

Christianity and social justice in nigeria assignment



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They believe that the principalities and powers of evil have effective control of things as they are and that the world and its forms of societal arrangement and culture hold nothing but trouble and temptation for the Christians. Therefore, Christians should have nothing to do with the world; they should avoid its friendship, its community life, its culture and its politics. On the other hand, there are Christians who see social involvement as an inescapable part of what it means to be a Christian.

The debate is a continuum and contemporary Christians are no exception to it. There is the basic question: "Should Christians have anything to do with the prevailing social situations of a world marked by weakness and exploited by power? A world in which wealth is made at the expense of the poor; position at the price of oppression and intimidation; security, affluent and influence at the price of integrity? The debate about the relationship between Christianity and social action is an important one.

The contention of this paper is that a Christian's understanding of God and his experience of him will inevitably lead him into the world with a vocational service, and leaves him no choice but to respond to the social order with actions and policies consistent with his knowledge of God. For instance, three things combined to turn Amos - a farmer and Christianity and Social Justice in Nigeria in the Historical Context of Amos 5: 15-17 By adulterous Samara.

The victories won by Jeroboam 11 (2 Kings 14) had brought wealth and power to the ruling classes in Israel, but luxury, impunity and intemperance were rife among them (Amos 2: 7, 8; 6: 4-6). For the poor, their case could

not have been worse; they groaned under the most oppressive exactions; they were totally unable to get justice; they were treated as chattels, not as human beings (Am. 8: 4-6). Secondly, he got to know of the campaigns against other nations, waged by the king of Assyria.

Thirdly, and most important of all, God's Spirit impelled him to speak against the evils of the society. Amos, like Paul (Am. 7: 15 CB. Gal. 1) was conscious of a direct call from heaven, he could not refuse to declare the message of God to a corrupt world. This should constantly serve as example to Christians of all ages, to address their minds and services to the well being of the citizens without fear or favor, particularly here in Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION: The theoretical framework for this paper is premised on Thomas Hobbes' theory of the state of nature', this is a theory of the state of moral immaturity, a state in which the motivating force of action was self-interest, " whatever is the object of any appetite or desire that he called good". As one would expect, Hobbes opines that there is no development or progress in the state of nature since the individuals who constitute it are morally bankrupt and socially irresponsible.

Hobbes' state of nature is an absolutely philosophical fiction; nevertheless, its lesson has been driven home, and it is this: moral maturity (purity), social responsibility and self-control on the part of the individual members of a society are indispensable to the development of that society. The extent to which moral laxity, egoism, individualism, lack of a sense of duty, bribery and corruption, egoistic disregard for public well-being, embezzlement of

public funds, etc. Prevail in any society would determine the extent of development of that society.

In a letter written to some prominent Church leaders in Nigeria by Aimed Allaying Slue, posted on the net on January 12, 2011. We have this extract: In the aftermath of the successful Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1957, Martin Luther King, Jr. Invited 60 other black ministers to the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta to discuss the formation of an organization to address the injustices meted upon members of the African-American community. The organization, which was named The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), was formed to draw on the unity of the churches to fight for racial justice through nonviolent resistance.

In explaining the purpose of the organization, Martin Luther King stated that This conference is called because we have no moral choice, before God, but to delve deeper into the struggle?? and to do so with greater reliance on non-violence and with greater unity, coordination, sharing, and Christian understanding. A similar climate of injustice and oppression is prevalent in Nigeria today as in yesterdays America. Income inequality in Nigeria is at all time high, life expectancy is on the decline, while infant mortality and maternal mortality rates are on the rise.

Corruption, tribalism and religious strife are plaguing the country. The masses continue to be oppressed by some sections of the privileged class including the political and economic classes. Nigeria has become a giant Oil scheme in which used to improve the fortunes of a privileged class at the top of the pyramid. Consequently, the average Nigerian has become

tired of being tired, frustrated of being frustrated and sick of being sick.

Unlike the Civil Rights era in the USA where a strong majority oppressed a weak minority, in today's Nigeria, a strong minority is oppressing a weak majority.

Similarly, while a number of African-Americans were lynched and hung on trees or buildings, many Nigerian have met their untimely deaths on the nooses of inadequate health facilities and poor roads. While African-Americans experienced racial segregation, many Nigerian experience class segregation whereby the 'have's not' are denied access to Justice, quality education and healthcare. As a result of the above, a similar combination of vision and rationality is needed now in response to the oppression, injustice and classicism currently taking place in Nigeria.

Chief Illusion Bassoon (former president of Nigeria) in 2000 emphasized the unfortunate circumstances of Insignia's export market and the poor state of her economy despite the strength of her human and mineral resources. This is quite important, but suffices to say that major, these resources have been badly managed by corrupt and inordinate leaders, who have caused pains and poverty in the country, forcing the citizenry, particularly the youth into unprintable, offensive and regrettable activities.

This is a country where billions of naira and dollars are carted away by some corrupt individuals every day, and yet, the country is not completely financially comatose. To this effect, certainly, there is wealth and economic potential in Nigeria, only that corruption has robbed her of her true economic value, integrity and status. Presently, the Nigerian environment does not

promote human and material development. The truth however, is that, poor countries can create their own economic prosperity if they chose to do so.

Nevertheless, equitable distribution of wealth will not occur without deliberate attempt to achieve it. Nigeria can achieve her developmental goals, but our leaders and their cohorts appear to have deliberately decided otherwise. How can there be development in any society in which public funds are diverted in billions of dollars and naira into private and selfish ends by some unscrupulous and greedy members of the society? 80% of our income from crude oil is enjoyed only by 1% of the population and as at 5th November, 2010, \$400 billion from the sale of crude oil have been stolen by corrupt leaders.

If this continues as the order of the day, how can the economy of this country develop? Certainly, the economy of any society cannot evolve if her members lack a sense of integrity, duty, patriotism, loyalty, right attitude to work, sense of moral obligation and social and spiritual accountability. If the dominant principle of action is self-interest, self-enrichment at the expense of the common good, how can the society in which they live develop? Who will develop and empower it?

There can never be development and progress in any society where devotion to duty, honesty, justice, equity and efficiency yield to self-interest, corruption and craving for self-enrichment. THE CHURCH AS SOCIAL VANGUARD IN NIGERIA: AMOS AS CASE STUDY Down the entries, the book of Amos has been a source of inspiration for all those working for the uplifting of the poor, beginning from John Chromosome and the like of Martin Lump

and Fests Governing of Uganda, Emmanuel Boolean Goofing and Anthony Cookie of Nigeria.

Amos (a Hebrew name which means “burden bearer”), was a native of Take, a town about 12 miles south of Jerusalem. A farmer and shepherd, he had spent his life caring for sheep and harvesting the sycamore fig, which is the “food of the poor.” Amos was a “layman,” a humble farmer and shepherd who was not an official member of the Jewish religious or political establishment. He was used to hard work and accustomed to a frugal life. This is a sharp contrast to the luxurious ostentation of Israel during the reigns of Isaiah in Judas (790 B.

C. - 740 B. C.) and Jeroboam II in the Northern Kingdom of Israel (793 B. C - 753 B. C). At this time, both Judas and Israel were enjoying prosperity and security. Luxury abounded (3: 1()-15; 5: 1-6), and “religion” was popular. Israel flocked to the royal sanctuaries at Bethel and Gila (4: 4-5), and Judas celebrated the religious feasts enthusiastically (5: 21-22), but the sins of both nations were eroding the religious, political, social and moral fiber of the people.

Making money was more important to them than worshiping God and observing godly neighborliness (8: 5); the rich exploited the poor, the judicial system was corrupt, and injustice flourished (5: 11-15, 24; 8: 4-6). Shocked by the moral, social, economic and religious situation in the Northern Kingdom, Amos stood at Bethel (the center of worship established over a century before him by Jeroboam I) and denounced in strong terms the lifestyle of Israel.

In a series of scathing sermons, he confronted the wealthy and ruling classes, exposed their sins, and pronounced in flaming anger, the punishment that God was to impose. The moral condition of the nation of Israel was clearly revealed by the prophet's shock at the cruel treatment of the poor by the rich, and the covetousness, injustice, and immorality of the people in power, and at the general contempt for things holy (2: 6-8).

Trampling on the poor, taking exactions of wheat (5: 1 1), afflicting the Just, taking a bribe, and turning aside from the needy (v. 3) stirred the indignation of the prophet, and gives us insight into the morals of the day. These people were ready to "swallow up the needy" and "to do away with the poor of the land" - that is, to let them die (8: 4). In political circles there as tumult and oppression, violence and robbery (3: 9-10). People hated any Judge who would reprove them or speak uprightly (5: 10). Then suddenly, against this background of prosperity and oppression, a man who knew poverty appeared from Judas and denounced the sins of Israel and pronounced God's Judgment.

Today we are facing a deteriorating world situation, an alarming increase in world hunger, a dangerous volatile world economic situation, an increasing rapacious exploitation of the earth's resources, pollution of the environment, a generally worsening world political situation, a widespread erosion of human rights, a deteriorating world health situation, continuing widespread exploitation and oppression of women rooted in sexism, and class domination, a growing feeling of powerlessness and a world-wide growth in religious reaction and fanaticism.

It is in the midst of these issues that people have to find meaning to life. Quite often, the media depict a moral vacuum in which morality, justice, fair play and equity are incomprehensible and suffering cannot be redemptive; pain, perhaps is the only real obscenity. It is obvious therefore that every society needs sound godly teachings and and prosperity. A church which is busy in evangelism; without any concern or desire to respond to the social pressures upon human life in society, is a church which has misunderstood the life-transforming thrust of the gospel itself.

The worldly kingdom provided the context in which the heavenly one preached the Good News by providing for an ordered and Just social community. The evidence of true commitment to the gospel is a display of greater social sensitivity on the part of Christians, rather than a diminished sensitivity, or withdrawal from social issues. Thus, if Christians take their faith seriously, they will find themselves demonstrating impassioned concern for the social ills in the society, and what happens to any member of the society would be of great importance to them.

A professing Christian cannot shy away from some scriptural instructions; he must attend to the whole message of the Good News of God in Jesus Christ, making use of all relevant resources at his disposal to carry this out effectively. This is evident in Pall's ministry; he was willing to make use of the political and legal structures of his time. He knew his rights as a Roman citizen and he used them. He was aware of the need for justice wrought law in the society, and when he came up against the state, he sought for justice in its dealings.

In the first place, Paul was ready to submit to indignity – he was flogged and thrown into prison. He was not ashamed to share in the sufferings of others because he was a man committed to sharing in the sufferings of Christ. Jesus also was roughly treated by those in authority, and his crucifixion was grossly an abuse with no redress. EXEGESIS OF AMOS MM 5-17. This is the central chapter and the longest of the nine; it opens with a tender and pathetic lamentation, in the style of a funeral song, over the house of Israel.

The chapter contains practically all the important ideas of the book, including the oppression of the poor and the needy (5: 11-12), insistence on justice and righteousness (5: 7, 15, 24) and Who's rejection of Israel's cult (5: 2(-24). An idea that is new in the book and new in the whole of biblical literature is the theological concept of the " day of the Lord" (5: 18-20). Israel was looking forward to this great day of rejoicing when WHY would destroy its enemies and bring victory to the chosen people, however, Amos turns the idea upside down.

The day of the Lord will be a day of defeat, gloom, and sadness (5: 18, 20), of mourning in the city streets and lamentation in the vineyards ((5: 16-17). False security in the day of the Lord as well as in a hollow cult (5: 21-24) are ruled out. Important in this chapter are also the exhortations Amos makes in the name of WHY. " Seek me and live" (5: 4), " Seek the Lord and live" (5: 6), " Seek good and not evil, that you may live" (5: 14). The verb " live" should be rendered as " survive" (the impending catastrophe).

The correlate of all this is that Israel should not seek the cult at Bethel, Gila, or Brasher (5: 5). Again, Israel should " hate evil" (5: 15). If Israel changes its

lifestyle, if Justice and righteousness flow like a never-ending stream, then and only then there might be some hope for the “ remnant of Joseph” (5: 15). This last idea of remnant, which will become popular in later times, we meet for the first time in Amos. Almost at the end of this section we find a verse that has baffled translators both ancient and modern.

It runs, muff shall take up Shakeout your king, and Kantian you star-god, your images, which you made for yourselves” (5: 26). It is to be kept in mind that this translation is made possible only changed to Stalks and skinny to Kantian. Both Stalks and Kantian are Babylonian astral divinities. The problem is that astral deities were imposed on Israel only in the time of the Assyrian domination, and so their presence in Israel in the time of Amos is a historical anachronism. Two solutions are possible. One is to say that this text comes from a later redactor.

The other is to vocalizes sickout as stake, which could mean “ booth” or “ palanquin”. The next word, skinny, could be left as it is since it has the meaning of “ pedestal”. The Hebrew word kabob translated as “ star-god” could be rendered as “ star symbol of your god”. Thus, one could translate muff shall carry the languid of your king (referring to a god), the pedestal of your idol and the star- symbol of your god”. The Hebrew has a three-fold genitive form (of your king, of your idol, of your god) that is absent in the versions.

This could well go back to Amos himself. The idea is similar to that found in Hoses, who tells us “ The thing itself [the calf of Beth-even] shall be carried to Assyria as tribute to the great king” (Hose. 10: 6). But the sarcasm is

much stronger in Amos. WHY, Israel's God, had carried Israel out of Egypt (Good. 19: 4) but Israel's idols will be carried by Israel into exile. Amos 5: 15. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish Judgment in the gate: it may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.

Hate the evil, and love the good - (Sis 1: 16-17; Rom 12: 9, " Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good"). And establish Judgment in the gate - Justice in the place where causes are tried. It may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious - so " peradventure" (Ex 32: 30). Not that men are to come to God with an uncertainty whether or not He will be gracious; the expression merely implies the difficulty in the way, because of the lack of true repentance on man's part, so as to stimulate the zealous earnestness of believers in seeking God (CB. Gene 16: 2; Joel 2: 14; Acts 8: 22).

Unto the remnant of Joseph - (Amos 5: 6, " the house of Joseph"). Israel (represented by " Ephraim," the leading tribe, and descendant of Joseph) was, comparatively to what it once was, now but a remnant, Hazel of Syria having smitten all the coasts from Jordan eastward, Gilead and Bash, Gad, Reuben, and Masses (2 Kings 10: 32-33) Rather, ' the remnant of Israel that shall have been left after the wicked have been destroyed' Amos preached that God was preparing to punish Israel. There would be a military disaster which would lead to exile for the Israelites (Am. 2: 13-16; 3: 1 1; 6: 7; 7: 17).

The greatest hope that he could offer was for a few remnants, but they would be in great trouble (Am. 5: 15; 3: 12). Amos denied that he had belonged to any band of prophets, but he was convinced that God had called him to prophesy (Am. 3: 7-8; 7: 14-15). Although he was a man of Judas, he

fulfilled his ministry in Israel (Am. 7: 10). Amazing, the priest of Bethel, ordered him to return to his home country for his meals, but Amos's only response was a stern rebuke (Am. 7: 10-17). This was in the reign of Jeroboam 11 when the country was most prosperous and the sanctuaries were crowded with worshippers.

Amos was convinced that the society was rotten underneath. Amos condemned both the social and the religious life of the nation. He accused the Israelites of selfishness and cruelty, gluttony and drunkenness, luxury and stupid revelry. The women encouraged their husbands in their senseless wastefulness. Judges were bribed. The merchants gave short weight and charged festivals of the new moon prevented their trade. Meanwhile, other people were so poor that they had to sell themselves or members of their families as slaves in order o get food.

Yet the very men who acted so selfishly longed for the ' day of Heehaw' when God would visit them, because they believed that their prosperity was evidence that God was pleased with them. Those who were rich and strong were behaving very unjustly to those who were poor. Money -lenders were gaining power over the poor and selling them and their property when they were unable to pay their debts. He pointed out the social injustice of his day with such severity that Amazing regarded his message as high treason and insisted that " the land is not able to bear all his words" (Am. 7: 10).

Wealthy merchants, lusting for economic power, were ruthlessly trampling on the heads of the poor and defenseless. Public leaders, reveling in luxury and corrupted by indulgence, were lying in bed of ease- unconcerned over "

the ruin of Joseph” (Am. 6: 1-7). Amos considered these things as symptoms of a deep “sickness unto death” When the dishonest leaders attempted to foist their lies on the people and manipulate the court, if somebody rebuked them, they turned on that person and tried to silence him or her. It got to a point when the righteous would not say anything because their interference did no good (Amos 5: 13).

Leaders with integrity will gladly listen to counsel and even to rebuke, but most leaders who are bent on perpetuating evil will seek to destroy those who stand in their way. The Prophet Amos was the champion of the poor and oppressed (2: 6-7; 4: 1; 8: 6) as he called for Justice in the land. He pictured the rich trampling the poor into the mud by claiming their crops for payment of the high rents they were charging. The rich were literally taking the food right out of the mouths of their tenants and their children and if these hungry tenants appealed to the local Judges for Justice, the wealthy endorsers bought off the Judges.

They used the ill-gotten wealth to build mansions for themselves and to plant luxurious vineyards. They anticipated lounging in their big houses and drinking wine, but the Lord had other plans. He announced that they would neither live in their mansions nor drink their wine because the Assyrian would destroy all their houses and vineyards. Like the selfish rich in the apostolic days, these powerful landowners were fattening their hearts for the day of slaughter (Amos 5: 1-6). Amos’ anger was a pale reflection of God’s own wrath, yet, the prosperous Israelites were unmoved. They were unconcerned about the misery of those they oppressed.

Apparently, prosperity often promotes values that are in deep conflict with what God Himself says is important. How hard it is to have wealth and status, and still retain perspective and godliness? It takes Christian discipline for these to co-exist. THE MESSAGE OF AMOS IN NIGERIAN CONTEXT. Nigeria today is in a state of emergency in spite of our achievements because of the toxic effects of the evils all around us - injustice, child abuse, bribery and corruption, oppression, deprivations, poverty, kidnapping, assassination, materialism and errors in the garb of Book Harm and lately, JAMBS Amounts Unsnarl Musician FL Bilabials Sudan), etc.

On the average, ethnic strife and religious conflicts in various parts of the country, especially in the North consumes not less than 3, 000 people annually. With reckless abandon however, the cabal only take turn at impoverishing the nation by embezzling large sums of money in public and private sectors (in the retirees, money for provision of Job for the youth, provision of infrastructures and social amenities, and money for eradication of HIV/AIDS and diseases among children ND unborn babies, yet, they escape Justice.

Insignia's new cultural practices promote reckless and open expression of social injustice and other vices - in the name of globalization, modernity, and civilization, self- gerrymandering and gratification rather than self control, and many people think that they have the right to do whatever they want. Even Christians are not immune to the harmful and addictive effects of these evils. As it were in the days of Amos, tales of social injustice, corruption, exploitation, brutality and oppression, are observed in almost every facets of life in Nigeria.

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Apart from corruption at the top, there are obvious cases of corruption at the lowest rung of the social ladder:- Police and traffic wardens who stand at the roadblocks to collect bribes, civil servants who insist on being oiled before moving the file, bank attendants who wink at customers so that the client could “ drop” from savings cashed from the counter, medical officials who anticipate tips before attending to a dying patient, even little children sent on errand who deliberately withhold the “ change”, lecturers who depend on tips or sexual relationship with their students to award marks.

The scourge seems to be on the increase as its varying emergent vocabulary: kickback, Ghana must go; giberd, ten percent, brown envelope, etc. Continue to increase. It is indeed a pathetic situation! The situation would however not be strange to Prophet Amos who was undoubtedly familiar with our situation because he lived at a time like ours when society was changing radically, except for the Book Harm bombings. Both Israel and Judas were extremely wealthy, which meant that their wealth and energy could be used for developing their nations and providing basic amenities.

The cities were expanding vapidly and a new wealthy merchant class was developing in the society. The two kingdoms were moving from an agricultural to a commercial society and experiencing both the benefits and problems that come with that change. However, in spite of their material success, all was not well with God’s chosen people. They experienced what the British poet- Oliver Goldsmith wrote about in 1770: Ill abounds in the land, Where wealth accumulates, and men decay .. There were ill aplenty in all the lands of that day, the Gentile nations as well as the Jewish kingdoms of Israel and Judas; and Amos wasn’t afraid to name them.

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Amos began his prophetic messages with the denunciation of the sins of six Gentile nations, and no doubt, the people of Israel and Judas applauded him for this. Nothing would make the Jews happier than to see the Lord Judging and punishing the surrounding enemy nations of Assyria, Babylon, Syria, etc. But when Amos denounced Judas and Israel, that became a different story; and his fame diminished almost immediately.