industries of the Western economies.³⁵ He goes further to state that even after independence, these structures are still maintained with the post-colonial leaders acting as middlemen for the previous colonial masters. Despite the fact that most African countries have been independent for more than forty years, the patterns of resource exploitation established during colonialism remain in place and continue to govern national economies.³⁶ He concludes by calling for the provision of economic and political structures that are relevant to African realities.³⁷ This has to include the introduction of property rights regimes, which are not in themselves sufficient but are necessary conditions. For without resource benefits, ownership is realized only upon capture. And if the assurance to future claims to resource benefits is absent, no incentive exists to limit use. The African resources are overexploited, because there are no clearly defined property rights either internally or with reference to international organisations.

Without intending to go deeper into the intricacies involved in the international economic policies, since that could be explained better by experts in economics and international relations, it is germane to point out that to neglect the notion of the human community as a communion of persons will lead inevitably to undue competition and crisis. It is irrelevant whether that concerns the internal structures of a given country or has to do with other countries. The process of globalization will make the conditions of Africa worse, as far as environmental degradation/resource control is concerned, if the moving forces in globalization fail to acknowledge the fact that the building blocks of the global structure are individual persons with dignity. Thus whenever the pursuit of material well-being is pushed to the detriment of the human person directly or indirectly through the misuse of the environment, then a fundamental mistake has been made. It is usually a one-sided orientation towards material values that leads to a neglect of environmental needs and concerns. The tendency by a given regime to cooperate with trans-national organisations to exploit maximally the resources of some countries in Africa is to be adjudged as unethical. This is the core of our argument in this section, namely that the exploitation of natural resources be guided by respect for human health/life; and that the people from whose land the resources are taken should be adequately compensated.

³⁵ Mbaku, M. J., *The Environment and the New Globalization in Africa*, In: George Klay Kieh, Jr.(ed.), *Africa and the New Globalization*, op. cit., 129.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 130

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 131

The Church teaches that the proper attitude to nature and its resources should be that of love and gratitude. Only the human person is able to love the things created by God, and ought to do so. He can receive them from God and respect and reverence them as constantly flowing from His hand.³⁸ This love, though differing in degrees according to the hierarchy of values realized in various beings, is in appreciation for the goodness and beauty of nature and in respect for the purpose to which all things have been destined. This is manifested in the exemplary life of Francis of Assisi, for whom all creatures, be it the moon, the sun, the stars, the birds etc were brothers and sisters. Furthermore, since love entails reverence, environmental ethics demands that the environment be treated with reverence and not be vandalized for any reason(s). Dialogue is necessary between the Western mechanistic and materialistic approach to nature and the Africans' nigh divinized relationship to nature. The freedom which was granted man by the Creator is not an absolute freedom to use and misuse, but one that is characterised by responsibility. It is so, because, "when it comes to the natural world, we are subject not only to biological laws but also to moral ones."³⁹ The moral laws therefore challenge the human person to treat the earth with due reverence, for it is not only through the act of creation, but also through the Incarnation, that God manifests his immanence in the world. For since the essence of sin is the refusal to abide by the will of the Creator made manifest in the order in creation, it follows that if the human person does not live in peace with God, he/she carries the same negation of peace to the environment,⁴⁰ both human and physical. Conversely, a reckless and imprudent exploitation of nature is a denial of the dominion of God over the earth. The attitude of reverence, which we have proposed here is based on the fact that life and all that exists have their own goodness and value, which cannot be limited only to the utility they may possess. Hence, "the reason why humans ought not to devastate their world is not simply utilitarian. Nor is the reason why humans ought not to waste what they derive from it solely economic. More deeply it is moral: to destroy heedlessly, to pluck and discard, to have and leave unused, is an act of profound disrespect to the eternal worth of nature. For, nature in its integrity is not simply a reservoir of raw materials. It is also a presence of value."⁴¹ Owing to the intrinsic value in nature, which does not necessarily imply *usus*, the human person has the obligations of responsibility towards it;

³⁸ *Gaudium et Spes*, 37

³⁹ John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 1987, nr. 34.

⁴⁰ Auer, A. *Umweltethik*, op. cit., 275.

⁴¹ Kohak, E., *The Embers and the Stars. A philosophical inquiry into the moral sense of nature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984, 72.

an obligation that is not only for the good of nature but equally for the good of the human person himself/herself.

7.3. Conclusion

In the just concluded chapter attempts were made to recapture the traditional value of community as an effective approach to the problem of poverty and violence in Sub-Saharan Africa. We saw that community has the advantage of not only being original to the Africans' *Denkschema*, but is shared by Christian anthropology, which makes dialogue between the two systems possible. However, whereas the Africans limit their understanding of community to sanguine ties to a common ancestor, who is in most cases the founder of the clan, Christianity has a more inclusive model, though it maintains an official admission into this community through baptism. The underlying principle in both of them is that of recognising and promoting our common humanity. The Christian concept of community complements that of the traditional Africa. But to avoid the error of superficiality, since the idea of community is no longer as forceful in contemporary African society as it was in the past, we introduced the expression, "communion of persons", borrowed from John Paul II. The aim was to underscore how closely related the human person is to the other, so that to neglect to show concern where a human person is suffering or to be the cause of such suffering is to violate this communion. But we observed equally that the human person does not lose his/her identity in this communion of persons but rather is enabled to fully develop himself/herself. The truth of this fact was expressed by Goethe, who many years ago stated: "How little are we, or do we possess, what we in the strictest sense call our property; we must all receive and learn not only from our predecessors, but also from our contemporaries. Even the greatest genius would not get very far if he had to rely solely on what he had in himself."⁴²

Apart from offering a broader perspective on the concept of community or communion of persons, the Christian model of community has social structures like the parishes and dioceses, which would make the implementation of the community spirit feasible. But we equally saw the danger that may arise, namely that the leaders of the new communities, Church leaders, could be lured into personal enrichment neglecting the poor and oppressed. Even where this danger is not envisaged, it was noted that the resources available to the Church leaders in Africa cannot be sufficient to take care of the poor members of the community, therefore the

⁴² Cited in: Meissner, J., *Fundamentals of Christian Sociology*, Westminster, Md: Newman Press, 1962, 21.

support of the state is needed in the socio-economic empowerment of the people as a way of escaping the grip of poverty and the resultant violence.

A more concrete effort in this direction would involve a socio-political reform that is people-oriented and that creates room for more participatory governance, bottom-up. This has to be initiated from the grassroots through the instrumentality of the Church leaders and the Church community. One crucial way of doing this would be the establishment of social centres, to which people could turn in moments of paralysing need. The theological option for the poor is making some impact in this direction, but this impact is still to be felt in Africa, where its awareness is at the level of textbook knowledge without concrete steps towards its implementation in most places.

Finally, we reviewed the different forms of foreign intervention in alleviating poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa, paying particular attention to such indices as aid support, the role of globalization and the management of the environment and its resources. In evaluating the impact of foreign aid in Sub-Saharan Africa, we discovered that the continued increase in material poverty in that region of the continent is disproportionate to the sum of money that flows into that region in the form of aid. As a result of this, some scholars proposed that foreign aid to Africa be withdrawn, but this opinion is not widely represented, as facts show that it is currently impossible for Africa to survive without aid. One other difficulty associated with aid is that of servicing foreign debt, which is said to siphon off the aid that is given to reduce poverty. Some scholars are of the opinion that what would be of help in combating poverty is interest-free loans. This, nevertheless, presupposes a system of governance that is honest and accountable to the populace. Faced with these two problems, there arises the moral question of the justification of debt-conditionalities and state sovereignty. To what extent can external organs, be they governments or institutions intervene in the internal affairs of a given country as a condition for giving a loan? On the other hand, is it wise to simply lend money, without conditions to a country whose leader is corrupt?

Then we were confronted with the issue of globalization, which promises many opportunities, but not without some difficulties. Since the primary interest of this system is the economy, we argued that certain preliminary steps will have to be taken if it is to help reduce poverty in Africa, such steps include inter alia, creating equal trade opportunities. We appraised, too, the contribution of globalization in the area of information technology which has transformed our

age and brought Africa closer to the rest of the world. Closely related to the question of globalization is that of environmental degradation and resource control. Our analysis led to the conclusion that although nature and their resources are there for the benefit of the human person, its use should be guided by respect for their value, which is not mainly utilitarian, and regard for the Creator. The misuse of nature is often occasioned by human greed and avarice, the consequences of which are felt not only by nature, but by the human person himself. A balance needs to be struck between profanation and divinization of nature and its resources.

GENERAL EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION:

Africa, South of the Sahara in the Context of World Order – Between Hope and Resignation.

I. Preamble

In concluding this work, it is proper to present a resume' of the key points that guided the investigation. The first part of the research examined the phenomenon of poverty and violence in Sub-Saharan Africa with the intention of establishing the connection between the two realities. Particular attention was here paid to the meaning, nature, causes and consequences of poverty in Africa. We saw that the problem of poverty in Africa cannot be attributed to one factor alone, but is traceable to a chain of factors ranging from climate, disease (especially malaria and HIV/AIDS – the latter is, however, recent), ignorance, socio-political instability to unjust international trade policies. It was also shown that most of the factors that cause poverty are the outcome of poverty as well. In other words, there exists a reciprocal relationship between the causes and the consequences of poverty in Africa. It is here that the issue of violence comes in. Hence poverty is often a contributory factor or a compounding element in violent conflicts. The prevalent violence in Africa is widely considered to be caused by the widespread problem of poverty and acts at the same time as a factor militating against the alleviation of poverty by discouraging foreign investments. A clear picture of the reciprocal role of violence as cause and consequence of poverty is seen in the disintegration of the social order with its indices of migration, joblessness and aggression. However, some scholars like Konrad Lorenz¹ argue that violence has its source in the dangerous tendencies in human nature, which can be triggered by social factors. In theological language, violence is the effect of original sin. Violence can also arise in the attempt to prevent violence, for instance when the police or the army is deployed to stop social uprising so as to maintain order in the society.

As a way of situating the work within the purview of theology, we undertook an extensive discussion of the historical development of the understanding of poverty in the context of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Here we saw what impact the age of the Reformation had on the

¹ Lorenz, K., *Der Abbau des Menschlichen*, München: Piper Verlag, 1983, 64

notions of wealth and poverty. This impact is said to have contributed to the introduction of liberal capitalism in which religious ethics are removed from the socio-economic process. This is an ongoing problem, for in market economies the largest question of all is, in the view of the author, how to balance the crave for profit against service to the public interest, understood as an inclusive conception of the common goal. When the economy of any society is left to the whims and caprices of the merchants and traders, the role of ethics in the economy is relegated to the background, and the society suffers for it. Africa is confronted with this problem as the wealth of many nations has been left in the hands of a few, while majority of the population wallow in poverty. It was in this connection that the Second Synod of Bishops for Africa in one of its proposals appealed for an economy in service of the poor and strongly denounced the unjust economic order which has led to the perpetuation of poverty in the continent.² Faced with the growing tendency of the economic system to develop its own rules independent of social ethics, there is the need to ask for the purpose of the economy to the society. Is the economy serving the society or vice versa?

To talk of poverty in Africa is to talk of material poverty. As central and crucial as this dimension of poverty may be in social science research and political programmes, we concluded that behind all the problems surrounding material poverty is anthropological poverty. By this we mean the devaluation of the human person; the denial of a person's worth and uniqueness. This assumes the superiority of a person or groups of persons over others based on what they know or have. And with reference to this, the inferior groups are denied opportunities to participate in the socio-economic and political systems of the society to which they both belong. Anthropological poverty arises when the culture (here understood as source of belief, values and lifestyle of a group of people) is disregarded as nonsense. The Sub-Saharan Africans have suffered under this prejudice in the course of their contact with colonial authority and still suffer it at the hands of their own sons and daughters, the neo-colonialists. These are the cadre of Africans, who, having been introduced to a certain minimum of Western education became influenced by Western ideals, which they tacitly accepted as being valid for African societies. And since this cream of Africans was seen to be closely associated with the Western sources of power, colonialism, they acquired a certain prestige and rank which were not conducive to the harmonious development of their own society.³ This group, which formed the new class of leadership in Africa after the colonial

² The Second Synod of Bishops for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace, Vatican City; 4 – 25 October, 2009 (Issued by the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria – CSN).

³ Nkrumah, K., *Consciencism*, op. cit. 69

epoch, developed an identity crisis, which had deleterious impact on the socio-economic and political policies. Hountondji cautions that the problem of Africa no longer has to do with comparing the relative values of European and African modes of thought, such that the one should be appreciated or depreciated in relation to the other. It is rather the problem of the present and the future, that is, the destiny of Africa. Hence, African scholars and leaders must from now on think independently, and open, by so doing, new problem fields, rooted in the actuality of our history of today.⁴ It was in response to this that we took a look at those values which are original to Africa, trying to place them at the service of the human person, who is both the victim and culprit of poverty and violence. We discovered, as Nkrumah put it, that the traditional face of Africa includes an attitude towards man which can only be described in its social manifestation as egalitarian. But the traditional African society was equally known for its maltreatment of women, the killing of twins, who were regarded as evil omens, the rampant cases of witchcraft and ritual murder. It would therefore amount to hypocrisy to pretend that everything was perfect in the Africa of yesterday, such that one could use it uncritically as a reference point. Christianity, by elevating the human person to a special status among other creatures, helped to purify those practices in Africa that are contrary to the dignity of the human person. In view of this, in the second part of the work we explored the traditional but ever relevant concept of human dignity as the foundation of fundamental human rights and the basis for mutual existence in any society. And since the human person is capable of feeling pain and tends to avoid it, the same reason should make him/her not to inflict pain on others, whether directly or indirectly. At the same time, he/she is to be moved to pity and compassion when any of his/her kind is subjected to pain. This is the meaning of compassion, which cannot be considered as an attribute of individual human subjects, but rather originates in and shapes relationships. In this context, therefore, the goal of fighting with the poor against poverty will be understood as an act of compassion and not as an effort to reverse the social imbalance and to create new injustices. This capacity to be affected by the sufferings of others, that is deeply rooted in every 'normal' human being, is an essential aspect of the dignity of the human person. Can this be what Africans are gradually forgetting that makes their poverty condition unbearable thereby increasing the rate of violent conflicts?

⁴ Hountondji, K., *Occidentalism, Elitism: Answer to Two Critiques*, In: *Philosophie, Ideologie and Gesellschaft in Afrika*, Christian Neugebauer(Hrsg.), Frankfurt am Main – Bern – New York – Paris: Peter Lang, 1989, 39-59

II. The African Condition and the Search for Identity

Since the twin problems of poverty and violence in Sub-Saharan Africa are social problems and the human person is the architect of the social process, it follows that the best place to look for the solution to these problems is to re-examine the traditional African understanding of the human person against competing ideologies. And when we talk of the traditional concept of the human person, we refer to those qualities which are inherent to being human such as the priceless worth of the human person, the uniqueness of each person but also his/her propensity to social interaction. The term 'tradition' is to be understood here in its etymological sense of *tradere* – to hand over/down something authentic, and not in the sense of preserving what is already old, antiquated or obsolete. Whereas the former enables continuity, the latter creates an unalterable dichotomy between traditionalism and modernism. This re-examination of the African person entails equally a search for an African identity, which involves a critical and free relationship with the African history of slavery and colonialism. Because until the Africans come to terms with these historical realities of their past, it will be difficult to accept the present and impossible to plan for the future.

The first step in the search for an African identity and authentic personality as the basis for tackling the social problems of poverty and violence is the cultivation of a culture of truth. The one-sided story, spread in the West, of Africa as a poor, undeveloped, disease-infested and conflicted-dominated continent can only be corrected by the Africans themselves. Firstly, by telling other stories about Africa, unknown or known but neglected, to the world. This includes the awareness of the fact that the problem of poverty is a world-wide issue and, even though Africa is much more affected than other parts of the world, she cannot be defined by this or other problems afflicting her. Africa is poor but Africa is not poverty. It is the truth that the alleviation of poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa cannot be left to so-called foreign aid, some of which is given with unfavourable conditions that amplify the problems it is intended to solve. The road to economic improvement, alias poverty reduction, may not be easy, but it is better freely chosen than imposed. Besides, Africa of the 21st century is materially better off than Africa of the 19th and 21st centuries, but with regard to human values worse off.

The culture of truth we mean here demands that Africa through her leaders and intellectuals work to recover the spirit of community, which she has traded for Western individualism. For a leader to appropriate for himself/herself that which belongs to the people is neither African

nor Western in character, it is a product of an identity crisis, a pathology of disordered value orientation. There is the need to educate the political class once more to understand that leadership means service. One who is elected to be a leader is chosen to be a custodian and an administrator of the common good. As long we Africans practice a politics of winner-takes-it-all, there can never be peace in that continent, because there can be no peace without justice and fair play; and there can be no justice without truth. And to come to this level, elections to public offices have to be democratic with less monetary-value attached to political positions. Subsequently, political leaders have to be made to be accountable both while in office and when they are out of office. With this, it would be easier to investigate the source of wealth of the citizenry where such is suspected to be dubious.

The same attitude should be inculcated into the populace to learn to live within their means by cherishing the things produced in their countries of origin instead of striving to buy imported goods where their local equivalents exist. Many Africans do not appreciate the things with which nature has blessed that continent. More attention is devoted to complaining of what we do not have in Africa with little or no time left for considering what we can make out of what we have. Two examples suffice to buttress this point. Think of solar energy, for which Africa would have been the greatest supplier, but it is produced by the people who have much less sunshine throughout the year. The recently completed World Cup in South Africa in June 2010, showed how a European was able to make millions of dollars from the local instrument called 'vuvuzela', which both added colour to the games and projected something original from the host country. Such creativity needs an atmosphere where people are looking for what to contribute to the world and not what to take from it. However, it is equally true that in some places where such creativity is discovered, adequate support is unfortunately denied, owing to tribal politics.

The next crucial factor is the organization of the social order. In most parts of Africa, as we pointed out in this work, the society was hierarchically structured for the purposes of co-ordination and division of labour. The Igbos of eastern Nigeria had such groupings, among which were those of 'titled men' and those according to age. These groups were charged with different responsibilities in the society apart from their occupation; that is, they were not paid for such services, which were rendered to sustain the society. The irony of it is that, while these structures are dying away in Africa as a result of modernity, the Westerners, who are the architects of modern civilization, are sustained by the same structures. When I talk of these

groups in the West, I am referring to such voluntary social services as the Red Cross and other charity organisations, the fire brigade, hunting associations and marching bands. Africans need to revive similar groups, because that will act as a check against the all-encompassing cash economy that tends to place a price on everything, thereby destroying mutual communal assistance for which the traditional African society was known. It was equally from such groups that the village vigilante was created to see to the security of the villages. However, we pointed out in the body of the work that this type of structure was easy to manage in the traditional society, because of the centrifugal role of the ancestors in the family lineage. Modern society is not only complex but multiplex and includes groups whose constitution depends on other interests than blood relationships.

Two factors are indispensable for the organization of the social services which we propose here: First and foremost, the use of statistics as the core of sociometrics is inevitable in planning the society. In thinking about the development of a society, the image of the human body quickly comes to mind. For just as the human body is constituted from the smallest unit of life called the cell, to tissues, organs to the entire organism, so must the improvement of every social set up begin with the families, villages, towns etc. And for this to be effective, accurate figures have to be provided. To follow this would be to create an objective standard for the distribution of benefits and opportunities to the members of the society. Immediately this is established, the lifestyle of the people is reshaped. And the goals of society such as good health and the absence of violent behaviour can be better managed. In the words of Michael Novak, social co-existence demands that people be prepared to pay one another the honour of taking each other seriously both on the part of the leaders and the led. This relational obligation is inextricably bound up with the dignity of the human person. This is the area of social ethics, which concerns structures within which individuals act and how these structures shape the ethos of their choices on the one hand, and how communities are judged to provide the basis for trust, that is necessary for good personal and community relationships on the other hand.

At this point, education becomes imperative as an instrument of development and poverty reduction. Development as a product of education is to be understood in two different, but closely related dimensions, namely moral development and material development. Moral development is the moral education of the human persons in the society in ways that make them pursue a life of hard work, honesty, justice, forgiveness and suppression of wrath,

among others, while material development refers to scientific and technological development. Chronologically, moral development should precede material development if the socio-cultural values that underpin the human society are to be preserved. We have dealt with this aspect in this work, maintaining that science and technology should be made to serve the human person and not vice versa. Although Africa has not made its debut in the areas of science and technology, the moral foundations based on the life and dignity of human person should be laid now as a preparation. This is what the Synod Fathers meant when they cautioned that although Africa is experiencing a crisis in education, it (education) cannot be reduced to academic learning only, but should be understood as a means to transmit to the young the profound meaning of life.⁵ The Synod Fathers further argued that church and the state work together as partners in the education of the people. Following the principle of subsidiarity, the state has to give all the necessary support to the churches for the moral education of the citizens, since as a moral institution the churches have the obligation to see to the moral development of children and youth. This includes among other things helping to liberate Africans from the shackles of superstitious beliefs. Although, this position does not exclude recognizing the merits of science and technology in modern society, we still maintain that to pursue solely the latter without a strong moral foundation can lead to the disintegration of the society. Social life would be, as it were, a game without rules. This is so because it falls outside the purview of science and technology to define what is good or bad, and right or wrong.

III. Is Globalization Possible Without Global Ethics?

The problem of poverty and violence in Sub-Saharan Africa today can no longer be regarded as a regional issue, because of the process of globalization that is very much underway in our time. It is impossible to consider it an African problem alone. For although the Africans are affected by poverty and violence more than any other peoples of the world, their spread to other places, because of globalization cannot be doubted. Fighting poverty therefore requires from a methodological point of view, drawing upon the fruits of economic and sociological research into the many aspects of poverty. Yet the reference to globalization should also alert us to the spiritual and moral implications that we all share in a single divine plan: we are called to form one family in which all – individuals, peoples and nations – model their

⁵ The Second Synod of Bishops for Africa, op. cit., no. 19.

behaviour according to the principles of fraternity and responsibility.⁶ We cannot talk of global benefits without at the same time talking of global deficits. We appreciate the achievements so far in the areas of information technology and the resultant geographical widening of the radius of economic activity as the outcome of globalization. But on the other hand, one needs only to think of the problems generated by immigration policies and terrorism, which have become matters of serious concern for all the countries of the world. The questions that arise from this situation are not uncomplicated: Can there really be globalization without global ethics? And is global ethics possible in our pluralistic society of cultural diversity, different political ideologies and increasing religious fundamentalism? What would be the contents of such an ethics? What institutions would be responsible for promulgating the said global ethics in a society that is working very hard to dethrone religion and enthrone secularism?

In the attempt to provide answers to these questions, two contrary positions emerge. On the one hand are the protagonists of global ethics, who maintain that such ethics will save the world from total collapse. The other group perceives global ethics as an unrealizable project, because of diverse cultural values and world views. It may not be necessary to go into an elaborate discussion of these two positions here, but it is nonetheless pertinent to give a sketch of the views which the two groups hold with more attention paid to those supporting the necessity of a global ethics as a check to increasing global capitalism and its concomitant economic imbalance.

Let us begin first by considering the point of view of the opposers of global ethics. According to this group, given the rate at which historical developments are moving in today's world and the unprecedented development of human possibilities, it is unimaginable to think of a universal ethics. Besides, since the process of globalization is mainly underpinned by strict economic logic, most of which does not coincide with ethical rules, it is illogical to want to define ethical norms to regulate the economic process. And even though economic thinking has a lot of influence in the life of the people, certain actions that might be termed irrational in economic language are rational when considered in terms of moral motivations.

Furthermore, experience shows that 'in the process of encounter and mutual penetration of cultures, ethical certainties that had hitherto provided solid foundations have largely

⁶ Benedict XVI, *Fighting Poverty to build Peace*, Message for World Peace Day, Dec. 11, 2008 In: <http://www.zenit.org/article-24524/english>.

disintegrated. The question of what the good is (especially in the given context of our world) and of why one must do the good even when this entails harm to one's own self – this fundamental question is continually debated'.⁷ For these reasons scholars like Robert Spaemann strongly criticise the idea of a 'world ethos' as proposed by Hans Küng, on the grounds that there is no common basis for it. Not even the idea of natural law as developed by Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) and Samuel von Pufendorf (1632-1694) among others, which established reason as the instrument whereby law can be posited in common, could provide such foundation. This is because the idea of the natural law, which presupposed a concept of nature in which nature and reason overlap since nature itself is rational, has been overcome by the theory of evolution.⁸ As plausible as this position may seem, the fundamental question still remains, whether we can really envisage a globalization devoid of global ethics. In other words, can there be a worldwide interdependence without common ethical guidelines. And since globalization, originating within economically developed countries, has spread to include all the economies of the world, acting as a driving force for development, it needs the guidance of charity in truth in order to avoid causing unprecedented damage and creating new divisions within the human family.⁹ Given this situation, the invention of a global ethic becomes not only imperative but also urgent. We shall now turn to the arguments put forward by the protagonists of global ethics.

The advocates of a global ethic acknowledge the dominance of multi-cultural values on the world scene, but at the same time argue that the rate at which globalization is moving makes a universal ethic indispensable. In the second chapter of this work, where we devoted a section to the theme of globalization, we came to the conclusion that what is commonly understood under the topic of globalization today is mainly the widening of the economic frontiers. Other forms of this process, be they political, cultural, or otherwise, derive their importance more or less from their place in the economic system. Following this trend of thought, it is easy to understand the proposed global ethics as one meant to direct global capitalism. It is one meant to govern the behaviour of market and non-market actors, in order to minimize the transaction costs of some cross-border activities like trade, technology transfer and internet communications. But if this were to be the only goal of the said global ethics, the result would be nothing other than the enlargement of the gap between the rich and the poor countries. This

⁷ Schuller, F., Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger: *The Dialectics of Secularization – On Reason and Religion*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006, 56

⁸ *Ibid.*, 69

⁹ Benedict XVI., *Caritas in Veritate* no. 33

is, however, not the case, as proponents of global ethics like Michael Novak held that cross-border economic integration should be guided by the concept of solidarity.

The aim of the globalization of morals, according to John Dunning, is to “formulate universal guidelines of behaviour while respecting the richness of cultural pluralism and the dignity of difference between nations.”¹⁰ Therefore, global ethics does not intend to introduce a uniformity of all values, but rather to create “a family of resemblances” by gathering together the cultural equivalents from different cultures of the world. Put another way, it is meant to highlight the common elements that run through all cultures, despite their diversity, and to use these as the basis for mutual relationship around the globe. For instance such virtues as gratitude, fidelity to promises, honesty, hard work, etc are acceptable in all cultures. Similarly their opposites are abhorred by all peoples in every aspect of human endeavour.

The proponents of global ethics having clarified its goal, identified four sources of moral behaviour on which global ethics could be based to include tradition, religious faith or philosophy, reputation and status, and societal (or peer) values.¹¹ Among these sources, it is religious faith or philosophy that can be said to have influenced more the pattern of life and behaviour of people throughout the ages. Although secularism is spreading from the West to other parts of the world, religious teachings have been the dominant sources and drivers of behavioural mores, even when that is not always acknowledged. It is not within the scope of this work to determine the role religion should play in fashioning the proposed global ethics in a postsecular society. But it is relevant to underscore the fact that if religion is to make an impact, it has to speak with one voice and resolve those differences that are based on unsubstantial issues. In any case, to put religion aside and work towards a global ethic can only end in futility, because religion is known to produce in its adherents motivations and attitudes that are societally desirable, if they are not driven to extreme. But our society is a complex one, and as such the constitutional state has the duty of handling matters concerning both the believing as well as unbelieving citizen.

Globalization is not a dream but a reality that affects every facet of our lives as *animalis socialis*. The process of globalization, especially economic globalization (global capitalism) cannot be allowed to function independently of any reference to the beliefs or conduct of its constituent parts as Friedrich Hayek argues. It has to follow the rules which govern the

¹⁰ Dunning, H, J., op. cit., 349

¹¹ Ibid., 354

society. In other words, non-market institutions, especially the government and supranational entities have to pursue policies which themselves promote social goals. The Marshall Plan of the Post-War period and the Millennium Agreement on debt relief to the poorer countries are examples of such policies.¹² In this regard, we share the opinion of Deepak Lal, who suggests that we return to the values of traditional societies, but reconstitute them to meet the needs of the 21st century. Since one of the essential elements of a true society is justice, an ethic of globalization that fails to reduce economic imbalance is partial. Africa south of the Sahara will need a development Plan from the developed world to alleviate her poverty and equally forestall the ever increasing trade in arms. Global ethics may have other factors opposed to its realization, but if globalization is to stand the test of time, it has to be supported by ethical guidelines, the obedience to which demands cultural humility. A global ethic will, among other things, help to protect the weaker countries from the economic power of the stronger countries and equally safeguard the identity and cultural values of the former from extirpation. The United Nations Organization can provide a common platform for enforcing such an ethic.

IV. Conclusion

Thus far we have seen that the problems of poverty and violence in Africa south of the Sahara perdure as a result of grave irresponsibility and corruption of the leaders of the countries in that region, as well as the economic policies of the developed countries. Secondly, we have closely analysed the relationship between poverty and violence, with the conclusion that abject poverty could lead to violence either directly or indirectly. In this regard, the work showed the connection between the spread of terrorism with poverty, where a few rich people use their wealth and influence to entice jobless youths. Part of the fight against the spread of terrorism will have to include creating sufficient job opportunities for the young, who will also need to be restricted from having access to arms. With reference to the latter, foreign countries need to revisit their trade policy on arms, especially as it concerns the third world countries. But most importantly, both the peoples of Africa south of the Sahara and other countries that have anything to with that region need a paradigm shift in their mindset as individuals and as institutions. There is need for, theologically speaking, a healing from the roots (*sanatio in radice*).

¹² Ibid., 354

But should we give up on Africa as an irremediable case? Do we have any reason to be optimistic or are we caught in a dark alley of pessimism? I am personally optimistic that Africa will rise from the present condition of misery. The hope is nurtured, on the one hand doubtless because of my faith as a Catholic priest; hence I agree with Benedict XVI that if we cannot hope for more than is effectively attainable at any given time, or more than is promised by political or economic authorities, our lives will soon be without hope.¹³ But equally, on the other hand, because Africans have the knowledge, resources and capabilities to do something for themselves. As I pointed out earlier in this work, what is needed is to define our programmes and commence with them. That may demand a lot of time and patience. That should not, however, constitute any problem. No country or continent ever did it overnight. Africa should not expect rulers with a *Midas* touch. And the first step as already indicated, would be to get our priorities right as individuals and as institutions. We have to begin restructuring the society at the village unit. This would entail taking a record of how many people make up a particular village. And from the figures given, which have to be real and not manipulated, we have to find out how many are educated, how many have jobs that sustain them and their families. What are the possibilities of establishing school(s) for the children, hospitals and markets? Right from a tender age, children should feel the impact of a responsible leadership, only then can it be expected that they themselves will act responsibly in the future.

The moral teachings of religious faiths and cultural traditions on the dignity of the human person, most of which are basically the same, have a vital role to play in the emerging global market society, of which Africa is a part. If the condition of Africa is to be altered, the religious institutions have to take a more and more prominent, active and conciliatory approach in influencing the attitudes and thinking of those in the higher echelons of power both at the national and international levels. In the end, it is they who act as a moral stimulus for the individuals and communities which they represent; and it is the ambience they create which affects not just our attitudes to, and behaviour in, the society, but the very fabric of day to day individual and social relationships.¹⁴ Religious institutions may not be experts in the logic of economic and market systems, but could act as umpires for the sake of the good of the society, for in the words of the Cambridge economist John Eatwell, the market can only be a good servant of the people, but a bad master. The unrestrained pursuit of profits which characterises global capitalism will eventually, if unchecked, lead us to Marx's description of

¹³ Benedict XVI., *Spe Salvi*, nr. 35.

¹⁴ Dunning H. J., *op. cit.* 366

a capitalistic society, where the accumulation of wealth at one pole at the same time leads to the accumulation of misery, agony, ignorance, servitude, brutality, and mental degradation at the other pole. Therefore the caution of the English philosopher Edmund Burke needs to be taken seriously, namely that civil liberty can only flourish if individuals 'put moral chains on their appetites' and that this can only be achieved if society places a high premium on such virtues as self-restraint, duty, benevolence, encouragement, example, and the development of character. An African renaissance is possible only if the Africans become deeply conscious of the need for it and continue to talk of this awareness. We still do not have any perfect society on earth, where everything is as it should be. But the major difference between the third world countries (Africa for example) and the developed countries is that the latter identify their problems and keep on talking about them with the hope of finding a solution, where the former either are not able to identify their problems or prefer not to talk about them. This work is a small attempt to help identify what our problems as Africans are. It might have achieved its goal if it sparks off chains of discussion and even criticisms on the issues raised. The greatest honour one can do to a scholar is to criticise his/her work, for it is only through such means that more discussions can ensue, leading to a better result. Good reasons should always make way for better ones. That is progress!

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Anhang I

ABSTRACT

Die Probleme der Armut und Gewalt sind die zwei größten Probleme, die der Kontinent Afrika, aber insbesondere die Region Afrikas südlich der Wüste, belasten. Es geht nicht darum, dass viele Menschen in Afrika arm sind, weil überall auf der Erde Arme zu finden sind. Es geht vielmehr darum, dass das Problem der Armut in Afrika unüberwindbar zu sein scheint. Trotz der unzählbaren Strategien von Gruppen und Organisationen zur Bekämpfung der Armut verschlechtert sich der Zustand Afrikas. Das Paradoxon unserer Zeit besteht darin, dass in einer Zeit, wo der Lebensstandard sich in vielen Ländern verbessert hat, Afrika rückschrittlich bleibt. Gibt es vielleicht eine Wechselwirkung zwischen der verbreiteten Armut und den ständig gewaltigen Konflikten in Afrika? Kann man mit Recht argumentieren, dass der Kontakt Afrikas mit den westlichen und den Nahost-Ländern durch Menschenhandel und später durch Kolonialismus, Christentum und Islam eine unheilbare Identitätskrise hinterlassen hat? Ist diese Krise nicht mindestens teilweise die Ursache der fortdauernden Armut und der schrecklichen Folgen von Gewalt? Warum haben die einheimischen Führer der Länder Afrikas nach der Unabhängigkeit von Kolonialmächten nicht vieles geändert? Diese und ähnliche Fragen wurden in der Arbeit behandelt.

Der Autor geht davon aus, dass eine richtige Armutsbekämpfung von den Afrikanern verlangt, ihre Werte wieder zu definieren. Dies ist jedoch schwierig ohne die eigene Geschichte zu kennen und zu akzeptieren. Solche Werte, die der Autor als grundlegend empfiehlt, sind das kommunitäre Leben und der Respekt vor menschlichem Leben. Der Mensch als Würdenträger nimmt in der gesellschaftlichen Ordnung Vorrang ein. Seine Würde ist unantastbar. Daher ist jede Gesellschaft als eine Gemeinschaft von unantastbaren Personen zu betrachten. Das bedeutet, dass man alles, was dazu beiträgt das Leben zu bewahren, fördern und das Gegenteil verhindern muss. Weil die Würde der Menschen relational ist, d. h. dass sie den anderen braucht, soll der Schutz dieser Würde die erste Aufgabe der Regierenden sein. Weiter argumentiert der Autor, dass, entsprechend unserer Zeit, das gemeinschaftliche Leben über die Ahnenwurzeln hinaus steigen soll. Er ist der Meinung, dass alle Programme von außen, die nicht auf dieser Ebene beachtet werden, misslingen. Dabei soll der erste Impuls in dieser Richtung von den Afrikanern selbst kommen. Wir Afrikaner müssen aufhören die Reagierenden zu sein und anfangen zu agieren. Daher ist eine Renaissance in Afrika dringend. Dazu liefert diese Arbeit einen kleinen Beitrag.

Anhang II

ABSTRACT

The paradox of our time consists in the increasing level of poverty all over the world despite the great achievements in science and technology. There is a significant rise in the standard of living everywhere in the world, but there are also many more people who have to live without food or water. With the help of mechanized system of agriculture a lot of foodstuff is produced, nevertheless many people die daily of hunger. Closely related to the issue of hunger is the denial of opportunities which constitutes a major index in the problem of poverty. The frequency of violent conflicts in some parts of the world is not unconnected with this and similar imbalance in our society. Africa, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa is one of the regions where the problem of social imbalance is exceptionally extant, leading, as it were, to widespread cases of poverty and violent conflicts. If the problem of poverty in Africa south of the Sahara is to be solved and the attendant violent conflicts minimized, the welfare of all has to be taken into consideration in the making and execution of policies that govern the countries of that region. This presupposes the recognition of the inalienable dignity of man.

This work undertakes a critical voyage into the history of Africa paying particular attention to its contacts with the West and the Near East: The one through the Slave Trade, Colonialism and Christianity, and the other through trade and Islam. The author argues that these contacts made much impacts on the Africans and their World-view(s) to the extent that it is no longer easy to talk of what is originally African. This identity crisis is at the root of some of the social problems confronting Africa today. The author further argues that a rediscovery of those African values such as the community spirit and the exaltation of the human person above material things, could be the first step in solving the problems of poverty and violence. The form of community which the author recommends goes beyond the ancestral roots as was the case in traditional Africa, hence we talk of solidarity based on the unique and inalienable dignity of the human person. It is therefore a community of persons endowed with dignity. The recognition of and respect for this transcendental dimension of the human person is an indispensable tool for the construction of a just social order and lasting peace among Africans within Africa and between Africa and the rest of the world. Africa needs a renaissance which, of course, has to be initiated by Africans themselves before requesting for external assistance. It is an exercise in self-discovery and self-acceptance. This is the basis for the strength of character without which any plan for development is bound to end in futility.

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