

ETHNIC NATIONAL AGITATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE LIGHT OF ISA 56:1-8

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Abstract

Ethnic national agitations have existed almost all through Nigeria's history. These agitations have usually been informed by perceived injustice or fear of inordinate dominance and loss of identity. The fever pitch reactions they generate often drag the nation into retrogressions in many fronts and they have been known to generate enduring bad bloods. Among those who make up the Agitators are Christians. Consequently, taking up the backdrop of the Israelites return from exile and the ethnic tensions it caused in Israel from the 6th BCE, this paper shall use close reading to evaluate lexemes within Isa 56:1-8 with the goal to present to the Agitators and Nigeria's leadership certain cardinal issues that should be respected and upheld in their drives. The objective of this trajectory is to underscore certain dignities they must respect in the cause of their possibly rightful agitations.

Keywords: Isaiah, agitations, race, class, justice, righteousness

Introduction

The biblical text of this presentation is in the book of Isaiah, and scholars have identified a tripartite division in its 66 chapters. The divisions are: *Proto* (First) Isaiah, *Deutero* (Second) Isaiah and *Trito* (Third) Isaiah¹. First Isaiah covers chapters one to thirty-nine. These chapters reflect the Assyrian period of political dominance over Israel and Judah. In this epoch, the prophet regularly condemned Judah's social injustice against the destitute of her nation and against her idolatrous dispositions and inclinations. Judah's inhabitants', and especially her leaderships', refusal to harken to the prophet's summons to a *metonia* evoked the deportation prophesy of Isa 39. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon began to fulfill the prophesy in 597 BC and 2 Kings 24-25 narrates dimensions of its actualization

¹ Brevard S. Childs, *Isaia*, (Brescia: Editrice Queriniana, 2005), 10.

also in 587 BC. Second Isaiah spans chapters forty to fifty-five. These chapters relate the era of the end of Judah's exile experiences in Babylon. They highlight the prophecies made to announce the end of the exile and the return to Zion; an accomplishment realized by King Cyrus, whom God chose in Isa 44:24-45:1-3 to execute the task and by 538 BC promulgated the edict that permitted all exiles within the fallen Babylonian empire to return to their homelands². The return journey of Jewish exiles to Zion and the issues which arose relating to their settling down in the Promised Land is what Third Isaiah depicts. Third Isaiah, which embraces chapters fifty-six to sixty-six, reports the teething problems the returnees of the seventy-year exile faced with those who were left behind at the deportations. Included among the conundrums faced by the returnees was who was qualified to be identified as a servant of God, a Jew, and what class of people can serve in important institutions like the Temple and its ancillary offices and services? These matters reveal problems of race, class and sociopolitical relevance and acceptance. Obviously, tensions and agitations aroused among the inhabitants of Judah in the post exilic time. The agitations arouse from ethnonational minorities that Andrew G. Kourvetaris describes as "... politicized groups within a society, where membership in a particular ethnic group(s) forms the basis for their members' mobilization in making collective claims on members of other groups that include a nation's political decision makers"³.

Nigeria is faced with similar issues of tribe, class and socio-political relevance 61 years after her Independence. And perceived injustice has engendered the contemporary agitations of the different Nigerian ethnic and socio-cultural groups. The promoters and perpetrators of these agitations feel shortchanged and marginalised in the political equation of the nation since 1999. For instance, Olaogun Michael Sunkanni contends that the President Muhamadu Buhari's administration painfully catalysed the current agitations because of his style of governance which unapologetically and unwittingly favours the Muslim north with impunity. Consequently, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) now repeatedly and loudly push for secession, while the Arewa Youths and some northern elders have, in the recent past, forcefully called for the exit of the Igbos from the North and vice versa. In addition, some South-Western political and cultural leaders lately call for an Oduduwa Republic in the South-West. This increasing request for secession from the larger polity is now sinking into the subconscious of the average young Nigerian⁴ in those parts of the country. This development is sad, because the youth are supposed to

² Berges Ulrich, *The Book of Isaiah: its Composition and Final Form*, Hebrew Bible Monograph 46, (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2012), 301.

³ Andrew G. Kourvetaris, "Ethnonational Minorities" in Richard T. Schaefer, ed., *Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity and Society*, (Los Angeles, London, Singapore: Sage Publications, 2008), 467.

⁴ Olaogun Michael Sunkanni, "Ethnic Agitations: Why We Must Learn From History" *Premium Times*, September 23, 2020, (<https://opinion.premiumtimesng.com/2020/09/23/ethnic-agitations-why-we-must-learn-from-history-by-olaogun-michael-sunkanni/>) retrieved on 27th September 2021.

perpetuate the indivisibility of Nigeria. Where they advance in age with divisive tendencies in their psychological orientation, there can never be growth and development in Nigeria but retrogression often championed by violence.

God proposed a solution in Isa 56:1-8 to the issues the returned exiles had to manage in order to deal with the divides and agitations that surrounded them. Against the backdrop of this text, this paper argues that while it is imperative for people to express their plights, most especially against unfavourable political and economic dispositions⁵, it should be done within given ethical and socio-anthropological positions that respect human dignity. Therefore, through close reading, this paper will interpret particular verses and their linguistic information in Isa 56:1-8⁶ to suggest parameters of operations for contemporary Nigerian agitators and the nation's leadership. This paper hopes that in keeping with the identified parameters of Isa 56:1-8, ethnically based agitations would be championed in such a manner that will not hamper national development.

Literary and historical context of Isa 56:1-8

Third Isaiah is the larger literary context of Isa 56:1-8. Isa 56:1-8 does not just introduce *Trito Isaiah*, Joseph Blenkinsopp argues that it signals a new departure from the other divisions of the book, and it justifies marking off Third Isaiah as a separate block⁷. The eleven chapters of Third Isaiah predominantly describe the early problems faced by the returnees as they struggled to settle and rebuild themselves in their homeland. Historically, these chapters reflect the situation in the province of Judah, during the first century of Persian rule corresponding more or less to the reigns of Darius I (522–486), Xerxes I (486–465) and Artaxerxes I (465–424). Even though there is not enough historical evidence to buttress this argument, *Trito Isaiah* nevertheless essentially reflects the post-exilic epoch which ranges from 538 BCE to 302 BCE; the eon when the Persians, Ptolemies and Seleucids reigned. Much can be garnered of the age from Ezra-Nehemiah rule⁸. The prophets that predominantly worked in this era were Haggai and Zechariah 1-8⁹.

The disturbances in Babylon in the early years of Darius's reign could have provided

⁵ Olaogun Michael Sunkanmi, "Ethnic Agitations: Why We Must Learn from History".

⁶ Raymond De Hoop contends that Isa 56:1-8 is a delimited passage. He argued further that the passage is a later addition to the Isaian complex order to create room for the divine promise to Eunuchs and foreigners (Raymond De Hoop, "Interpretation of Isaiah 56:1-9: Comfort or Criticism?", *JBL* 127 (4) (2008) 671-695).

⁷Blenkinsopp Joseph, *Isaiah 56-66: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, (London: Yale University Press, 2008), 130.

⁸ Clint Banz, "Ezra and Nehemiah Within their Historical Context", *CBTJ* 9(1) (Spring 1993), 52-64; Hans-Georg Wuench, "The Structure of Ezra-Nehemiah as a Literary Unit", *Verbum et Ecclesia* 42(1) (October 2021), 3-5. [1-9].

⁹Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 43.

motivation for Judean settlers to emigrate to Judah, especially if the Jewish ethnic minority in and around Babylon and Nippur had come out in support of the native rebellions. That this actually happened is suggested by the exhortation to flee from the land of the north (i.e., Babylon) and escape to Zion (Isa 48:20). The result would have been a significant increase in the Judeo-Babylonian element in the province of Judah. Thus creating the opportunity for non-Jews to be among the returnees. The actual number that had already immigrated into Judah before the accession of Darius is hard to know for certainty. The eventual list of about 50,000 assumed to have returned following immediately on a decree of Cyrus (Ezra 2:1–67 = Neh 7:6–68) is probably from a census of the Province from a considerably later date¹⁰.

We could assume that the returnees had been also essentially encouraged by the value which the Israelites accorded the Land entrusted to them by Yhwh. They needed to rebuild and reestablished it to the noble status it had and enjoyed prior the deportation. The book of Ezra-Nehemiah gives us a biblical history of the various struggles faced by the returnees in maintaining their identity as Jews and rebuilding their national socio-political life. Third Isaiah to a large degree reflects that period with its attendant problems of bad leadership and divisions among the inhabitants of Jerusalem over who deserved to be called Servants of Yhwh¹¹ and authentic Jews; so as to be recognized as fearers of Yhwh¹². Isa 65–66 within this wider literary context describes the level of destructive divisions of social and religious implications existing among the dwellers in Zion¹³. The bone of contention was determining the conditions and prescriptions which classify those to be regarded as authentically servant of God and Jews, and those that are not. Little wonder Ulrich Berges states that Isa 56–66 “...emphasizes, among other things, the conditions for entering Zion and the divine community; this also means a new conception of the identity of the people of God”¹⁴.

Two Hebrew language terms in Isa 56:1–8 furnish us with the linguistic information that demonstrate some patterns of categorization for distinctions in the time. Distinctions which reflect the social and historical context of the text of this paper. They are *sārîsîm* and *bⁿê hannēchār*. The term *sārîsîm* is the plural form of *sārîs*. *Sārîs* etymologically characterizes two socially contrasting classes of people. The first class is illustrated as

¹⁰Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56–66*, 45.

¹¹ Childs, *Isaia*, 489.

¹² Beuken Willem A.M., “Yhwh’s Sovereign Rule and His Adoration on Mount Zion: A Comparison of Poetic Visions in Isaiah 24–27, 52 and 66”, in A. J. EVERSON – H.C.P. KIM, eds., *The Desert Will Bloom: Poetic Visions in Isaiah*, SBL.AIL 4, Atlanta 2009), 67–87.

¹³ Alison Hartke, *Covenant, Particularity, and Inclusion: An Analysis of Isaiah 56:1–8 and Its Implications for Modern Jewish and Christian Communities*, (Masters Thesis, Minnesota: St. Paul, Luther Seminary, 2014), 7–8.

¹⁴ Berges, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3.27.

special services royal-court-officials (Gen 37:36; 40:2; 1 Sam 8:15; 1 Kgs 22:9; 2 Kgs 8:6; 9:32; 23:11; 24:15; Jer 29:2; 41:16; Esth 1:10; 2:3.14; 1 Chron 28:1)¹⁵. These special services officials could rise to high ranks (Gen 39–41) even as senior military commanders (2 Kgs 25,19)¹⁶. They are often naturally highly gifted or well-trained people with good health and finesse physical appearance in order to qualify for service at the king's presence and court (cfr. Dan 1:1-20). Isa 56:3 describes the second class as castrates with no descendants and they consider themselves as withered trees unfit for service at God's altar¹⁷. This happens should they have emasculated their male organ or have it cut. Such an act, for whatever reason, violates their physical integrity¹⁸. Frustratingly, Deut 23:2 forbids individuals with crushed testicles from entering the Assembly. This prohibition is believed to be in specific reference to eunuchs or those that intentionally mutilate their own genitals or those who had been officials in foreign governments¹⁹. Lev 21:20 contends that such blemishing of the male organ should not be understood as solely referring to eunuchs because this portion of Leviticus refers to an unsuccessful circumcision. Whatever may be the direction and essence of the arguments, the blemish or mutilation rank among the most comprehensive list of physical impairments in the biblical anthology²⁰. Thus, it raises many questions which scholars have just many educated guesses. Ultimately, the exact meaning of these blemishes is moot.²¹ In fact, many of the blemishes would not be classified as disabilities today. Yet those cited texts are clear. They identify certain physical conditions that disqualify a priest from performing priestly duties at the altar and in the sanctuary²². Thereby creating class distinction where some are refused service in the Temple because of their physical condition, among whom were *sārîsîm*.

Then *b^{en}ê hannēchār* refers to foreigners. Frequently, geographic and national individuals are described as sons of a place or of a land²³. But the term *b^{en}ê hannēchār*

¹⁵ Beuken, *Isaiah 28–39*, 419.

¹⁶ EBACH Jürgen, *Genesis 37–50*, Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament, (Freiburg: Herder, 2007), 158-270.

¹⁷ K. KEDAR-KOPFSTEIN, “קָרִיס”, in G. Johannes Botterweck – Helmer Ringgren – Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament X*, (Grand Rapids – Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 345-349.

¹⁸ Beuken, *Isaiah 28–39*, 419.

¹⁹ Kalland Earl S., “Deuteronomy” in Frank E. Gaebelin, Earl S Kalland, Donald H. Madvig, et al. eds., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 47.

²⁰ Olyan Saul M., *Disability in the Hebrew Bible: Interpreting Mental and Physical Differences*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 27.

²¹ Milgrom Jacob, *Leviticus 17-22: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, (London: The Anchor Bible Series, 1992), 1826.

²² Wilson Jare, “The Perfect Priest: An Examination of Leviticus 21:17-23”, (George Fox University Masters Thesis, 2013), 28.

²³ Haag H., “בְּנֵי”, in G. Johannes Botterweck – Helmer Ringgren – Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., *Theological*

refers to one who is not a member of the household (Gen 17:12, 27; 31:15) but more commonly designates a non-Israelite (e.g., 2 Sam 15:19; 22:45–46) and therefore a worshiper of “foreign” gods (Gen 35:4; Deut 31:16; Josh 24:20 etc.).²⁴ In most instances, the connotations attached to *b^ḥnē hannēchār* are negative. Although occasional neutral or even positive usages occur. Particularly in the prophets, *b^ḥnē hannēchār* designate in generalizing and indeterminate fashion the other nations with whom Israel comes in contact with. Frequently, they are interpreted as the actual or potential devastators and exploiters of Israel (Isa 1:7; 62:8; Jer 5:19; Lam 5:2; Hos 7:9; 8:7; Obad 11) who function as God’s punishing agents (Ezek 7:21; 11:9). Israel’s involving herself with other nations was reprehensible (Isa 2:6; Jer 2:25; 3:13; Ezek 16:3; 44:7) because of the danger of apostasy to foreign gods. So, Israel was exhorted to separate itself from the nations to the extent possible (Neh 9:2). In the future, it is hoped that foreigners’ subjugation of Israel will be eliminated (Isa 25:2, 5; Jer 30:18; Joel 4:17) and that Israel itself will attain the level of control over foreigners (Isa 60:10; 61:5). In the same line, there exists legal prescriptions denying those who are ethnically foreigners various Israelite prerogatives, whether political (Deut 17:15), economic (Deut 15:3; 23:21) or cultic (Exod 12:43; Lev 22:25; Ezek 44:9). On the other hand, a few texts do allow foreigners some degree of participation in Israel’s worship by well-disposed *b^ḥnē hannēchār* (1 Kgs 8:41, 43; Isa 56:3, 6; cf. 66:18–21). Finally, in the oracles against the nations, foreigners are peoples other than - and hostile to - the particular non-Israelite nation (Babel, Tyre, Egypt) against whom a given oracle is addressed (Jer 51:2; Ezek 28:7, 10; 30:12, 31:12)²⁵. This semantic explanation describes the socio-historical context of the problem faced by the returned exile community that had difficulty accepting foreigners and eunuchs. This could be the reason why in the same period in Ezra 9-10, there was a covenant to put away foreign wives of the returned exile²⁶. An unfortunate decision that was anti-people and anti-our common humanity.

The semantic explanation of the context of Isa 56:1-8 visualizes the notions of tribalism and class as the issues that created the sociopolitical problems faced by the returnees and the remnants of the deportation. Problems which cause issues affecting their national growth and development. Nigeria faces similar problems of class distinctions and categorization. The bases of which unprincipled systems exist to determine those who are

Dictionary of the Old Testament II, (Grand Rapids - Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 151.

²⁴Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 136.

²⁵Begg Christopher T., “Foreigner” in David Noel Freedman, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary II*, (New York - London: Doubleday, 1992), 829.

²⁶Emmanuel Usue, “Is the Expulsion of Women as Foreigners in Ezra 9-10 Justifiably Covenantal?” *Acta Theologica* 32(1) (2012) 158-169.

fit for leadership and those who cannot be trust for meaningful contribution to national growth. These individuals are denied the opportunity to give their best because their provenance is of a particular ethnic group or because they belong to a misunderstood socio-political class. Hence, even if by merit they are the best hands and minds available to champion development in the nation, they are not accorded their due credit. These perceived injustices have been largely responsible for the crises of ethnic agitations by ethnonational minorities in Nigeria. The divine solution proposed in Isa 56:1-8 to those fueling ethnic divide and class distinction in the 6th century BCE inhabitants is being presented as principles, models and pathways for a constructive agitation in Nigeria: the challenge being both to the Agitators and the nation's leadership.

Isa 56:1-8 and Nigerian agitations

Isa 56:1-8 is a divine oracle because of the prophetic Messenger Formula called *coh amar Adonai*. The formula is interpreted as “thus says the Lord”. By the formula, the prophet Isaiah underscores God's intention to deal with a problem of socio-political significance. And He presents the resolution of the quagmire in a tripartite pattern of verses 1-2, 3-7 and 8²⁷. Verses 1-2 demand justice and righteousness from the people. Following on the demands, verses 3-7 condemn every form of class and racial distinctions and verse 8 describes a divine guarantee of what is desired²⁸.

The interpretation of Isa 56:1-8 which follow shall essentially be structured according to this tripartite division.

Verses 1-2: practice justice and righteousness

Two verbs in verses 1-2 showcase the essential elements for averting the occurrence of agitations or for their proper management. They are “observe” and “do”. These verbs are respectively represented in Hebrew as *shāmar* and ‘*āsār*. And they frequently address human beings and collectively address the people of Israel. *Shāmar* and ‘*āsār* demand physical deeds from those they refer to, which may include adopting and actualizing ethical dispositions which build humanity and society or are helpful to it²⁹.

Shāmar and ‘*āsār* are used in the imperative in Isa 56:1-2 to give a command to the

²⁷ Analysing linguistic information given in Isa 56:1-8, Curtis Fitzgerald proved the passage as a delimited unit (Curtis Fitzgerald, *A Rhetorical Analysis of Isaiah 56-66*, [Phd Thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 2003],)100-104.

²⁸Childs, *Isaia*, 494.

²⁹ F. García López “*אָסַר*”, in G. Johannes Botterweck – Helmer Ringgren – Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament XV*, (Grand Rapids – Cambridge, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 284-286.288.

people of Israel to perform two tangible ethical deeds of relevance³⁰. The deeds are observing justice and doing righteousness. The virtues of these deeds, here given a hendiadystic interpretation, create the harmonious rapport that shades off distinctions of any sort between people. The deeds had the power to resolve the crises of tribalism and class distinctions within the post-exilic community of the 6th century BCE. The observance of justice and doing of righteousness were ordered because deliverance was near and divine justice was about to be revealed. The Old Testament lists those primarily responsible for the dispensation of justice as specifically priests (Exod 28:15-30), judges (Exod 21:6) and individuals like Moses (Num 25:1-5), Joshua (Josh 20:6; cfr. Num 27:21), kings like Solomon (1 Kgs 3:11.28; 1 Kgs 7:7) and judges like Deborah (Judg 4:5). The listed figures and personality imply that justice often refers to an official function of Israel's leaders within their society. So, prophets condemn them for any breach of justice (Isa 1:17.21; 5:7; 10:2; 59:8-9; Hab 1:4). However, it is not only leaders that God commands, in our text, to perform justice, but also the people. The people are equally exhorted to constantly pursue and practice justice and engage in righteous action and to eschew evil³¹. The source of this prophetic word is in Isa 1:27 which teaches that Zion shall be redeemed by justice and those who repent by righteousness. So, full and complete redemption is contingent upon the display and actualization of justice and righteousness within Zion. And verse 2a, citing Psalm 1:1-2, speaks of the reward for keeping this conduct³². The simple addition to these twin virtues is abstaining from profaning the Sabbath (v. 2), a stipulation emphasized twice more in the following verses³³ of Isa 56:1-8. The reason is Sabbath observance was an important aspect of Nehemiah's campaign to create a strong ethnic consciousness in the province of Yehud in the mid-fifth century BCE (Neh 10:1-40[9:38-10:39])³⁴. Leading lives by these virtues and religious demands means to be happy.

From the foregone, the text of Isa 56:1-8 suggests that giving everyone his due in all facets of life is justice and doing it with the right intention is righteousness. And these should be the basic principles of determining who a human being is, and of belonging to any race and/or class. Common sense even shows that upholding justice in righteousness is essential in averting dissensions, and also of amicably and constructively dealing with any impasse. Therefore, verses 1-2 of Isa 56:1-6 address not just Nigerian ethnic agitators

³⁰ H. Ringgern, "πῶς", in G. Johannes Botterweck - Helmer Ringgren - Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament XI*, (Grand Rapids - Cambridge, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 394.

³¹ G. I. Emmerson, *Isaiah 56-66*, (London - New York: T&T Clark, 1996), 15.

³² Oswalt, J. N., *The Book of Isaiah. Chapters 40-66. The New Interpreter's Bible VI*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 485.

³³ Emmerson, *Isaiah 56-66*, 15.

³⁴ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 135.

to go about their quest in justice and right intention, their principles and ideology of action should be shaped by these virtues. Agitators should not breed and perpetuate the injustice they fight against. Every single direction of their actions should be guided by the principles of justice and righteousness. This will give value to the cause they pursue and gun for; and history will judge them veritable fighters for a cause that encourages growth and national development.

On the part of the nation's leadership, they should be aware that ethnic agitations in recent times in Nigeria have led to charismatic figures like Nnamdi Kanu and Sunday Igboho in the style of Mohandas Gandhi³⁵, Cesar Chavez³⁶, and Martin Luther King, Jr.³⁷. These figures have achieved power because their unique personalities captured the imagination of a wider audience and they articulate their audience's concerns, ideas, or grievances³⁸. Where Nigeria's leadership process is not consistently just in the right direction, they will worsen existing conflicts. This is not good for national growth and developments. Nigeria's leadership must bear it in mind that these ethnonational minorities are already existing in Nigeria and will surely make claims that should be considered and generally incorporated in how Nigeria is governed. Upholding this is respecting their social rights³⁹. This implies every form of tribal dominance through ethnocentrism must be discouraged. The tendency of a tribe and/or class of people to interpret themselves as the center and essence of Nigeria's social political existence and orientation and then championed by a leadership from that class, fuels agitations which militate against the rating of all other groups according to the norms, values, and characteristics of the ethnocentric group. Such drives do not promote nationalism, growth and development, but tribal and racial discriminations⁴⁰. Against this backdrop, the injunctions and exhortations of verses 3-7 carry a heavy weight which deserve serious mention and taking note of.

Verses 4-7: condemnation of tribal and class distinctions

Verses 1-2 have laid down the ethical principles of observing justice and doing righteousness as the fundamental criterion for judging who a human being is: not class, race or tribe. Little wonder in verses 4-7, the prophet kicks against any form of discrimination on the bases of class and tribe. He contends that as long as the foreigner and eunuchs observe justice, do righteousness and keep the Sabbath, they will be counted

³⁵ Krishan Kumar, "Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi", *Prospects* 23(3/4) (1993), 507-517.

³⁶ Ronald A. Wells, "Cesar Chavez's Protestant Allies: The California Migrant Ministry and the Farm Workers", *Journal of Presbyterian History* (2009), 1-12.

³⁷ Richard Besel, "Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream' and the Politics of Cultural Memory: An Apostil", *ANQ* (2010), 2-9.

³⁸ Kourvetaris, "Ethnonational Minorities", 468.

³⁹ Kourvetaris, "Ethnonational Minorities", 467.

⁴⁰ Anju Mary Paul, "Ethnocentrism" in Richard T. Schaefer, ed., *Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity and Society*, (Los Angeles, London, Singapore, Sage Publications, 2008), 465-467.

among God's servants⁴¹. Consequently, foreigners who think they do not belong to the people of God and eunuchs who describe themselves as having no importance can find solace in the service of God by joining themselves to God through keeping His Sabbaths, choosing to lead life in His delight, and laying hold of His covenant. The foreigner and eunuch who walk their lives by these ethical and religious principles have behaviours rooted in a shared love relationship with God. Their parentage or their bodily deformity or social class has nothing to do with their acceptability.⁴²

Consequently, verses 4-7 highlight that for no parochial reason should foreigners and eunuchs be rejected and denied normal national life as residents of Israel nor refused participation in any official function of the land. Their humanity should not be prejudicially judged and debased, as long as they live according to established provisions of the land. These verses present basic ethical principles of equality and equity. They encourage meritocracy and best practice. Where an individual is engaged with and allowed self-expression on the basis of his worth as a person without recourse to class and race, the best hands and minds are empowered to develop Nigeria for sustained rapid growth. By implication, Nigerian Ethnic agitators must pursue the identification and entrenchment of principles that define Nigeria as a nation and which can help her grow. They should be weary of tendencies that will side-track them from the trajectory to realize the principles of justice and right intention. They must not themselves be discriminatory, unjust and evil intentioned against members of differing ethnic groups. Such socio-psychological disposition will water down the essence of their existence and actions. And it has been known to engender violence of first magnitude which heighten insecurity and destabilise a nation. This too can be productive when Nigeria entrenches and promotes true federalism⁴³.

Conclusion

This paper takes it for granted that among the members of the ethnic agitations in Nigeria are Christians who hallow the Bible. These Christians believe that the socio-political situation they encounter today are reflections of the experiences of yestermillenia. God's dealing with the problems of those millennia are veritable for handling contemporary problem. This is because human beings have essentially remained the same and have faced equal problems.

Taking Isa 56:1-8 which reflects the post exilic period marked by ethnic tensions, class

⁴¹Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 456.

⁴²Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 458.

⁴³Zaccheaeus Adangor, "Separatist Agitations and the Search for Political Stability in Nigeria", *Donnish Journals of Law and Conflict Resolution* 3(1) (August 2017), 12-15.

distinctions and agitations, this paper recommends that justice and righteousness should be the defining principles on which contemporary Nigerian agitators pursue their goals. This will enable them to avoid every form of discriminations on the basis of tribe and class. Where they perpetuate the vices they fight against, they work against national development and growth.

This paper assumes that the agitators are campaigning against every form of injustice which does not encourage national growth and human capital development. The bottom line of the argument of this paper is that Agitators and government must thrust themselves within the noble principles of ethical value which promote human dignity and worth. They should do it with the ethical principles of Isa 56:1-8.

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