

THE MORAL DETERMINANTS OF NIGERIA'S NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE LIGHT OF ISA 1:16-17

George Odafe, PhD
Good Shepherd Major Seminary
Buwaya, Kaduna, Kaduna State-Nigeria.
george.odafe@gmail.com
DOI:[10.13140/RG.2.2.11572.94089](https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.11572.94089)

Abstract

If national development presupposes the ability of a nation to harness its human and natural resources for growth and advancement to its full potential, then Nigeria is a long way off. Her human capital development and socio-economic growth have been abysmally poor in contemporary experiences, caused by her retrogression in those fronts. Nigeria has retrogressed because her leaders and citizenry have largely become preoccupied with corruption which eulogises cosmetic solutions to her problem rather than time honoured and enduring ones. So, the basic indices for sustainable national socio-economic growth are currently to a great extent neglected. And those that were in place, have been through decades of neglect, reduced to the shadows of their potentialities with no possible hope of revampisation. This article contends that one area that has contributed to creating this ugly situation is the fall in moral rectitude in Nigeria. Using discourse analysis, it argues that the content of Isa 1:16-17 offers the attitudinal dispositions Nigerians need to adopt in order to develop the nation and make her grow.

Keyterms: *Tôrah*, self-renewal, justice, corruption, moral rectitude, attitudinal disposition.

Preamble: The Nigerian Paradox

In 2004 and 2005, Nigeria was respectively voted the most religious nation in the world. Indeed, a first-time visitor to Nigeria will immediately notice and feel the explicit display of religious houses, symbols and their activities. This visitor will also – after a few days – expeditiously notice that the everyday Nigerian language and expressions are laden with religious sentimentalities. Paradoxically, in those same years, Nigeria was consecutively voted among the most corrupt nations in the world, because corruption had become both pervasive and significant in the nation. And it goes back years before 2005. In fact, Mohammed Salisu observed that for five consecutive years before 2000, Nigeria had been ranked by Transparency International as the world's most

corrupt nation. This ranking was based on the degree to which Nigerian public officials and politicians were involved in accepting bribes, taking illicit payments in public procurement and embezzling public funds (Salisu 8).

Nigeria's corruption is wholesomely affecting and eating deep into every fabric and facet of the nation's life. If her population is 200 million, it may not be an exaggeration to avow that a large percentage of the figure are either corrupt or have easy tendency to it. No sector or portion is free from its lethal hold. It has astronomically deadened the consciences of a few and the will-power of many in the nation. Nowadays, not to be corrupt, especially with regards to the management of public offices, is to be averagely depicted as being "unwise". So, when a public office holder refuses to be corrupt in the Nigerian style, he is "deified". It seems as if the only none corrupt Nigerian, is the one who has not had the opportunity to choose between being and not being so. No wonder, pace observes that "Nigerians view their country as one of the world's most corrupt and struggle daily to cope with the effects" (338). For this reason, those Nigerians who stand out against corruption are not often given the opportunity to patriotically serve the nation. Okolo and Akpokighe, underscore how Nigerians supposedly tolerate it in these words:

Nigeria must be one of the very few countries in the world where a man's source of wealth is of no concern to his neighbour, the public or the government. Wealthy people who are known to be corrupt are regularly courted and honoured by communities, religious bodies, social clubs and other private organizations. This implies that people who benefit from the largesse of these corrupt people rarely ask questions (35).

But Okolo and Akpokighe (35-36), suggest that among the many reasons why corruption is prevalent in Nigeria is the non-conformity to religious tenets and one of the solutions they propose for it is the mobilization of the pulpit as a knowledge and faith-based platform for reaching the souls of Nigerians and in directing them towards nation-building. Their reason for this proposal is Nigerians listen to their spiritual leaders, much more than they do politicians and policy makers.

Interestingly, the basis of the spiritual leaders' mobilization efforts for educating and entrenching the moral basis for national development is the Bible. Tens of millions of Nigerian Christians believe God's word endures forever, Isa 40:8. They assert that since no one is capable of annulling the word of God, Isa 14:27, it never goes back to Him without fulfilling its purpose on earth Isa 55 (M. A. SWEENEY, *Isaiah 1-39*, 60). Consequently, this article intends to use God's word in

Isa 1:16-17 to call Nigerians to evolve the attitudinal change which will transit them from being prone to corruption to a moral rectitude that works for good. A change presupposed by every Nigerian's self-re-evaluation to a virtuous disposition. Matthew T. Page decrying the consequences of corruption on Nigeria was worried that only few analytical tools exist for examining the full range and complexity of corruption in Africa's largest economy and most populous country (Page 338). This article proposes to present Isa 1:16-17 as one of the tools to suggest measures for the change which enable productive paths to national growth and development. Employing discourse analysis, this paper will first of all exegetically establish and analyse the stylistics and form of the chosen biblical portion. Thereafter, the fruits of the exegetical foundation laying shall be analytically deployed to serve as bedrocks for change.

The Literary Context, Delimitation and Division of Isa 1:16-17

Literary context and delimitation signify the literary parameters and framework within which a pericope or passage makes meaning and conveys its messages, while its division demonstrates how the arguments of the pericope are articulated to convey its high points. An exegesis that is not done against the prior establishment and explanation of a passage's framework and manner of articulation of arguments lacks the scientific basis for analysis.

Literary Context

The literary context of Isa 1:16-17 is chapter one of the book of Isaiah. Most scholars subdivide Isaiah 1 into five blocks (verse 1, verses 2-3, 4-9, 10-17, 21-26 and 27-31). Georg Fohrer interprets it as an introduction to some key themes and events of the entire book (FOHRER 253-254). Isaiah 1 predominantly deals with the failure of Judah's leadership and her people, Israel (ECK 6). The theme of leadership is first highlighted in verse 1 where it is said Isaiah saw visions in Judah and Jerusalem during the reign of four kings: Uzziah, Jothan, Ahaz and Hezekiah (SEITZ 23; LUC 115). Then in verses 2-4, it describes Israel's sinful breach with God by rebelling (פָּשָׁעוּ) against Him and not knowing and understanding Him. These verses conclude with a woe proclamation (BEUKEN 41). Verses 5-9 present the laments of the disastrous consequences of Israel's disloyalty, but they also express God's benevolence to the nation by sparing for it a scanty remnant in order that its destruction does not liken the annihilative type of Sodom (סְדוֹם) and Gomorrah (לְעִמְרֹהַ) (ECK 82; CHILDS 16; NIDITCH 513-515). In verses 10-17, rulers and the people are instructed to wash themselves, convert and practice justice to the destitute of their society. The instruction sandwiches a strong reproach of their cultic activities and sacral times of celebrations. Verses

18-20 exhort Israel to choose between the path of life that requires the return to God, and the continuation of their rebellion which leads to death; because in verses 21-26, God complains against Jerusalem for becoming a whore that exchanges justice and righteousness for murderers, especially as championed by princes (שְׂרִירָה) who had become rebels and thieves, collecting bribes and caring less for widows and orphans. The consequence of their anomalies is the Lord's purificative judgment that will restore judges and counsellors for Jerusalem. Finally, verses 27-31 which begin with a prophecy of salvation for Zion and her inhabitants who repent by justice and righteousness, ends with a message of annihilation for her rebels and sinners (ECK 6). This brief explanation of the basic themes and matters of the context of Is 1:16-17 demonstrates a picture of the basic issues which verses 16-17 will be dealing with.

Delimitation

Isa 1:16-17 is collocated in Isa 1:10-17. The major delineating elements of verses 10-17, according to J. Eck, are the imperative Hebrew language verbs of verse 10 and verses 16-17. They respectively are שִׁמְעוּ (*Shim'û* signifying "listen") and הֶאֱזִינוּ (*Ha'āzînû* meaning "give ear") in verse 10; and רַחֲצוּ (*Rachātsû* explained as "wash yourselves"), הִזְצִקוּ (*Hizzakkû* describing "purify yourselves"), הִסְרִירוּ (*Hāsîrû* understood as "eliminate"), חִדְלוּ (*Chidlû* meaning "cease to do"), לִמְדוּ (*Limdû* meaning "learn to do"), דִּרְשׁוּ (*Dirshû* defined as "seek"), אֲשֶׁרוּ (*ashrû* identified as "help"), שִׁפְטוּ (*Shiftû* meaning "defend"), רִיבוּ (*Rîbû* explaining "plead") in verses 16-17. These verbs summon the leaders and people to listen and pay attention to the word of God in verse 10, but in verses 16-17 they instruct them of what the word of God expects of them. This stylistic employment of imperative verbs to open and close a unit is unique to verses 10-17 in Isaiah 1 (ECK 83).

The exhortative invitation with a cohortative in verse 18 and the closing formula (for the mouth of the Lord has spoken) at verse 20 demarcates verses 18-20 as a different unit from verses 10-17 (Sweeney 79; Wildberger 36).

Finally, the *Setûmāh* (ס) at verses 9 and 17 – according to the Masoretic division of the *Biblica Hebraica Stuttgartensia* – closes the verses 4-9 and 10-17 units respectively, marking out Isa 1:10-17 as a unit (cfr. Scaiola 162). With the mention of Sodom (סְדֹם) and Gomorrah (עֲמֹרָה) in verse 10 and the speech formula – says the Lord (יְאָמַר יְהוָה) – in verse 11a, Isa 1:10-17 is inserted into its literary context in what precedes in verse 9 and in what follows in verse 18a (Gitay 220).

Division

Isa 1:10-17 contain a speech broken into three sub-parts: Part 1 is verse 10, which is a summons to the leaders and people to listen and pay attention to the word of God; Part 2 is verses 11-15, they talk about the prophet's contestation against their flamboyant religiosity that is not acceptable to God; and Part 3 contains verses 16-17, which state the directives of God's word to the leaders and people to practice and lead a life of social justice, especially to depicted people in order for their worship to be acceptable by Him (Vargon 183; Williamson 82). It is the third part of Isa 1:10-17 that this work is about. The focus is on how Isa 1:16-17 contains the moral elements that can be principles for national development in Nigeria.

The Genre and Analysis of Isa 1:16-17

The speech of Isa 1:10-17 is either called *tôrāh* instruction (B.S. Childs, *Isaiah*, 16) or prophetic *tôrāh* (G. Fohrer, "Jesaja 1", 259-260). *Tôrāh* as used by the prophets concerns "teaching", "instruction", "direction" and not ordinarily "law". *Tôrāh* underscores the teaching and content of God's revelation to humanity prescribed in statutes, precepts and ordinances intended to act as guidelines of how the Israelites would mould every facet of their socio-economic and political life to conform to God's expectations (MAFICO 645) in order for the Israelites to live in acceptable moral rectitude.

The classical prophets' oracles solely instructed and directed the Israelites to lead their lives according to God's teachings and revelations based on the principle of justice to Him and humanity. Israelites' failure to orientate themselves by this principle implied that their worship and ritual acts became unacceptable (Amos 5:21-24; Mic 6:6-8) by God. It was obligatory for them to practice righteousness and good neighbourliness among themselves as a covenant community. The failure to do so merited divine punishment (Amos 2:6-8). To fulfil this obligation involves a constant change of heart towards God's precepts (Jer 31:33) shown in concrete practice of justice to the poor, who were economically and politically crushed by the unscrupulous rich and powerful Israelites, Amos 4:1-3 (MAFICO 645).

Isa 1:16-17, which falls under Part 3 of the prophetic *tôrāh* of Isa 1:10-17, is a directive, instructing the rulers and people to a self-renewal that rids them of all forms of evil in order that they will lead a life where they practice social justice, especially to some designated members of their society. The verbal (*shiftû*) and nominal (*mišpāt*) Hebrew language's lexemes used to characterize the theme of justice in verse 17 highlight the social justice motif of verses 16-17. Sweeney and Obara, avow these verses are constituted of positive instructions in a progression

of nine commands graphically detailing the progression, states that the first four (in verse 16) demand a purification of the encrustation of evil (88) through self-renewal. She describes the last five in verse 17 as an exhortation to take up positive actions synthesized in two general requests firstly particularized into: learn to do good and search for justice; and secondly itemized into three final commands - the defense of the right of the oppressed, widow and orphan. This article takes a step further on Obara's detailing by merging verse 16b with verse 17, firstly on the theological grounds of the dyad *tôbwārā'* (good and evil) (DOHMEN "רעע", 583), and secondly on the syntactic grounds that the direct objects of the verbs of verses 16b and 17a α are said by Joüon and Muraoka to be verbs of mood of action (JOÜON and MURAOKA 154-149). So instead of Obara's learn to do good and search for justice, this article has three general directives of cease to do evil, learn to do good and search for justice: all with verbs of what must be done.

Stylistically, the syntactic formation of the lexemes of Isa 1:16-17 are structured in a rapid succession of minor sentences that do not possess coordinating conjunctions or particles amongst them. The sequence of imperative verbs is instructive of peculiarities (WATTS 23-34) presented in a synthetic parallelism of nine positive dictates outlined in a progression of concepts and thoughts. Thus, the rulers and people by washing themselves (v. 16a α_1) cause their purification (v. 16a α_2), removal of evil (v. 16a β) and ceasing to do evil (v. 16b). Those religious and ethical deeds should empower and lead them to learn to do good (v. 17a α) and seek justice (v. 17a β) in order to correct oppression (v. 17a γ) by helping the oppressed, defending the orphan (v. 17ba) and contending for the widow (v. 17b β) (SWEENEY 110-111). Verses 16-17 state the terms on which God will relate with the leaders and people. They are non-negotiable (WATTS 23-34). The study thus far has shown that Isa 1:16-17 is the heart and climax of the prophetic *tôrah* of Isa1:10-17. The values of the verbs of verses 16-17 shall together with their nouns, guide this study's call for attitudinal change in Nigeria as a panacea for growth.

Isa 1:16-17 as a Tool for Moral Rectitude in Contemporary Nigeria

The principles for demanding for attitudinal change shall be identified and analysed in the following exegesis beginning with verse 16a $\alpha\beta$.

Verse 16a $\alpha\beta$ The Demands for the Purification of the Encrustation of Evil

All the verbs in verse 16a $\alpha\beta$ are imperatives: *rachātsû* (wash yourselves), *hizzakkû* (clean yourselves) and *hāsîrû* (put away). Of the three verbs, two - *rachātsû* and

hizzakkû – have no direct objects, reflecting inward and reflexive deeds. *Rachätsû* and *hizzakkû* summon the leaders and people of Judah (Isa 1, 10) – the entirety of the nation – to look inwardly and evaluate themselves through washing and purification to an attitudinal change that is ethically inspired.

Rachätsû (wash yourselves) in different verbal forms has 72 occurrences in the Old Testament and it signifies washing for cleanliness: religious, ethical and hygienic. Its use in verse 16aαβ is metaphoric. It refers more to ethical and a little to religious cleanliness through the washing of selves to remove filth and blood (cfr Isa 4:4 and Ezek 16:9) of evil deeds arising from primarily unethical behaviors. Because to think of oneself as clean while remaining unclean is decried by Prov 30:12 (ZOBEL, “רָחַץ”, 460-463). *Hizzakkû* (clean yourselves) underscores inner and deeper self-re-evaluation through purification to self-cleanliness. A cleanliness of ethical and religious implications that lead to a life of pure righteousness (Job 8:6; 33:9; Prov 20:11; 21:8) (AVERBECK, “רָחַץ”, 1099-1100). The directive for the purification of the encrustation of evil these verbs demand is not an offer of unconditional grace, but rather a reasoned, detailed demonstration of what constitutes the true path of life (WILDBERGER 48). That is why they betoke repentance (WILLIAMSON 98) from unethicity.

This style and nature of ethical renewal is what verse 16aαβ recommends to Nigerians if the nation must make progress. We had just underlined that these three verbs were used to direct the people and leaders of Judah to inner self renewal. Hence, it is fitting to use them to call Nigerians to attitudinal change that is ethically based. However, the quality and nature of this inner attitudinal renewal of Nigerians demands the last item of verse 16aαβ that is championed by the verb *häsîrû* (put away). With *häsîrû*, verse 16aαβ invites Nigerians to strive to remove all evil deeds. A striving that is prefigured by inner self renewal through washing and purification of encrusted evil. That *häsîrû* is a form of Hebrew verb called *hiphil* means that Nigerians must make it happen. They must bring to reality that which removes every form of evil in their midst. Therefore, crimes in which the worth of a Nigerian is trampled upon caused by someone’s wanton craving and arrogance (Isa 3) (WILDBERGER 49; Dohmen 560-588) must be removed.

The purification and washing should lead every Nigerian to be guided and orientated by the spirits of nationalism, patriotism and common humanity. It also demands too that Nigeria deals with unethical attitudinal impurities of the past decades of her history that have caused it economic and socio-political woes. Otherwise, all projects at making Nigeria a great nation will simply be parodies

and showboating of what it takes and not the reality. Sweeping the past wrongs under the carpet does not solve the problems on ground. It rather encourages newer forms of unethical behaviours. Because future offenders will, on the basis of how past perpetrators went free, assume no one will call them to justice. But if the past is revisited and adequately dealt with, the contemporary will be challenged to be more careful.

This means Nigerians must be driven by enduring efforts to success and by the desire to work towards national growth in the short term and for posterity. Therefore, all sorts of unethical means and channels, including the manipulation of religion and ethnic affiliations to attain inordinate personal and ugly goals should stop. Nigerians must work for her spirit and the onions of what she exists for. Ill-gotten wealth should not be glorified and deeds of infamy like embezzlement of public funds and abuse public trust should be discouraged. Due-process needs to be ethically applied. Its poor conception and application are killing the nation right from the highest office in the land to even the common man on the streets, and to even intra-family relations. For instance, Usman D. Usman https://scholar.google.co.uk/scholar?ht=en&as_sdt=o%2C5&as_vis=1&q=the+abuse+of+the+due+proces+in+Nigeria&btnG=) citing some Nigerian Dailies highlights a number of abuses of the due process during Obasanjo's era when a Japanese firm was said to have been over paid to the tune of N604 million for a power project the firm did not complete (Sunday Punch 6th April, 2008). He observed that another German Company was paid N400 million as mobilization fees for the feasibility studies on the multibillion-naira Mambila Hydroelectric Power Project, but did not execute the project. Worse still, the former Minister of Finance and the former Director-General of Due Process Unit, testifying before the House of Representatives Committee probing the \$16 billion spent on power in Nigeria of the Obasanjo era, said that the President did not allow the power project to follow the due process (Daily Trust, April, 4th, 2008). And it was alleged by the Nigerian House of Representative Committee on Privatization and Commercialization that the Government of President Obasanjo did not follow due process in the privatization of public enterprises since 1999. The Committee said that apart from the privatization of the Trade Fair Complex in Lagos where due process was followed, all the others were not based on due process (Daily Trust November 28th, 2007). These abuses have continued even after the Obasanjo era. Otherwise, one cannot understand why the alleged \$20 billion dollars that simply disappeared during Jonathan's administration did not attract serious attention. The eye-lids that bated were only Sanusi Lamido Sanusi's and

a handful. It has not been adequately investigated. The Mohammed Buhari administration has not been different from milking the nation. The Guardian Newspaper reported on 10th June 2021 that Nigeria's foreign debt as published by DMO stands at USD 33.348 billion. (<https://guardian.ng/news/nigerias-total-public-debt-reaches-n33-107trn-dmo/>), a monumental increase in the USD 9.7 billion Mohammed Buhari inherited. By 29th November 2019, Lukman Abolade reported that the nation's debt had risen by 163% between 2015 and 2019. Yet there is nothing really tangible to demonstrate what these monies have been used for. The seeming disappearance of these monies has joined the league of past waste. For instance, between 2011 and 2015, Nigeria earned a total of N51 trillion from petroleum resources alone. The money is part of the N96.212 trillion the country earned in 58 years from crude oil sales (NDUJIHE). These monies have been probably mismanaged and seemingly unaccounted for, because there is nothing tangible, grand and of enduring socio-political good to show for them. Those who steered the nation during the epochs in question have not been thoroughly investigated and a greater number of them still constitute those who decide the fate of the nation. Some opinions demand that the nation moves on and forgets the past just like that. Therefore, who will stop or prevent prospective future looters then? Where it is known that reserves of the nation have been depleted and savings squandered, and government Agencies rarely give befitting account of their services to the nation, who can stop future looters? Those anti-progress deeds have been swept under the carpet, in the "spirit" of moving on. State Governors of the Jonathan's administration – despite warnings from economic experts – shared the wealth that accrued in the excess crude oil account meant to serve as a safe haven for the nation's rainy days. It now seems as if the same State Governors and their cronies looted those monies, because States now owe their workers' salaries for years, and no identifiable physical development reflecting the amount received from the sharing is known in most States. In their lawlessness, these politicians now see Nigeria as their personal investment. Who will have the moral capacity then to stop future looters? Even the present administration is seemingly making lip service at fighting corruption. Billions accumulated from JAMB, Customs, TSA, etc have not improved the socio-economic misfortunes of Nigerians.

With the leadership morally decayed, most average Nigerians see such attitudinal disposition to consciously do the wrong thing as right and okay. When most Nigerians commit offences like examination malpractice, electioneering deceptions that change election to selection, breaking of every manner of regulations, etc, they see nothing wrong with what they have done and feel no

sense of guilt assailing them (CHIBUKO 79). It is taken as the Nigerian way. The economic loss resulting from the unjust systems, structures and attitudinal dispositions have made it impossible for a child born in the first two and a half decades of this century to see the Nigeria of our dreams. Simply because the basic platforms for national growth are not yet in place: our universities are not the apex centres for technological breakthroughs that can fetch the nation forex advantages, our political system is run by retired heads and ostensibly by the same visionless and unproductive political thieves that put the nation in the sorry state it is in. We do not have the technological basis for production since we import even pencil and petrol, there is no electricity, trains and good roads, etc.

The verbs of Isa 1:16a α β calls for the need for Nigerians to begin a cleansing in order to save the nation from eminent economic and socio-political doom.

Verses 16b-17 Summons to Take Up Positive Actions

Having demanded the purification of the encrustation of evil, verses 16b-17 summon and instruct the entirety of Judah to take up and lead their lives in positive and society's constructive deeds. The first two clauses of the summons invert the antithetic Hebrew language word called *tôbwārā'* (good and evil). *Tôbwārā'* presents two of the general but common Old Testament's requests: cease to do evil and learn to do good. Dohmen argues that the ability to distinguish cognitively between good and evil, and then choosing the former and eschewing the latter, is a fundamental Old Testament ethical requirement (583). This Old Testament's ethical requirement empowers a person's mastery over life so as to be intelligent enough to judge it wisely as Solomon (1 Kgs 3:7-12; 2 Sam 14:17; 1 Kgs 3:9). Those who fall short of this ability are designated as "immature" and "babies" (cfr Deut 1:139; Isa 7:15ff; cfr Num 14:31) (HÖVER-JOHAG 309).

Wildberger's interpretation of the general requests is quite important. He says people must cease to "behave in an evil way" and learn to "behave in a good way" (49). To cease to "behave in an evil way" and learn to "behave in a good way" come about through taking up a fundamental new direction and disposition of life. A disposition that ceases to do evil whether in the physical due directly to nature, and/or in the moral evil due to human volition. To be short of this disposition is to engender social and/or structural evil, an evil that results in the injustice that falls between necessity and approbation. Such evil leads to suffering because it attacks existence, threatens and destroys life, by creating disorders and catastrophes in the society. This is what Nigeria has

suffered in the past decades in forms of corruption and embezzlement caused by structural-political evil, and in forms of religious and tribal crises caused by the systems of social evil. A social evil that has sparked off a geometric increase in the frequency of armed robbery, kidnapping, the mentality of the-winner-takes-it-all, etc, because Nigerians have not ceased to “behave in an evil way” and have not learnt to “behave in a good way”. Therefore, the third request does not find a place in the nation: most contemporary Nigerians do not seek (*diršû*) justice (*mišpāt*). The verb – *diršû* (seek) – used for the directive to seek justice implies the practicalisation of the justice sought for (cfr Isa 16:5; Jer 29:7; 38:4) (Wagner 296-297). But most Nigerians have not sought to behave in a just way, where every body’s due is given to him in right and complete measure. The inability of most Nigerians to seek to behave and live in justice has empowered an oligarchy to control Nigeria’s socio-economic and political landscapes, and so reduced well over 200 million Nigerians to “poverty”, deprivation and deaths.

In the Old Testament, the dispensation of justice was the responsibility of priests (Ex 28:15-30), judges (Ex 21:6), Moses (Num 25:1-5), Joshua (Num 27:21; Jos 20:6), kings like Solomon (1 Kgs 3:11.28; 7,7) and figures like Deborah (Judg 4:5) (ENNIS 1143). This means it was the primary responsibility of leaders, but also of the people: all are to seek, promote and exercise justice in its positive and fullest sense (JOHNSON 86-98). Unfortunately, Nigerian courts are predominantly theatres where the most connected in government and the richest flex muscles against the vulnerable. If the citadel of justice is wanting, imagine what it is within other socio-political systems and structures in the country. A nation that lacks justice does not make progress. In her, meritocracy becomes a system reserved for those in the graveyard. No wonder, the prophets castigated corrupt leaders (Isa 1:17.21; 5:7; 10:2; 59:8-9; Hab 1:4) and people (Isa 4:4; Jer 5:1; 7:5; Ezek 5:6-7; 20;11.13.16.19.21; Hos 5:1.11; Mal 3:5) who breached justice and/or did not promote it (ENNIS 1143). When every Nigerian becomes confident that he can be heard and given his true measure, then people can be inspired to be altruistic, nationalistic and patriotic. Until when Nigeria is not driven on the platform of nepotism, tribalism, religious bias or any form of anomaly but on merit, that is when it shall indeed grow and develop to its full potential.

But where the nation’s attitudinal disposition does not cease to behave in an evil way, learn to behave in a good way and seek to behave in justice, she cannot at all affect and promote the human dignity and socio-anthropological good of every member of its citizenry. This is exactly the summons of the reminder of verse 17. It directs the leaders and people of Judah (cfr verse 10) to defend the

rights of the oppressed (PHELPS 182): orphan and widow. The oppressed in the Old Testament refer to the most vulnerable to injury and abuse. They could include strangers, orphans and widows (HAMILTON 570). The orphans in the Old Testament are the fatherless and they metaphorically could denote the weaker and vulnerable members of the society. The Old Testament prohibits taking advantage of them (Ex 22:22,24[21,23]; Deut 24:17; 27:19), it rather requests that they be provided for (Deut 14:29; 24:19-21; 26:13). Where rulers and people fail to do so, the Old Testament says God fights for them (Deut 10:18; Psa 10:14,18; 68:5[6]; (Jer 49:11) (HAMILTON 570). The widow in the Old Testament designates those in bereavement from having lost a husband (2 Sam 14:5), economic and social protection and security. Since they can become victims of social contrasts, they are to be protected from their creditors and their deceased husbands' (Deut 24:17; Job 24:3), they are not to be regarded as spoils (Isa 10:2), they are to receive the benefit of doubt in civil suit (Ex 22:21[22]; Deut 10:18; 27:19; Isa 1:12,23; 10:2; Jer 7:6; 22:3; Zec 7:10; Mal 3:5) and they are to enjoy social privileges which included the tithes of every third year (Deut 14:28f; 26:12f). Should the society fail to carry out this responsibility, God assumes it (Deut 10:18; Psa 10:14,18; 68:6[5]) (HOFFNER 289-291).

To shortlist the oppressed, orphans and widows as those to whom justice is to be done to, means that every member of the society deserves it. Because he or she is important and can contribute veritably to the wellbeing and development of a people or a nation. So, it is imperative that there exists charitable altruism in the wider interests of the Nigerian society (WILLIAMSON 102). Everybody is entitled to be part of the Nigerian society not minding class, tribe and religion. Every Nigerian must learn to see God in the other. Our social structure must, in the spirit of justice guided by an inner self renewal, admit the fallacy of "business-is-business". It must judge its economic policies not merely by their feasibility but by their morality, and it must confess that its economics and politics must be shaped by justice with a human face (CHIBUKO 80).

The message of Isa 1:16b-17 is achievable because Nigerians being dogged people who survive through thick and thin can make a difference of their present despicable state, but it must begin with an attitudinal change. This demands trying the past and making those who milked the nation dry to account for their misrule through retribution. There should not be killings, but a move to make them return a certain percentage of their loot to the national treasury for internal national development. This will serve as deterrent to the future. It should not be done in the style of the charades like the Oputa Panel, Constitutional Assemblies

and various Bodies set up to study issues affecting the nations that end up becoming toothless and reduced to White-papers fit only for the national archives. There should also be aggressive campaigns through teaching, preaching and propaganda for attitudinal change.

Conclusion

Pazhayamphallil, Christian Ethicist or Moral theologian, defines virtue as "...a habitual and firm disposition to do the good" (394). It means, a bad virtue is a vice (MATTISON III 6). There is a relationship between habit and virtue. A habit is not simply a way of calculating how frequently a person performs a certain type of activity in a certain way; it is an abiding disposition that changes who a person is and resides in a person like a second nature. Therefore, a virtuous person is not simply someone who consistently performs good actions, although that is certainly the case, but one who is transformed by his/her virtuous disposition (MATTISON III 6) in order to give his best, after having undergone self-transformation by the influences of that virtue (PAZHAYAMPBALLIL 394). This enables one to act spontaneously and automatically and thus the inclination to act well is easily spreadable to related areas in life (ODAFE 119). This is what Isa 1:16-17 simply calls for in this short piece. It is also its basic recommendation.

Isa 1:16-17 has lays down guiding principles that are perceived fitting enough for the pursuit of a better Nigeria. It is hoped that this prophetic *tôrāh* will be hearkened to, and that it will inspire the needed revolutionary change. For a society that lacks social justice is designated by Isa 1:21 as a "prostitute" and assimilated to "assassins" who have nothing to do with God, who is justice Himself. Therefore, human interactions must be based on God's justice (OBARA 88-89). Every form of corruption is not part of God's justice. In fact, it is the single greatest obstacle preventing Nigeria from achieving its enormous potential. It has drained billions of dollars from the country's economy. It has stymied development and weakened the social contract between the government and its people (Page 338). All forms of cosmetic solutions to our national problems must be stopped. Cosmetic solutions serve as conduit pipes for the nation's leaders to siphon the nation's wealth to their foreign bank accounts. The average Nigerian should stop to rank them as constructive development.

Works Cited

Abolade, Lukman (2019), ("Nigeria's external debt rises by 163 percent between 2015 and 2019" in International Centre for Investigative Reporting,

<https://www.icirnigeria.org/nigerias-external-debt-rises-by-163-per-cent-between-2015-and-2019/>).

- AVERBECK, R. E. (2012), "זכה", in Willem A. VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary for Old Testament Theology and Exegesis I*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids.
- BEUKEN, W.A.M (2007), *Jesaja 1–12*, Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament (HThK [AT]), Freiburg.
- CHIBUKO, P. C., "The Church in Nigeria and Its Role in Democratic Governance: A Call to Authentic Witnessing", *Journal for Religion and Society (JORAS)* 3 (2013) 79-80.
- CHILDS, B.S. (2001), *Isaiah*, Louisville.
- DOHMEN, C. (1974), "רעע", in G. Johannes Botterweck – Helmer Ringgren – Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., *Theological Dictionary of Old Testament XIII*, Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 560 - 588.
- ECK, J., *Jesaja 1 – eine Exegese der Eröffnung des Jesaja-Buches*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft (BZAW) 473; Berlin, de Gruyter GmbH, 2015.
- ENNIS, P. (2012), "מִשְׁפָּט", in Willem A. VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary for Old Testament Theology and Exegesis II*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids.
- FOHRER, G., 'Jesaja 1 als Zusammenfassung', *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft (ZAW)* 74/3 (1962) 253-254.
- GITAY, Y., 'Reflections on the Study of the Prophetic Discourse: The Question of Isaiah 1,2-20', *Vetus Testamentum* 33 (1983) 207-221.
- HAMILTON, V.P. (2012), "יְהוֹם", in Willem A. VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary for Old Testament Theology and Exegesis II*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids.
- HOFFNER, H.A (1974), "אֶלְמָנָה", in G. Johannes Botterweck – Helmer Ringgren, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament I*, Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 287-291.
- HÖVER-JOHAG, I. (1986), "טוב", in G. Johannes Botterweck – Helmer Ringgren, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament V*, Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 296-317.

- JOHNSON, B. (1998), "טַשְׁוּנָה", in G. Johannes Botterweck - Helmer Ringgren - Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament IX*, Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 86-98.
- JOÜON, P. - MURAOKA, T. (2009), *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, Roma; GBP.
- LAFFERTY, T.V. (2012), *The Prophetic Critique of the Priority of the Cult: a study of Amos 5,21-24 and Isaiah 1,10-17*, Oregon; Pickwick.
- LUC, A., "Isaiah 1 as Structural Introduction", *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft (ZAW)* 101 (1989) 115.
- MAFICO, T.L.J. (2001), "Ethics (OT)", in David Noel Freedman, editor-in-chief, *Anchor Bible Dictionary II*, Toronto - London - New York - Sydney
- MATTISON III, W.C. (2008), *Introducing Moral Theology: True Happiness and Virtues*, Grand Rapids; Brazos Press.
- NDUJIHE, C., "Under Jonathan, Nigeria earned N51trillion from crude oil", *Vanguard Newspaper*, <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/08/jonathan-nigeria-earned-n51trillion-crude-oil/>, retrieved Friday, 3rd March 2017.
- NIDITCH, S. "The Composition of Isaiah 1", *Biblica* 61 (1980) 509-529.
- Page, T. Matthew (2018) "A New Taxonomy for Corruption in Nigeria" in the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Report, July 2018, https://carnegieendowment.org/files/CP_338-Page_Nigeria_Brief_FINAL.pdf, retrieved 30th August 2021.
- PAZHAYAMPALLIL, T., *Pastoral Guide*, Bangalore; KristuJyoti Publications, 2004.
- PHELPS, M.A. (2012), "רַמְיָה", in Willem A. VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary for Old Testament Theology and Exegesis 11*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids.
- OBARA, E.M (2010), *Le Strategie di Dio*, Rome; GBP.
- ODAFE, George (2013), "Is Astuteness a Christian Virtue?", *Journal of Religion and Society Volume 3*.
- OKOLO O. Philips and Akpokighe Okiemute Raymond (2014), "Corruption in Nigeria: The Possible Way Out", *Global Journal of HUMAN-SOCIAL SCIENCE: F Political Science*, Volume 14 Issue 7 Version 1.0 Year 2014 Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal Publisher: Global Journals Inc. (USA) Online ISSN: 2249-460x & Print ISSN: 0975-587X).

- Salisu, A Mohammed (2000). Corruption in Nigeria. Lancaster University Management School Working paper 2000/006. The LUMS Working Papers series. Retrieved from: <http://www.lums.co.uk/publications>.
- SCAIOLA, D. (2011), *I Dodici Profeti: Perché "Minor?"*, Bologna; EDB.
- SEITZ, C.R. (1993), *Isaiah 1-39: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, Louisville.
- SWEENEY, M.A. (1996), *Isaiah 1-39*, Eerdmans; Grand Rapids.
- Usman D. Usman ("Due Process and Corruption in Nigeria from 2003 to 2007", https://scholar.google.co.uk/scholar?ht=en&as_sdt=o%2C5&as_vis=1&q=the+abuse+of+the+due+proces+in+Nigeria&btnG= retrieved on 30th August 2021).
- VARGON, S. (2000), "The Historical Background and Significance of Isa 10-17" in Z. KALAI , M. WEINFELD, eds, *Studies in Historical Geography and Biblical Historiography Presented to Zecharia Kallai*, VTSup 81; Leiden; Brill.
- WAGNER, S. (1978), "רַשׁ" in G. Johannes Botterweck – Helmer Ringgren, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament III*, Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 293-307.
- WATTS, J.D.W (2005), "Isaiah 1-33", *Word Bible Commentary 24*, Nashville 2005.
- WILDBERGER, H. (2002), *Isaiah 1-12*, Minneapolis; Fortress Press.
- WILLIAMSON, H.G.M. (2006), *A Critical and Commentary on Isaiah 1-27*, London – New York; T & T Clark.
- WILLIS, J.T. "The First Pericope in the Book of Isaiah", *Vetus Testamentum* 34 (1984) 63-77.
- ZOBEL, H.-J. (1975), "רַחֵץ" in G. Johannes Botterweck – Helmer Ringgren – Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament XIII*, Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 459-467.
- «Missing \$20 million Oil Money: Why we can't publish full details of audit report – Nigerian Govt», <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/177469-missing-20-million-oil-money-why-we-cant-publish-full-details-of-audit-report-nigerian-govt.html>, retrieved from *Premium Times*, Friday, 3rd March 2017.
- The Guardian Newspaper June 10th, 2021.
- Daily Trust November 28th, 2007.

Daily Trust, April, 4th, 2008.

Sunday Punch 6th April, 2008.