

DOING THEOLOGY AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES IN THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTIONS AS A WAY OF SUSTAINING THEOLOGY IN THE CHANGING ECONOMY

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Abstract

In recent times, there has been a growing concern and emphasis on Africa's economic development failure. This has necessitated the inclusion of a broad spectrum of intellectual disciplines and scholars of different traditions to help in articulating solution to Africa's economic and development challenges. In this regard, various governments and development policy makers had sought solutions from scientific, economic and political dimensions, with religion playing a very minimal role particularly the church and its theology. Adopting a qualitative research methodology, this paper, argues that the Church using its theological resources in the context of theology and development, and acting as a synergy could be a significant contributor in solving Africa's economic and development problems. This, indeed, could lead to realizing the missio-dei which is the rasion d'être of the church.

Introduction

In 1978, Edem Kodjo, the then Secretary General of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), made what could be regarded as a prophetic utterance when he told a group of African leaders that "Africa is dying. If things continue as they are, only eight or nine of the present countries will survive the next few years. All other things being equal, absolute poverty, instead of declining, is likely to gain ground. It is clear that economy of our continent is lying in ruins. Our ancient continent is on the brink of disaster." ¹The present beleaguered development state of many African countries is just exactly what Edem Kodjo described many decades ago.

Adopting a qualitative research methodology, this paper, seeks to address the problem of non inclusion of Christianity and her theology in helping to address Africa's development challenges. A lot of efforts had been made and discussions have been going on over the years about finding solutions to Africa's development challenges. However, much of these discussions had been dominated and influenced by scientific, economic and political

¹ Deryke Belshaw, Robert Calderisi and Chris Sugden (eds). 2001. *Faith in Development. Partnership between the World Bank and the Churches of Africa*. United Kingdom: Co publication of the World Bank and Regnum Books International.pg.31

disciplines. It is unfortunate that various governments, development agencies and policy makers had failed to recognize the influence of Christianity in this regard. Christianity, on the other hand, had also failed to make herself relevant by bringing her theological resources to bear on Africa's development in her *mission Dei*.

It has become evident that government, scientific and political bodies alone, cannot solve the problems of Africa's development and economic challenges, hence the need for the church to partner with government in providing solution to Africa's development and economic challenges. This partnership was also recognized by Patricia Mische who argues that:

Science and technology alone cannot resolve ecological threats (and developmental challenges). Nor can governments or the laws they promulgate ... Sustaining the integrity of creation thus requires not only the external laws governments enact to deal with belligerent behaviour, but also inner governance, laws internalised in our hearts and minds and the will to live by them... Church praxis has special relevance for the development of inner governance and a culture of ecological responsibility. Religions carry the archetypes, the symbols, meanings, values and moral codes around which people coalesce and define themselves, their sense of the sacred, and their relationship with each other and the natural world.²

The objective of this paper is to remind the church to use her theological resources in partnering with governments and other agencies in contributing to solving African's developmental challenges by "doing theology instead of thinking theology". For the church to effectively do this, there is therefore the need to introduce theology and development studies in theological Institutions.

This call is apt and timely since Christians constitute a large segment of African society-a society adjudged to be "notoriously religious."³ For the African, every facet of life was associated or defined in religious terms.⁴ Therefore getting the church in Africa to be involved in the search for solution to Africa's economic and development challenges would be of immense benefit to Africa.

² Conradie, Ernst. 2008. The church and Climate change. South Africa. Cluster Publications. p.64

³ Mbiti, John. 1980. African Religion and Philosophy. Ibadan: Heinemann.p.108-109

⁴ Cited in Ilesanmi, Simeon. 1997. Religious Pluralism and the Nigerian State. Athens: Center for International Studies, Ohio University .p.xx

The Importance Of Involving Theology

On the importance of the participation of the church mentioned above, Badiako, proclaims that “the Christian churches in Africa should be recognized as institutions with genuine commitment to Africa’s economic and development concerns, coupled with a deep understanding of African problems with African perspectives, which arises out of their Christian conviction”⁵ Bediako was arguing for the involvement of Christian theology in Africa’s development agenda. Bediako’s position is a criticism of the long years of neglect and exclusion of theological involvement in Africa’s economic and development discourse on the erroneous, misleading, simple and flimsy excuse that scientific investigation (and not religious) is the only authentic and acceptable method of inquiry into the multifarious problems facing humanity.

Those who have been championing the inclusion of theological involvement in Africa’s economic and development are convinced because of Christianity’s antecedents in national development of many nations. Historically, the importance of religion in the transformation of states leading to economic developments and social revolutions had been recognized as part of the Christian mission. For example, studies in English history, particularly the consequence of the Protestant and Puritan revolutions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, clearly confirm the significant role Christianity played in contributing to the socio-political development of England during that period and subsequently⁶.

Furthermore, during the struggle for the soul of Africa, it was assumed that colonial and imperial enterprises remain unfulfilled or incomplete without religious accompaniment. This fact is hardly contestable judging from the leading role which the church and other religious organizations played in the age of the Enlightenment from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries. In fact, as records show, explorers, priests, administrators, statesmen and soldiers served their respective empires for “God, gold and glory”.⁷

The above is very true of many African states including the Nigerian society judging from the positive contributions of the early Christian missionaries who without gainsaying contributed to the socio-economic and political

⁵ Bediako, Kwame . 1995. *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a non-Western Religion* MaryKnoll: Orbis

⁶ Gustav, H.K. Deveneaux. 2003. Christianity and national Development in West Africa: Dilemmas and Possibilities in James L Cox and Gerrieter Haar (eds) *Uniquely African? African Christian Identity from Cultural and Historical Perspectives. Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press, inc. pg.157*

⁷ Gustav, H.K. Deveneaux. 2003. Christianity and national Development in West Africa: Dilemmas and Possibilities in James L Cox and Gerrieter Haar (eds) *Uniquely African? African Christian Identity from Cultural and Historical Perspectives. pg.157*

development of many African states. The early Christian missionary development activities, reflects the teachings of the bible regarding the world and Christian concern for and involvement in societal issues. Biblical scholars and theologians interested in development issues are unanimous, that Christian theology rooted in the insights of the Bible is a great resource for addressing societal problems including socio-economic and other development concerns. The Christian understanding from theological stand point is that the Church is called and sent by God to be engaged in socio-economic, political and cultural issues in our society. Therefore, a holistic understanding of church's involvement in social responsibility reaffirms the notion that God is not only concerned with the supernatural, but is active to humanize the world, and that his power is active in the secular life of humankind.⁸ The extent to which the Church in Nigeria understands this mandate will undoubtedly redirect her involvement and determine her relevance in socio-political and economic challenges of our Nigerian society.

Two important lessons are to be learnt from the above historical references. 1. The synthesis of the values of theological resources, in addition to other interdisciplinary approaches, is a great asset waiting to be harnessed by the government in pursuit of development. 2. The recognition of the need for a new theological paradigm of development for the church in Africa and particularly the Church in Nigeria. The realization and implementation of the above will critically oblige the church in Africa and Nigeria in particular, to radically challenge those structures of the African societies which negatively affect the lives of the people-the marginalized in the society.

In this regard, the new theological paradigm of development which this paper is proposing for the churches in Africa especially the Church in Nigeria , must aim at societal transformation especially in the areas of socio-economic and political development. This point has been noted by Madu⁹, who posits that, if the church in Africa does not engage or stand side by side with people in sharing their joys, sorrows, anxieties and daily burdens, would lose her relevance. The areas of socio-economic and political concerns are of utmost importance because many of the challenges to effective nation-building have their roots in socio-economic and political structures of many societies

⁸ Tsele, Molefe. "The role of the Christian Faith in development" in Belshaw D, Calderisi R and Sugden C, Faith in Development" Partnership between the World Bank and the Churches of Africa (Oxford:Regnum,2001) P.214

⁹ Madu, Emeka, J. 2004. Honest to African Cultural Heritage. Onitsha: Coskan Associates.pp117

including the Nigerian society.¹⁰ People are marginalized and pauperized precisely because the socio-economic and political structures are designed that way.

Holistic Engagement of Theology in Economic Development in Human Society

A critical reflection on the near absence of practical theological engagement by churches in Nigeria makes it even more expedient for the churches to re-appraise the dimension of its involvement in the humanization process of the African society in general and Nigerian society in particular. The consequence of this reflection is an expected praxis which is to challenge our theological discourse to cease from only concentrating on “the ambulance ministry” with the poor, sick and the troubled, while ignoring the socio-economic and political causes of poverty that make people sick and troubled.¹¹ One’s argument here in this paper, is that theology has to engage itself in the political, economic, social and developmental transformation of the people, in transforming those ugly societal structures which breed humiliation, agony and death for a large section of the African societies”.¹² The above concern was vividly corroborated by Nyerere when he warns that:

“Unless we participate actively in the rebellion against those social structures and economic organizations which condemn men to poverty, humiliation and degradation, then the church will become irrelevant to men and the Christian religion will degenerate into a set of superstitions accepted by the fearful”¹³.

We have to admit that the church, especially in Africa, had not engaged theologically enough on issues of socio-economic and political concern. This made her critics to see her as a religion that does not concern herself with worldly affairs. This position was not only held by critics alone, some Christian fundamentalists believed and justified this stance by their wrong application of hermeneutics to some biblical texts such as John 17:16 “*They are not of the world, even as I am not of it*”. The erroneous hermeneutical application and interpretation given to this text by such people, in addition to the way they try to live it out in their interaction with the world, had encouraged them to distance themselves from any worldly involvement they perceived to be

¹⁰ Buffel, O.A. 2007. *Journeying with the Poor as they struggle for survival and Freedom: Pastoral Work Amongst the Poor*. Presentation at a PhD seminar at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, School of Religion and Theology. pp.1

¹¹ Pattison, S. 1988. *A Critique of Pastoral Care*. London: SCM Press Ltd. pp.83

¹² Madu, Emeka, J. 2004. *Honest to African Cultural Heritage*. Onitsha: Coskan Associates. pp117

¹³ Madu, Emeka, J. 2004. *Honest to African Cultural Heritage*. Onitsha: Coskan Associates. pp117

incongruous with this text. The suggestion for this proposal is not merely to respond to these accusations and criticisms in order to erase the impression already created; rather it is to stimulate a contextualized theological approach for engaging in societal issues especially the “double earth crisis” of environment and development across the globe in general and Africa in particular. The “double earth crisis” has some relationship with economic challenges of our time.

Doing Theology and thinking Theology

The earlier mentioned prevailing *cacophonous* theologies on socio-political and economic involvement of the church in society are incongruous, “uncontextual” and not corresponding with the new trends in theological discourse by scholars of theology and development studies. In this regard, the church has to be reminded of the need to engage in theology contextually. Effective contextualization would produce theologians who according to Buffel¹⁴ would engage in “doing theology instead of thinking theology”. Thinking theology makes theology look so abstract and makes people’s lived experience unreal. It detaches theologians and Christians from the harsh realities of existence, sometimes making our faith a superficial one. On the other hand, doing theology empathizes it and translates those seemingly unreal experiences to appear real. In fact, it is a translation of theological theories into practical realities of existence.

The emphasis being placed on the relevance of “contextualization”-an integral feature of theology and development studies, is underpinned by the understanding that “any theology that ignores context is worthless and not worth pursuing”.¹⁵ Arguing on the importance of “contextualization” in theology and by engaging in theology and development exercise, de Gruchy asserts that “when people forget context and crisis, they turn abstract, detached, ideological, remote and unhelpful. However, when they remember context and crisis, they show their identification with the people who are subjects and objects of Christian ministry”.¹⁶ “Doing theology” that engenders praxis has therefore become critically important for the Church in Nigeria to respond in pragmatic terms to the socio-political and economic challenges plaguing the continent at large and Nigerian nation in particular. The realization of the above noble aims, in the opinion of this paper, will make the

¹⁴ Bufel.O. A . *Journeying with the Poor as they struggle for survival and Freedom: Pastoral Work amongst the poor*. A PhD seminar presentation at the University of KwaZulu – Natal. November 2007.

¹⁵ Bonion M.2004. Latin America in An introduction to third World Theologies, by Parrat J.(ed) Cambridge University Press.pg.131

¹⁶ De Gruchy J. 1986. Theology and Ministry in context ad crisis: A South African Perspactive. London. Collins Publications. Pg. 36

Church in Nigeria to reflect the ideals of a responsive, caring and prophetic church that she ought to be.

The Church in Nigeria and total engagement with Economic and developmental issues

Though the church has made some contributions, there are indications that it has not made impressive effort to engage contextually in the socio-economic and development issues in the country. From economic and development perspectives, the church's engagement areas has remained largely minimal. This is because issues of low economic growth, unemployment, poverty and environment which are at the moment characteristically challenging the Nigerian nation, still remain some of the challenges testing the relevance of the Church in Nigeria. One can therefore conclude that the Church in Nigeria has not been ferocious enough in prophetically and contextually responding to issues of internal economic policies which favour the rich and pauperize the majority of our citizens with its resultant entrenchment and extension of inequality and class divides. Other *grey areas* as far as church's economic and developmental involvement is concerned include issues of governance, human rights, injustice and corruption prevalent in the Nigerian polity. The implications of the above scenario, calls for a "doubling of efforts" by the church, if she will be able to meet the prevailing challenges of socio-economic and political realities in the country.

It is therefore a fact that the church in Nigeria, is not always properly equipped for this task of "contextualization" in order to significantly contribute to the developmental and economic transformation of Nigeria. This "ill-equipped" posture also reflects the structural and curricular inadequacies prevalent in our theological education system. This "ill-equipped posture" is a part of the consequences of an age long theological system inherited from Colonial Masters. This colonial theological education system was, and is still tied to an inflexible view on academic standards that are incognizant of the social realities out there in the Nigerian society the church is expected to impact positively has some implications.

First, it is a recognition of the fact that the dynamics and challenges of the 21st century Nigerian society has placed additional demands and even pressures on the ordained ministry. The 21st century Clergy now faces a lot of expectations from the public more than before when the clergy was looked upon only as a bridge between God and the people. Nowadays, the general public expectations have significantly shifted from seeing the clergy as a

divine connector between the people and God to include other additional expectations that are not only spiritual in nature but socio-economic as well.

Second, in this era of globalization in all its various dimensions and consequences, the Clergy are now more than ever before expected to minister to a highly digitalized, secularized and pluralized world.

Thirdly, because Christianity has been accused of its dangerous anthropocentric stance on nature,¹⁷ (economy being dependent on nature), the role of theology and development studies in this perspective has become imperative. This is so as theology and development is expected to systematically articulate the crisis, the causes, the effects (present and potential) and provide resources for the church to approach these economic challenges in creative and helpful ways.

The truth is that the present structure of our theological education curricular is not enough to prepare theological students to live up to the public expectations of additional economic developmental demands by the church. The important thing however, is that, the three major implications highlighted above had facilitated a gradual process of awareness and the consequent removal of the “veil of ignorance” on the part of the church to engage the society in a more contextual manner in addition to its already familiar spiritual engagement. The “veil of ignorance” now gradually being removed, has led to a new consciousness and discovery-a recognition that the “traditional” theological pedagogy for the training of the Clergy in the Church in Nigeria, in this 21st century, is no longer sufficient to provide enough focus on economic development concerns. For a more effective contextual engagement on the 21st century Nigerian society, the Church in Nigeria, needs as a matter of necessity to articulate a well researched theological curriculum designed to meet the socio-economic and developmental aspirations as well as the spiritual needs of the generality of the Nigerian population. I make bold to state here that theology and development studies is an “untapped theological resource” waiting to be harnessed by the church as a theological tool to fulfil its missiological mandate, which is its *raison d’être*. I know the “uninformed” will be disturbed trying to comprehend what theology has got to do with economic and development issues. This now leads us to deeper insights of theology and development studies.

What has Theology got to do with Development? *My first experience of engaging in Theology and Development concerns*

¹⁷ Harris, F. *Global Environmental Issues* England: John Wiley and sons, Ltd 2004 p.301

It all started in 2003. I was admitted to do a B.Th degree in Theology and Development studies in the School of Religion and Theology of the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. I found the discussions in Theology and Development classes fascinating because they were very engaging and practical. They deal with practical life situations and socio-economic experiences people are going through in their everyday life. Topics relating to poverty, environment, economic justice, Assets based community development, people-power and faith, etc were taught in a more practical and engaging way. It was during the BTh programme that my interest in environmental issues was aroused and I became more enthused to the extent that I went to the Centre for Environment and Development Studies of the same University to register for a master's degree programme in environment and development studies. At first, some of the students who came from purely environmental background, were surprised to see somebody with theological background in their midst as a student of environment and development. To them it appeared absurd, strange and nonsensical. Their question was "what has theology got to do with development" They defined development purely from economic point of view.

What they did not understand is that the concept of development is multi dimensional and could be pursued from interdisciplinary angles. It is this interdisciplinary approach that gave it some theological adumbrations. Thus from theological perspective, "Development is a process by which people gain greater control over themselves, their environment and their future, in order to realize the full potential of life that God had made possible"¹⁸ Reading John 10: 10 "...I came that they may have life in abundance" with a theological-development lens, brings out the adumbrations of development from the above quotation.

I tried to explain to them that theology and development is a reflection on the reasons for Christian involvement in development, the method of involvement and the goal of involvement from a Christian biblical perspective¹⁹ I used my knowledge of the history of Theology and Development to convince them that it originated and was popularised by Latin American Theologians. How did it begin? Their countries were nominally Christianized and they were politically independent, but they were poor. Measured by per capita GNP, they are not as poor as many countries in South Asia or Africa,

¹⁸ Ronald, J. Sider. (ed) 1981. *Evangelicals and Development. Toward a Theology of Social Change.* Australia: The Paternoster Press. pp.19

¹⁹ Ronald, J. Sider. (ed) 1981. *Evangelicals and Development. Toward a Theology of Social Change.* Australia: The Paternoster Press. pp.19

but by Western standard they are poor. Large numbers of the population live in appalling conditions. It is in this context that a number of liberation theologians began to show concern about such levels of poverty and injustice and began to seek answers to their problems. They believed that gradual change was not the answer. They claimed to find more adequate explanation for what they saw as the economic colonization of their countries in the Marxist categories of the division of society into oppressor and oppressed groups. Here, Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* provide insightful readings. For them, development cannot be achieved through economic growth because it is the economic system itself that is responsible for their situation. What the people needed to attain this goal of self control of their own destiny to fulfil their God-given potential, this is the *raison d'être* for development, is the liberation from the bondage of economic structures which prevent this. According to them, new structures are needed, both within the country and internationally, because the oppressor group maintain their position by alliance with the international structures of injustice (e.g. terms of trade, multinational companies, capitalism).²⁰ Liberation theology and by extension Theology and Development was born into the above descriptive context to stimulate the church to engage in a praxis on fundamental issues of being fully human.

It is worthy of note to observe that many African countries shared similar contexts with the Latin Americans though not exactly the same, but shares certain commonalities. For example, South Africa, like other African countries had chequered political and economic history. During the apartheid regime that was dismantled more than two decades ago, majority of the blacks were subjugated and oppressed as second class citizens in their own country. It is disheartening to note the ignoble role the Apartheid regime played in using what is termed "state theology" to justify its oppressive regime of racism, capitalism, totalitarianism and injustice by reducing the blacks to passive agents of their destiny. The "state theology" misuses theological concepts and biblical texts for its own political purposes. As a response to "state theology", there arose a need to articulate a theology of liberation and by extension a theology of development of some sort to counter the erroneous teaching of "state theology".

²⁰ Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden.2003. *Theology of Development: A Guide to the Debate* in James L Cox and Gerrieter Haar (eds) *Uniquely African? African Christian Identity from Cultural and Historical Perspectives*.pg.23

Having traced the history of the origin of theology and development in addition to my other theological and biblical contributions during lectures on courses like, environmental ethics, environmental philosophy, environmental history, urban environmental management and the like, my course mates in the Centre for Environment and Development were not in any way left in doubt as to whether there exists some sort of commonalities between theology and development. It was then that they discovered to their excitement the theology and development nexus-a commonality they never imagined existed. Having now discovered that a Theology and development study especially with environmental consideration was intricately linked, I now decided to do a PhD research on theology and environment in a Nigerian context, focusing on the church and poverty issues.

From this personal narrative, we could deduce the fact that there is a strong relationship between theology, environment and development. The relevance of theology and development studies by theological students is appreciated by the recognition that it will facilitate the church's transition from the existing "traditional" theological pedagogy to a new missional model that would reflect the shape of the 21st century Nigerian society.

Development gap in theological discourse in the Church in Nigeria

Furthermore, theology and development studies as a specialized area of study cuts across the three known "traditional" disciplines in theology viz-Practical theology, Christian Ethics and Missiology. Although these three known "traditional" disciplines of theology show concern about societal issues, theoretically they appear to be more prescriptive than descriptive in context. Whilst it appears that religious concerns and convictions emanating from these "traditional theological inquires" are clear, it is admittedly true that the church sometimes have an ambiguous understanding of what its social responsibility from these "traditional" perspectives entail. This ambiguity is premised on the fact that theological students are not theologically equipped to engage contextually in ministry engagements. "Traditional" theological study apparently does not place enough emphasis on church's involvement in development issues in general, and this could explain the reason why secularism seems to be pushing hard against religion (including Christianity) in many societies, thus making Christianity appear far removed in associating and solving societal issues in socio-economic and political realm.

Drawing from the insights of these "traditional" theological disciplines, theology and development study attempts to make Christian faith more real and practical in the lived experiences of Christians by engaging in societal

issues in a more analytical paradigm. In other words, theology and development studies aims at the interface of faith, social analysis, theological reflection and action, and emphasises that these elements must correlate in a meaningful way to engender the engagement of the church in social issues. The Genesis creation narratives are open and glaring illustrations of this fact. Whereas theology traditionally deals with societal issues from the stand point of the dictates of dogmatic prescriptions about what faith communities “ought to be doing”, theology and development not only deals with what ought to be done, but goes further to provide theological resources to enable the church achieve its religious as well as its social responsibilities-(thereby providing how it will be done). Because of its “action-oriented” nature, theology and development is concerned with translating theory into action, thus making theology less rhetoric and more practical as it is able to respond to the social realities of the society in which it exists. In this regard the main thrust of theology and development is therefore to understand and systematically articulate social realities people are grappling with, its causes, its effects on society (including intergenerational context) and provide biblical and theological resources for the church and society to approach the problems in more creative and helpful ways. This brings to the fore, the realistic and practical involvement of God in the universe he beautifully created and loved. The Theology of doing not Theology of thinking is at the heart of God.

Students of theology and development studies would find the programme more fascinating because of its practical approach to societal issues. Unlike the “traditional” theological study, theology and development, for example engages in a spectra of societal issues which ab nitio are thought to have belonged in the public domain and considered secular, and therefore would usually be left in the secular arena for the secular academic disciplines. Students involved in theology and development studies are exposed to a wide range of socio-economic, political and cultural issues with the understanding that religion and or theology is ideally expected to play an inspirational role of pushing back “death-dealing systems” rooted in the socio-economic, political or cultural structures and provide both the society and individual member with an alternative sets of values and ethical priorities. From the above discussions, Theology and Development Studies is expected to provide the antidote to the “anti systemic force” inherent in the global governance of the 21st century in many forms. Because of the broad based context in which theology and development operates,(somewhat interdisciplinary), it provides students with the knowledge and the necessary skills to engage with social problems. Consequent upon engaging in the programme, theology and

development students are expected to impact positively on their immediate environment upon graduation.

The study of theology and development will provide those who have given themselves to the ordained ministry the wherewithal to meet the challenges of the socio-economic and developmental dynamics of the 21st century society. Those who are already ordained would be encouraged to undergo training in other disciplines than theology. The implementation of the above will make the church versatile and engender a ministry that transcends only ecclesiastical consideration. It will no doubt; make the church's prophetic voice to be heard in less *cacophonous* and unmistakable terms as it aspires to address the socio-economic challenges plaguing the society in which it exists from a biblical and theological perspective.

Conclusion

Having traced the origin of theology and development studies and its benefits to the church in contributing to the solution of the 21st development challenges in the Nigerian society, the paper hereby proposes the need to include it in the curriculum of theological institutions owned by the Anglican Church in Nigeria. It is my opinion, and I am convinced, that if the Church in Nigeria would expend a little less effort towards engaging in the socio-economic and political challenges of our society (through theology and development) it would not only have fulfilled the *missio-Dei* which is its *raison d'être*, it would also have produced committed Christians who would forever remain grateful to God for the ministry of the church.

The Church in Nigeria should strengthen its social development arm by way of capacity building and human resource development, particularly among the clergy. The option for clergy development is because the capability of the church to speak and act from an informed and authoritative position on development issues will be hugely undermined if the clergy have limitation in these development areas. This view does not in any way undermine lay participation. Lay participation could be encouraged as partners in the mission of the church. The above position derives from my engagement in theology and development expertise. This paper in addition to the earlier proposal of theology and development in the curriculum of all the theological institutions owned by the Church in Nigeria, also suggests the establishment of a *social development action committee* comprising of both clergy and lay experts from different disciplines to articulate a strategic development plan. There is a strong optimism that if this is implemented, many of the development challenges confronting both the church and the society would

have been half solved because the church has resource persons within its fold even more than it imagines. These resource persons no doubt, would be more than willing to assist the church fulfil the *mission-Dei* .

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