



RELIGION AND HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

Essays in honour of Prof. Yasir Anjola Quadri

Edited by
Y. O. Imam
R. W. Omotoye
P. O. Abioje
A. I. Ali-Agan

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Dedication

God and humanity.

Acknowledgement

All praise is due to Allah, the Disposer of all affairs, with Whose favour we have been able to reach the final stage of this project. We thank Him profoundly and appreciate His Grace over all the stakeholders in ensuring that the book finally sees the light of the day. To Him therefore be the Glory in the beginning and in the end.

Several people have played significant roles in the conception, planning and production of this book. The first of such personalities is Prof. Oyeronke Olademo who not only conceived the writing of the book in honour of Prof. Yasir Anjola Quadri, the Honouree, but also constituted a four man Committee namely; Professors Yahya Oyewole Imam, Rotimi William Omotoye, Pius O. Abioje and Dr. Abubakar Imam Ali-Agan with the mandate to source, assess, edit and produce a book in honour of our Distinguished Teacher. Prof, the editors appreciate the trust and confidence you reposed in them and thank you profoundly.

Though the Project began towards the tail end of Prof. Olademo's headship, it dove-tailed into the administration of Dr H.A Abdulsalam who salvaged the Committee from cash crunch which could have crippled the production of the book because of the inadequacy of the publication fees to pay for the product cost. The release of the sum of Two Hundred Thousand Naira (₦200,000) in two tranchies, was not only timely, but also assisted greatly in paying the initial deposit to the printer. "Malam Hashir", as you are fondly called, we appreciate your intervention.

Due to the time lag between submitting the draft assessed papers to the printer and the economic recession in the country occasioned by technical hitch experienced by the editors, the printer had to seek an upward review of the cost of production. The request came in the headship of Prof. Omotoye who graciously released the sum of One Hundred and Fifteen

thousand (N115,000) after securing an approval from the departmental meeting. Prof, your commitment to the success of the work is appreciated.

Members of the editorial committee are equally wonderful scholars whose efforts should not go unnoticed. They displayed sincerity and an unalloyed support at all stages of producing this book. I want to place on record that Prof. P.O. Abioje had professionally handled the secretarial needs of the Committee by appropriate record keeping and provision of same when required.

The understanding and cooperation of the contributors at every stage of production of this book are acknowledged. If you had not responded to our call through submission of articles and effected corrections after your papers have been found publishable, the Committee would have had nothing to work on. The Committee therefore sincerely thanks you for submitting publishable articles that contribute to existing knowledge in the area of Human Capacity development using religion as a vehicle to attaining that objective.

This acknowledgment will be incomplete if the efforts of Prof. Ishaq Olanrewaju Oloyode, OFR, FNAL in writing a Foreword to the book despite his tight schedule are not appreciated. Your foreword in no measure demonstrates your commitment to your *Alma Mater* but also respect for the Honouree. For others who have contributed to the success of the Project but whose names have not be mentioned as a result of the limitation of human memory, we say a big thank you.

Foreword

Writing a book in honour of Prof. Yasir Anjola Quadri is not only an appropriate exercise but also a commendable one. The appropriateness of the exercise lies in the fact that the honoree, one of the foundation staff of the Department who has seen and contributed to its steady growth, is being celebrated while living, unlike the practice of posthumous publications in honour of distinguished departed scholars. The exercise is equally commendable because it shows that there are still people around who honour and credit the deserving without solicitation.

The honoree, to the best of my knowledge, has over the past four decades been contributing to human capital development in the twin discipline of Arabic and Islamic Studies in particular and Religions in general through teaching, research and supervision of research works of both undergraduate and postgraduate students. Some of those who passed through him and his colleagues have occupied key positions in teaching, administration and judiciary locally and internationally. I am in fact one of the hundreds of such accomplished graduates. His contributions to the departmental publications, namely *Journal of Arabic and Religious Studies* (JARS) and *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies* (IJOURELS) through insistence on the publication of only high quality articles in them undoubtedly are additional proofs of his commitment to academic excellence.

His administrative competence is equally not in doubt. Having occupied headship and deanship positions in the Department and the Faculty respectively, his tenures witnessed tremendous growth and monumental achievements. Other administrative positions occupied by Prof. Quadri in the University like membership of the University Council, Chairman of Senate Publications Committee as well as Chairman, Dress Code Committee, to mention just three, brought to the fore his deployment of experience, selfless service and commitment to duty.

During my tenure as the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ilorin, from 2007 to 2012, I found in Prof. Quadri a dependable and reliable ally, a workaholic personality and a frank adviser who would not hesitate to call the VC to order whenever the need arose.

It is therefore no doubt that these sterling qualities might have caught the attention of the Department in writing a book in honour of this academic *par excellence* and astute administrator. The array of topics written upon and institutional spread of the contributors also show the wide acceptability of this distinguished Islamic scholar. The twenty-three chapter book contains articles on Arabic language and literature, Linguistics, Christian Studies, Comparative Religious Studies, Gender Studies and Islamic Studies. Articles in each of these subject areas have been well researched by the authors and I am optimistic that they will contribute significantly to the frontiers of knowledge in those areas.

Let me therefore at this juncture congratulate the Department on initiating the project, the contributors on writing brilliant papers and appreciate the editors on considering me worthy of writing a foreword to this very important book. I will equally like to congratulate the honoree, Prof. Yasir Anjola Quadri, on this feat and wish him more years of meritorious service to scholarship and humanity in sound health, unshakable faith and lawful wealth.

Lastly, I want to once again commend this noble effort and recommend the book to all students and scholars of Arabic and Religious Studies in our various higher institutions of learning. Scholars in the fields of Humanities and others who are interested in God and Religion will also find many chapters herein relevant to deepening their religious knowledge and whetting their intellectual appetite.

Prof. Is-haq Olanrewaju Oloyede, OFR, FNAL
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Secretary-General, Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA)
Registrar and Chief Executive, Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB)
25th December 2016

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Introduction

Human Capital Development (HCD) among several objectives intends to develop personal and organizational skills of employees for optimal performance. This is achieved through several activities like training, mentoring and coaching to mention just but three. The present book which is consisted of twenty three chapters written on a variety of topics that cover subject areas of African Traditional Religion, Arabic, Christian Studies, Gender Studies and of course Islamic Studies is a collection of reference materials written to train, mentor and coach academics especially the early and mid-career scholars.

Though these two categories are focused, seasoned academics can also find some of the chapters useful in their researches. The contributors have modestly presented their arguments and adopted clear expressions that can be easily understood by their intended readers.

The responsibility for correctness of facts used and their due acknowledgment is the authors' and not the editors' or the department's. It is therefore hoped that the book will satisfy the yearnings of those who read the articles in it and constitute an additional reference material not only in Religious studies but also in other disciplines in the humanities.

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SECTION ONE



African Traditional Religion

CHAPTER SEVEN



Come Let Us Reason Together: An Exegetical Study of Isaiah 1:18-20 in the Context of Security Challenges in Nigeria

C. O. Ogunkunle

Abstract

The security challenge that confronted the people of Judah as a result of their rebellion against God was a serious burden of Prophet Isaiah. But then, solution to their challenge came from God who gave them opportunity to come and reason with Him. This paper examines Isaiah 1:18-20 in the context of the imponderable security challenges and threats in Nigeria which are manifested in diverse ways: abduction, Boko Haram saga, religious and communal conflicts, among others. The historico-exegetical method is adopted. It is discovered that God is deeply interested in both Judah and Nigeria as demonstrated in the text and how He is preserving Nigeria. It is also believed that Nigeria as a religious nation will benefit from spiritual dialogue in resolving the security challenges confronting the nation.

Keywords: Isaiah 1:18-20, Security, Challenge, Dialogue, Nigeria.

Introduction

The nation of Judah was confronted with security challenges as a result of the judgement of God which came upon them because of sin. Isaiah 1:7 says:

Your country is desolate,
Your cities burned with fire;

Your fields are being stripped by foreigners right before you,
Laid waste as when overthrown by strangers.

In other words, the people were exposed to security threats as also noted in Amos 4:11. Similarly, the current security challenges confronting the nation of Nigeria is a serious concern to all well-meaning Nigerians especially those in the field of religions. The level of insecurity in the Nigerian society manifests itself in kidnapping, religious and communal conflicts, and all forms of terrorist attacks on innocent lives among others. For example, how can one explain the gruesome murder of seven foreigners in Nigeria in the hands of the Ansaru, a militant group which is an offshoot of the dreaded Boko Haram?¹ How can one explain the killing of several innocent Nigerians through guns and bombs on daily basis as being reported in the print and electronic media? For example, the *Nigerian Tribune* of Thursday 21st March, 2013 has the following captions: "Jos communal clash: 35 killed, commissioner's house burnt, 1 kidnapped", "2 feared dead in renewed Ogoni communal clash", "Fresh shootings in Kano, 9 policemen injured",² "Boko Haram: 22 killed in Army Barracks",³ "Kwara C.P. shot dead in Enugu."⁴

Unfortunately, the Government looks helpless on the issue of insecurity confronting the nation, despite the fact that a huge part of the nation's budget is on security. Reviewing the security challenges in the nation, the United Progressive Party (UPP) has said the insecurity in the country has reached a level that the Federal Government should seek the assistance of friendly countries that are better equipped to handle the Boko Haram insurgency.⁵ In his own comments, the former Chief of Army Staff, Lt. General Azubuike Ihejirika, stated that the prevailing security challenges facing the country are of serious concern and a veritable source of worry to the Nigerian Army in particular and to Nigerians in general.⁶

This paper on the exegetical study of Isa. 1:18-20 provides a platform through which a permanent solution is proffered to security challenges in the nation. The paper has its focus on "spiritual dialogue" which has its root in the text.

Conceptual Framework

The Longman Contemporary English Dictionary defines dialogue as a "formal discussion between two groups, countries, etc."⁷ Eric J. Sharpe identifies four types of dialogue:

1. **Discursive dialogue:** This was previously known as "debate" or "discussion" which involves meeting, listening, and discussion on the level of mutual competing intellectual inquiry. Discursive dialogue is profitable among equally equipped partners since it presupposes the willingness of both to listen, as well as speak.
2. **Human ("Buberian") dialogue:** This rests on the existential foundations previously described, and assumes that it is possible for human beings to meet purely and simply as human beings, irrespective of the beliefs that separate them. The main setback to this approach is its individualism. Although this type of dialogue is suitable enough among intellectuals in the semi-secular West, it leaves out consideration of the extent to which the individual is shaped by the community of which he or she, depending on its support and adhering to its value, is part.
3. **Secular dialogue:** This stresses that where there are tasks to be performed in the world, believers in the different creeds may share in a programme of joint action with regard to their respective convictions.
4. **Spiritual dialogue:** This has been advocated chiefly by those who have been trained in the contemplative and monastic traditions, and who have learned to set high value upon Eastern (or other) spirituality, while not wishing to lessen their hold upon their own. Its focus is not debate and discussion, but prayer and meditation, and in recent years it has given rise to a considerable number of ashrams and meditation centres in the East and West alike. In theoretical terms, it rests on a monistic theology similar in many ways to Vedanta; in practical terms, it

often concedes to the East, a level of attainment in matters of spirituality superior to that of the West, and is prepared to use non-Christian scriptures, liturgies, and techniques alongside those that are specifically Christian.⁸

Of the four types of dialogue highlighted above, this paper adopts "spiritual dialogue" as it has its root in monasticism which deals with personal seeking for God in a solitary place. Monasticism started as a reaction to the noticeable deterioration in the early Church.⁹ Thus, spiritual dialogue is closely connected with God as seen in Isa 1:18-20 where Yahweh took the initiative of talking with the people of Judah. Indeed, for our nation to have a lasting solution to the security challenges confronting her, all the stakeholders in the nation must look inward, meditate, pray and seek for spiritual solution over the security issues.

Exegesis of Isa 1:18-20

The passage in Hebrew:

Isaiah 1:18 לְכוּנָא וְנִנְּךָ ה' אֱמַר יְהוָה אֱמַר ה' יוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ
כְּשָׁנִים כֶּשֶׁל לֵב יִנּוּ אֱמַר יֵאָדָּר יָמוּ כְּתוּלָה כֶּשֶׁל מִרְיָנוּ: ¹⁹ אֶם-תֵּאָבֹד
וְשִׁמְעָתָם טוֹב הָאֵל רָצָה אֲבָל: ²⁰ וְאִם-תִּמָּאֵן וּמְרִיתָם חָרָב
תֹּאכְלוּ כִּי פִי יְהוָה דִּבֶּר: ס

The Transliteration of the Passage:

Isaiah 1:18 lükû-nä' wüniwwä|k•Hâ yö'mar yhwh ('ädönäy)
'im-yi|h•yû Há†ä'êkem Kaššänîm Kaššeleg yal•Bînû 'im-
ya'•Dîmû kaTTôlä' Kaccemer yih•yû¹⁹ 'im-Tö'bû
ûšüma'•Tem †ûb hä'ârec Tö'kêlû ²⁰ wü'im-Tümä'ânû
ûmürîtem Hereb Tü'uKKülû Kî Pî yhwh ('ädönäy) DiBBër.

The Passage in English:

^{NIV} **Isaiah 1:18** "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." For the mouth of the LORD has spoken (Isa 1:18 NIV).

Prior to the last two decades, the book of Isaiah had been studied independently according to its major sections, that is, Isa. 1-39 and 40-66 (Deutero-Isaiah) or Isa. 1-39; 40-55 and 56-66 (Trito-Isaiah).¹⁰ However, in the last two decades, much emphasis has been placed on the unity of the whole book.¹¹ That Isaiah is perhaps the most important and richest book in the Old Testament is not contestable. Commenting on the book of Isaiah, John Oswalt aptly states:

Its literary grandeur is unequalled. Its scope is unparalleled. The breadth of its view of God is unmatched. In so many ways it is a book of superlatives. Thus, it is no wonder that Isaiah is the most quoted prophet in the NT and along with Psalms and Deuteronomy, one of the most frequently cited of all OT books. Study of it is an opportunity for unending inspiration and challenge.¹²

Isaiah 1 is the general introduction to the whole book. The chapter gives the summary of the sin of the people of Israel which had exposed them to security threat and the need for them to show a genuine repentance.¹³ Garry V. Smith is of the view that the prophet Isaiah wrote this introductory chapter very late in his lifetime, probably after he had finished writing most if not all of the book. Now he is able to reflect back on what God told him to say to the people of Jerusalem over the last years, and now he knows how they responded to God's words.¹⁴ John Oswalt gives the structure of the chapter as follows:

- Superscription (1:1)
- Israel's condition (1:2-9)
- The folly of empty cult (1:10-17)
- The wisdom of obedience (1:18-20)
- The announcement of judgement (1:21-26)
- The fate of the wicked (1:27-31).¹⁵

Structurally, Garry V. Smith argues that Isa. 1 is divided into two sections. The first section is a sermon that is addressed to the people and rulers and it is marked by the introductory "For the LORD has spoken" in 1:2, and the concluding "For the mouth of

the LORD has spoken" in 2:20. The second section (1:21-31) focuses on the city of Jerusalem and its rulers with the words of lamenting accusations (1:21-32) and first person statements about the consequences of the refiner's fire (1:24-26). The section ends the chapter (1:27-31) with a clear choice for the righteous as they will be redeemed and the wicked and their idols will burn with fire.¹⁶ Also, the strategic location of Isa. 1 as an introduction to the whole book has been noted. The chapter contains several vocabularies and themes that are repeated in chapters 2-66 in general and chapters 56-66 in particular.¹⁷

Isa. 1:18-20 provides a conclusion to the way of deliverance from sin as presented by Yahweh in 1:10-17. It suggests obedience and submission as the only way out of the impending judgement. Isa. 1:18 begins with *l'khu*, which is from the verb *halakh* and it means to go, come or walk. In this context, it is used as imperative plural to mean "come." The word is used of the people of Israel in presenting their case before the LORD (Isa. 41:1, 21; 43:26; Mic. 6:21). A similar use of the word is found in Gen. 37:20 where the brothers of Joseph conspired against him saying to one another "Look this dreamer is coming! Therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit..." The word is equally used in Prov. 1:11 in the context of sinners asking the young son to "come with us".

Following a record of rebellion where Yahweh, the plaintiff, condemns Judah for their self-designed religious festivals (1:10-15), Isaiah issues a call of repentance to the people (1:16-20). The King James Version, New America Standard Bible and New International Version of Isa. 1:18a have "Come now, and let us reason together, says the LORD." *The Message* translation puts it differently: "Come. Sit down. Let's argue this out. This is GOD'S Message." Isa. 1:18 is the most familiar passage where *yakhah* occurs within a covenant lawsuit. The word *lekhu* in Isa. 1:18 is used together with *na* which is an enclitic particle of urgency. The particle is used here to express an entreaty, exhortation or admonition as in Gen. 12:13; 13:9, 14; 15:15; Num. 20:10; Jud. 13:4; 16:6, 28; 18:5; Isa. 1:18; 5:3; Amos 7:2, 5.¹⁸ Therefore, the use of *l'khu-na* by Yahweh is to admonish the people of Israel to reason and iron out issues with Him.

The Hebrew word *w^eniwakh^ehah* is the Hiphil imperfect of *yakhah* which occurs fifty-four times in Hiphil and three times in Niphal.¹⁹ The verb *yakhah* has the following meanings:

- to give reproof, reprove (Gen. 21:25; Lev. 19:17; 2 Sam. 7:14; Jer. 2:19; Ezek. 3:26; Hos. 4:4; Psa. 6:2; 38:2; 50:8, 21; 94:10; 105:4; Job 5:17; 6:25; 13:10; 19:5; 22:4; 40:2; Prov. 3:12; 9:7-8; 15:12; 19:25, etc.).
- to correct, rebuke (Job 5:17; 6:26; 13:10; 2 Sam. 7:14; Prov. 3:12).
- to decide, judge (Gen. 31:37; 31:42; Isa. 2:4; 11:3; Psa. 94:10), etc.
- to adjudge, appoint (Gen. 24:14, 44).
- to administer justice (2 Kgs. 19:4; Isa. 37:4; 29:21; Amos 5:10; Hab. 1:2).²⁰

Another important word in the passage is *hata'ekhem* (your sins), which is from *heti'* (sin). It is a masculine noun which means "failure to hit the mark, a turning away from obedience, and lack of wholeness or acceptance before God."²¹ *Heti'* occurs 35 times in the Old Testament in the context of sin against man (Gen. 41:9 and Ecc. 10:4) or sin against God (Num. 27:3; 2 Kgs. 10:29; Ps. 103:10; Isa. 38:17; Lam. 1:8; and Dan. 9:16).²² Some of the sins that the people needed to confess and put away include murder (Isa. 1:21), robbery, bribing and exploiting the helpless (Isa. 1:23), and worshiping of idols (Isa. 1:29).²³

In Isa. 1:18, the sin which was against God is compared to *sani* (scarlet) that has the connotation of being stained with blood. God, having told the Israelites that their worship is unacceptable to Him because of the stains of blood on their hands (Isa. 1:15), tells them that they must be cleansed and cease from evil. Therefore, Isa. 1:18 is the invitation of God for the people to come for cleansing from their bloodguiltiness and their garment which had been dyed with scarlet will become white as snow. *Laben* (white) in this context is a denominative verb whose theological motif relates whiteness to moral purity. Isa. 1:18 states that the cleansing which God brings to the sinner makes the individual white as snow (cf. Psa. 51:7 and Dan. 11:35).²⁴

The Hebrew word *'abhah* means willingness or inclination to do something under obligation or upon request. In Isa. 1:19, Israel is urged to show a positive intention towards God and not to refuse and rebel.²⁵ The Hebrew word *ma'en* (refuse) is a Piel verb. It is used in connection with Pharaoh's refusal to obey God (Exod. 4:23; 7:14; 10:3) or Israel's refusal to obey God's commands. The word is used of the Israelites who refused to walk in His law (Psa. 78:10); refused to repent (Hos. 11; 5; Jer. 3:3; 8:5); or refused to receive instruction (Jer. 5:3; 9:6; 11:10; Zech. 7:11).²⁶

Commenting on the relationship between the Israelites and God, Warren Wiersbe says: "If the people would cleanse themselves by repenting and turning from sin (Isa. 1:16-17), then God would wipe the record clean in response to their faith (Isa. 1:18). God had every reason to punish His people for their sins, but in His grace and mercy, He offered them His pardon."²⁷ Describing the relationship between Yahweh and the Israelites, Smith succinctly states:

The spirit with which God desires to enter this discussion is not to argue whether Judah has sinned, nor to re-evaluate the legitimacy of the people's worship, nor to reassess whether justice was provided for the widow or orphan.... Instead, God offers grace through forgiveness to restore the relationship if Judah is willing to change. God does not have an agenda to end the relationship with punishment.²⁸

Factors Responsible for Insecurity in Nigeria

Generally, as the people of Judah at the time of Isaiah had sinned against God; so also the people of Nigeria have turned away from God and have sinned against one another. The level of wickedness in the nation is on the high side. In fact, some of the several factors responsible for insecurity and upheaval in the nation are directly connected with sin against God and mankind. Four of them are highlighted below:

1. **Greed:** The vice of greed manifests itself in an inordinate ambition for money and the desire to accumulate wealth by all means. This factor has led to the increase in armed

robbery, kidnapping and all forms of vices that have brought about insecurity in the society. Politically, greed has made several politicians hang on to power and thereby see politics as a do or die affair. One of the several cases of greed is that of Olisa Metuh, the National Publicity of the People Democratic Party, who is currently being tried at a Federal High Court in Abuja by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) for collecting the sum of ₦400 million from Sambo Dasuki, the former National Security Adviser. Many people in the leadership of the party are claiming ignorance of the said sum and are angry with him for allegedly concealing the receipt and expenditure of the money.²⁹

2. **Deception and Insensitivity:** The security upheavals in Nigeria today can be attributed to deception and insensitivity of our political leaders. There has been agitation for shari'a laws in some states in the northern part of the country as far back as 1999. Perhaps, the agitation has been made mainly to cause confusion in the polity. Again, the administration of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan witnessed the activities of the Boko Haram, an Islamic militant group whose objective is to have Shari'a laws implemented especially in the northern part of the country. Incidentally, the government is fully aware of this group and her activities, as the President himself rightly declared that Boko Haram has infiltrated his government.³⁰ The fact that the Government is aware and nothing serious is done to control the group is a sign of deception and insincerity. Unfortunately, the political class and opinion leaders from the north seem to be pretending that they do not know the group or groups that are involved in the barbaric acts of killing innocent lives and destroying valuable properties. This act of deception and insincerity at the highest level must be checked if the nation is to have a permanent peace.

3. **Unemployment:** The issue of unemployment is a major factor that is responsible for the level of insecurity in the nation. There are millions of individuals, especially young people, who are willing to work but they are not employed. There are several cases of well-educated and hard-working young men and women who have graduated from various universities and tertiary institutions for years and they have no job and the opportunity of getting one is nil. This is confirmed in the crime sections of National Newspapers where many young people have confessed that they go into robbery as a result of lack of employment.³¹ In other words, it is possible that many of the people who have joined the Boko Haram group would not have done so if they were to be gainfully employed.
4. **Poverty:** Perhaps the most important factor that is responsible for insecurity in Nigeria is poverty, which has been defined among other things as "lack of opportunity to develop our abilities and to control our own lives because of economic deprivation".³² Samuel Odoma sees poverty as "the greatest of man's known enemies as it has sent many to their early graves, left many malnourished, while others perpetually remain in hopelessness and misery."³³ Speaking of poverty in Nigeria, it has been reported that 69.7% of Nigerians are living below the poverty line. Over 80 million Nigerians, based on the 120 million population estimate, survive on less than \$1 per day.³⁴ Connecting religious violence with poverty, the editorial comment of the *Nigerian Tribune* of January 13, 2010 says; "Since the 1980s, the condition of the average Nigerian has fallen to miserable levels. Over 70% of the population live below the poverty line."³⁵ Highlighting the effect of poverty on the nation, Isiramen says:

Most families hardly find three square meals in a day. Portable water is a scarce commodity, goods are not easy to come by, proper medical facilities have turned a

mirage to most Nigerian citizens. Most people have lost hope for the next day. These groups of people can easily be lured into perpetrating violence against others. Young people are known to be paid small amounts of money and promised heavenly rewards if they participate in religious violence.³⁶

Obviously, the level of poverty in Nigeria has posed a big threat to the security of the nation as there are so many young people on the streets without any visible means of livelihood and they are easily lured into all forms of lawlessness and wickedness. Ononogbu expresses the fact that many of the young people in the security risk group today started by simply roaming about the streets and later joined bad gangs who eventually had negative influence on them. He says:

They hang on for some time, just whiling away the time but when they get tired of merely sitting on the wall, they tend to implode and fall into all sorts of anti-social behaviours and habits that the society may not be able to help them again. This is how many of them end up as career miscreants and a menace to the society for the rest of their lives.³⁷

Way Forward/Solution

The current security challenges have posed a great danger to the existence of the nation, for which some urgent measures must be taken so as to check the wasting of innocent lives and valuable properties. Incidentally, several individuals, especially the political and religious leaders, have suggested certain measures to control the problem of insecurity in the nation. Three of their recommendations stand out:

1. **Military action:** Some people have suggested that the use of force or military action is the way out of our security challenges. The Federal Government has partially taken the option and this has led to the declaration of a state of emergency on some local governments in some northern states where the Joint Military Force is in charge. But then, it is obvious that this has not solved the problem.

Rather, it has aggravated it.

2. **Prayer:** Some other people are of the opinion that the best option and way out of our current predicament is prayer. In other words, they argue that the security challenge that is confronting the nation has its root in both politics and religion and therefore prayer must be used as the main weapon to fight the battle. Thus, the former Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon, admitted that Nigeria is going through a difficult period. He believes that the effective weapon to stop Boko Haram sect's insurgence against Nigeria is prayer.³⁸ In a similar vein, the President, Christian Association of Nigeria, Pastor Oristejafor declared Thursday 14/06/2013 as a national day of prayer by all Christians against Boko Haram activities in the nation. While prayer is the solution to every challenge that is confronting man, it is important that man himself takes certain actions. Perhaps, this is the view expressed by the Christians in northern Nigeria as stated by their representatives:

Nigerians are famously renowned for calling on the Lord. Calling is not enough, for God sees the heart of men; we must not only call upon Him, we must also live lives that evidence to Him our desire to be as He intended us, like Him.³⁹

3. **Dialogue:** One apostle of peace who has been advocating for dialogue, especially between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria, is Archbishop Ignatius Kaigama.⁴⁰ A renewed call for dialogue is currently being made by prominent Nigerians. Championing this cause is the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar, who is regarded as the leader of the Nigerian Muslims. He said on 5th March, 2013 that the Federal Government should consider amnesty for Boko Haram insurgents whose activities had paralyzed the business of most Northern States.⁴¹ The former President of the World Court and former Attorney-General of the Federation, Prince Bola

Ajibola (SAN) asked President Goodluck Jonathan to dialogue with the group in order to stop the ongoing attack on innocent Nigerians. He said, "I have always advocated dialogue. Even when a war is fought, at the end of the war, the winner will still need to discuss with the loser to find solution to the whole dispute."⁴² Some other prominent leaders who have supported the call for dialogue/amnesty include the former Governor of Lagos State and the leader of the All Progressive Congress (APC), Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, Nuhu Ribadu, Turai Yar'Adua among others. Apparently, former President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan in his Independence Day broadcast on 1st October, 2013 declared the intention of his Government to organize a National Dialogue as a way of resolving the intractable security and political crises in the country. The National Conference was inaugurated on 17th March, 2014 at the Auditorium of the National Judiciary Institute, Abuja with Hon. Justice Idris Legbo Kutigi as chairman, Professor A. Bolaji Akinyemi as Deputy chairman and Dr. (Mrs) Valerie-Jannette Aringe as Secretary. The inauguration ceremony was attended by 492 delegates.⁴³

Spiritual Dialogue

There is no doubt that each of the above methods has been used extensively in trying to solve the problem of insecurity in Nigeria. But unfortunately, the problem keeps on escalating and everybody is afraid. There is even "fear in [the] Presidency as Boko Haram rejects amnesty."⁴⁴ It is in the light of this dangerous trend that this paper is calling for a re-examination of our approach to security challenges. Thus, this paper recommends the adoption of "spiritual dialogue" as a possible solution to the present predicament. This approach is a combination of prayer and dialogue. The approach has its origin in Isa. 1:18-20, where God initiated a discussion with the people without any accusation and judgement. He simply pardoned them of their iniquity. The spiritual dialogue approach makes God its main focus. Incidentally, Nigerians are known to be

very religious and so our understanding of God must be reflected in all that we do. With the "spiritual dialogue" approach, there will be no room for accusation of one another. The important thing with this approach is for all the stakeholders, especially the religious and political leaders to come together for reasoning. A serious reflection on the socio-political and economic situation of Nigeria at this time will go a long way in resolving the security issues in the nation. Spiritual dialogue, under God helps the stakeholders to meditate on where we are coming from as a nation; where we are; and where we are going. Spiritual dialogue recognises the sovereignty of God in the whole world and it appeals to the hearts of human beings for them to do a thorough soul searching and prayerfully consider the option of peace. It is only when this is done that a meaningful dialogue and lasting amnesty can take place. Adopting the "spiritual dialogue" approach will not only bring a permanent solution to our security challenges but it will bring a lasting peace in the land (Isa. 1:19). However, if we ignore the "spiritual dialogue" at this critical time, it is likely that there will be more shedding of innocent blood in the land (Isa. 1:20).

Conclusion

This paper has done an exegetical study of Isa. 1:18-20 in the context of security challenges in Nigeria. The study has provided a basis for comparison between experiences of the people of Judah and contemporary Nigerians. On the one hand, the people of Judah rebelled against God; they were judged, thereafter, they were pardoned. On the other hand, insecurity in Nigeria has a link with all forms of wickedness that are found among the people in the nation as manifested in greed and deception among others which has brought about serious security threats to the nation. Thus, the paper recommends spiritual dialogue bearing in mind that Nigerians are very religious people. It is believed that that the spiritual dialogue which is connected with God will bring a permanent solution to the high level of insecurity in the nation. Therefore, all the stakeholders, especially the religious and political leaders must be willing to adopt this approach and allow peace to reign in the nation instead of war.

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