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**AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF REPENTANCE IN 2 CHRONICLES
7:14 IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIO-RELIGIOUS LIFE IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

Nigeria is currently going through a difficult period as she is being confronted with various socio-religious issues ranging from corruption, high rate of unemployment, poverty, increased crime rate, insecurity, insurgencies, and terrorism. In fact, the level of innocent blood being shed on daily basis is becoming unbearable. Unfortunately, political leaders appear helpless as they have not been able to come up with concrete solution to these various challenges. Incidentally, individuals from different professions have made some suggestions on how to restore peace in the land, yet the tension is still high. Therefore, the thrust of this paper is an exegetical study of repentance in 2 Chronicles 7:14 in the Nigerian context with a view to proffering religious solution(s) to the challenges that are robbing Nigerians of their commonwealth. A historico-exegetical method was adopted. Historically, attempt was made to understand the historical context of the passage. Exegetically, key words in the text were explained and re-interpreted with the use of Hebrew lexicon and theological commentaries. It was discovered that God has blessed Nigeria with human and natural resources that can make her stand among the comity of nations, but various challenges were militating against her development and progress. The study concluded that Christians in general and Church leaders in particular must set the pace through attitudinal change by providing spiritual solution(s) to the nation's problems.

Keywords: 2 Chronicles 7:14, repentance, national challenges, religious solution, Nigeria

Introduction

It is an undeniable fact that life is becoming unbearable in Nigeria. Many people are living in fear as a result of numerous challenges that are confronting the nation. The presence of moral evil which has its root in lust,

greed and hatred, among others, has brought untold hardship to virtually everyone in the nation. Apart from the high level of corruption and abject poverty, which millions of Nigerians have to cope with; the level of insecurity is equally worrisome. Several atrocities ranging from senseless killing, kidnapping, and banditry among others are being perpetuated on daily basis. Ramon (2021, p.2) notes that "Nigeria is becoming less safe each year. Kidnapping has increased in almost all states, but the sharpest rise has been in Kaduna, Rivers, Katsina, Zamfara and Taraba. Indeed, the shedding of innocent blood through these various insurgencies as well as ritual killings is a serious concern to many well-meaning Nigerians.

So far, two steps appeared to have been partially taken by the government to address the challenge of insecurity. One is the military action where the troubled spots were taken over by them. Two, is the issue of dialogue and amnesty. One apostle of peace who has been advocating for dialogue in the nation, especially between Christians and Muslims is Archbishop Ignatius Kaigama. Another person is the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar who at a time advised the Federal Government to consider amnesty for Boko Haram insurgents whose activities had paralysed the business of most Northern States (see *Nigerian Tribune*, Monday 8 April, 2013, pp. 41-2). Recently, an Islamic cleric, Sheikh Ahmad Gumi is championing the cause of amnesty for bandits (Sahara Reporter, October 1, 2021). Unfortunately, all these approaches have not given the desired solution to the problem of insecurity in the nation. It is on this note that this exegetical paper examines repentance in 2 Chronicles 7:14 in the context of socio-religious life in Nigeria. The article focuses on Nigerian Christians that form 45% of the population (See: <https://www.statista.com>). The percentage is significant enough that when the Christian community adheres to the biblical injunction on issues affecting the nation, the effect will be positively felt on the entire nation.

Hebraic Rendition of 2 Chronicles 7:14 and its English Equivalent

וַיִּכְנְעוּ עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְא־שְׁמִי עֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּתְפַּלְלוּ וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ פָנַי וַיִּשְׁבוּ מִדְּרָכֵיהֶם הָרָעִים וְאֲנִי
אֲשַׁמֶּע מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶסְלַח לְחַטָּאתָם וְאֶרְפָּא אֶת־אֲרָצָם: WTT

"If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (RSV).

Lexical Analysis of Key Words

2 Chronicles 7:14 begins with the phrase "if my people." The Hebrew word for people is *'am* which, is a masculine noun. It means people or nation (Exodus 21:8; Joshua 17:14, 15, 17) or all mankind (Genesis 11:5). It also means smaller units such as the inhabitants of a city (Genesis 19:4; 1 Samuel 9:12-3, etc.), inhabitants of a locality (Jeremiah 37:12; Deuteronomy 33:3). The word is especially used of common people (Jeremiah 21:7; 22:4; Leviticus 4:27) or people in general (Genesis 50:20 and Exodus 13:16; Brown, Driver & Briggs, 1979). The phrase, "my people" is used to express the relationship between God and His people. The phrase in this context specifically refers to the restored Jewish people after they had returned to Jerusalem (Brown, Driver & Briggs, 1979). The phrase is used in Exodus 3:7-10 when God speaks of the descendants of Abraham whom He has chosen and with whom He is identified by means of the covenant. "My people" speaks of God's constant protection over the people and all sufficient provision for them testify to the continued love and concern for them (Psalms 78:52-66; 95:7).

There are four important things which these people who are called by the name of the Lord must do. The first thing is to humble themselves. The Hebrew word used for humble is *kana*^c and it is a Niphal verb. The verb occurs thirty-six times in the Hebrew Bible. It denotes bringing a proud and recalcitrant people or spirit into subjection (1 Kings 21:29; 2 Chronicles 17:7; 30:11; Leviticus 26:41; etc.; Oswalt, 1980). The word *kana*^c is used in two senses. On the one hand, it can be used in a reflexive mood meaning to humble oneself. This is the sense in which the chronicler used the word in 2 Chronicles 7:14. Other related passages include Leviticus 26:41; 2 Chronicles 12:6, 12; 30:11; 32:26; 33:19, 23, etc. On the other hand, *kana*^c can be used in a passive sense which means be humbled or subdued (1 Samuel 7:13; 1 Chronicles 20:4; 2 Chronicles 13:14; Brown, Driver & Briggs, 1979). The phrase "humble themselves" is also used in 2 Chronicles 12:6-7 in the account of Shishak's invasion during the reign of Rehoboam. God did not allow the King (Shishak) to invade Judah and Jerusalem because the people humbled themselves.

The second thing these people must do is to pray. The Hebrew verb that is used in 2 Chronicles 7:14 is *palal* which means to pray, intervene, interpose. The word has four different meanings: One, it means specific intercession on behalf of an individual (Genesis 20:7; Numbers 21:7; Deuteronomy 9:20; 1 Samuel 12:23). Two, it means to pray, either unto idol (Isaiah 44:17; 45:50) or unto Israel (Isaiah 44:14). Three, it means to pray to

God as used in 2 Chronicles 7:14 and in several other passages (1 Kings 8:33; 2 Kings 6:17; Ezra 10:11; Daniel 9:20; 2 Chronicles 6:24; 7:1; etc.). Finally, the word used in the context of poetical and liturgical prayer (1 Samuel 2:1 and Jonah 2:2; Brown, Driver & Briggs, 1979). A good example of an individual who prayed to God is Hezekiah who cried to God concerning Sennacherib who was a threat to him and his nation. God heard his prayer (2 Chronicles 32:20-23). Also, Hezekiah prayed to God when he was sick and God healed him (2 Chronicles 32:24-26).

The third thing they must do is to seek the face of God. The verb *baqash* (seek) is used in different contexts in the Hebrew Bible. The word is used to seek in order to find God (Judges 6:29; 2 Kings 2:17; Jeremiah 5:1; Ezekiel 34:6; Ecclesiastes 3:6; 8:17). It is also used to seek to secure (Numbers 16:10; 2 Samuel 3:17). The word *baqash* is equally used to ask or request for something (Esther 2:15; Nehemiah 2:4; Daniel 1:8; Psalm 104:21; 2 Chronicles 20:4). The word *baqash* is specially used to seek the face of a ruler (1 Kings 10:24; 2 Chronicles 9:23; Proverbs 29:6) or the face of God as used in 2 Chronicles 7:14 cf. Hosea 5:15; 1 Chronicles 16:11; Psalm 105:4; 2 Samuel 21:1; Proverbs 24:6; 27:8 (Brown, Driver & Briggs, 1979). An example is Jehoshaphat and his people who set themselves to seek the LORD for restoration.

The last important thing these people must do is to turn from their wicked ways. The Hebrew verb *shub* which means turn back or return has several meanings, few of which include: to turn back from following an individual (2 Samuel 11:15; 1 Kings 19:21; Ruth 1:16); return or go back from foreign land (2 Kings 8:3; 2 Chronicles 10:2; Ruth 1:6, 22; 2:6; 4:3; Jeremiah 31:16, etc.); and change the course of an action from good to bad (2 Kings 24:1; Jeremiah 34:11, 16) or bad to good (Jeremiah 34:15; Job 6:29). The word *hub* is figuratively used in different ways; one, turning back from God (Numbers 14:43; 1 Samuel 15:11; 1 Kings 9:6; Jeremiah 3:19, etc.); two, turning back to God in repentance as in 2 Chronicles 7:14 cf. Hosea 6:1; 7:10; 14:3; Jeremiah 3:7; 1 Kings 8:23, 48, etc.; three, turning back from evil (1 Kings 8:35; 13:33; Jeremiah 15:7; 18:8; Ezekiel 18:30; etc.) among others (Brown, Driver & Briggs, 1979).

There are three verbs in 2 Chronicles 7:14 that show what God would do in response to the plight of the people of Israel. The first verb is *shama*^c which means to hear, obey or listen to. The verb *shama*^c is used of man in the context of hearing and perceiving by ear (Genesis 3:10; Amos 8:11; etc.). The word is also used of God as the subject (Genesis 21:17; 2 Kings 19:4, 16) and it is usually with favour (Numbers 20:16; Deuteronomy

33:7). When God hears, he forgives and sends help (1 Kings 8:30, 32; Isaiah 30:19; Brown, Driver & Briggs, 1979). In Judges 13:9, God hears the voice of Manoah by responding and answering his prayer (Ezekiel 8:18; Psalm 4:2).

The second verb in 2 Chronicles 7:14 which indicates what God would do is *salah* which means to forgive or pardon. This word is solely used of God's pardon and forgiveness of sinners in Numbers 14:20; 1 Kings 8:30, 39; 2 Kings 24:4; Isaiah 55:7; Amos 7:2; Lamentation 3:42; Daniel 9:19; etc. (Brown, Driver & Briggs, 1979). The fact that Yaweh forgives His people is shown in two cases of Israel's sin, that is, the incident of the golden calf (Exodus 34:9) and the murmuring at Kadesh Barnea (Numbers 14:19-20). Another time of God's pardon is on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:21, 30, 32, 34). But then the people must sincerely humble themselves in true confession (Leviticus 16:21, 31). This is the kind of forgiveness which Solomon prayed for as he led the prayer of dedication of the Temple (1 Chronicles 8:30, 34, 50 cf. 2 Chronicles 6) and which God promised to do in 2 Chronicles 7:14).

The last verb that indicates what God would do is *rapa'* which means to heal. This healing can be of God as in Genesis 20:17; Psalm 107:20; and Numbers 12:13 or it can be of man as in Ecclesiastes 3:3; Genesis 50:2 and 2 Chronicles 16:12. Figuratively, the word *rapa'* is used of healing individual distress (Jeremiah 17:14; Psalms 41:5; 147:3; Isaiah 61:3; Job 15:18). Significantly, *rapa'* is used in the context of healing the hurts of a nation; and thereby restoring her favour through forgiveness. This is exactly what God promised to do for Israel in 2 Chronicles 7:14 cf. Hosea 6:1; 7:1; 11:3; Exodus 15:26; Isaiah 19:22; 57:18-19; Jeremiah 33:6; Psalm 30:3; 2 Chronicles 30:20; etc. (Brown, Driver & Briggs, 1979).

Context of 2 Chronicles 7:14

The two books of Chronicles were originally a single volume in the Hebrew Bible, under the title *dibbrihayomayum* which literally means "the words of the days." In the Septuagint, this one volume book was divided into two parts and modern versions in English and other languages have adopted the arrangement. Canonically, 1 and 2 Chronicles are placed at the end of the third division (*Hagiographa*) in the Hebrew Bible. However, the Septuagint placed 1 and 2 Chronicles between Kings and Ezra-Nehemiah bearing in mind the historical nature of its contents (Harrison, 1969).

1 and 2 Chronicles tell the story of Israel up to the time of her return from the Babylonian captivity with emphasis on her religious life. The two

books are made up of events already discussed in Samuel and Kings (Ellison, 1984). Jewish tradition and some scholars have attributed 1 and 2 Chronicles to Ezra on the basis of similarities of ideas such as Levites and Temple found in the two books with Ezra-Nehemiah. The author who is generally referred to as the Chronicler wrote with the purpose of encouraging the post-exilic community on the need to remain faithful to Yahweh in the face of their difficulties. Merrill says:

The purpose of 1 and 2 Chronicles is to show God's elective and preserving grace in His covenant people through David, the Messianic king and priest. The purposes of 1 and 2 Kings are different. These books explain the fall and destruction of Samaria and Jerusalem as evidence of divine judgement of God's people who had forsaken His covenant requirements. The books 1 and 2 Chronicles, though not avoiding this theme, show that the gracious God of all the earth and all the ages has a better plan by which He will achieve redemptive reconciliation (1985, p.591).

1 Chronicles is divided into two parts, namely chapters 1-9, which deal with genealogies from Adam to the time of returning from the Babylonian captivity. The second part is made up of chapters 10-29 which deal with the activities of David, which include his coming to power, bringing the ark to Jerusalem and his military victories among others. 2 Chronicles is equally divided into two parts, namely chapters 1-9, which centre on the activities of Solomon, such as his building and dedication of the Temple among others. The second section of 2 Chronicles, that is, chapters 10-36 deal with the reign of Davidic dynasty, that is, from the reign of Rehoboam to the period of Babylonian captivity.

The account in 2 Chronicles 2:1-7:22 is centred on Solomon's Temple. Actually, David had it in mind to construct a temple for the LORD but, he was denied because he had been a man of war and that he had shed blood (1 Chronicles 28:3). Therefore, he made plans of the building available to Solomon his son and he also encouraged him to be strong and of good courage (1 Chronicles 28:9-21).

Specifically, the account for the preparation for the building of the temple is given in 2 Chronicles 2:1-18 cf. 1 Kings 5:1-18; the account of the building is recorded in 2 Chronicles 3:1-17 cf. 1 Kings 6:1-22; the finishing of the Temple in 2 Chronicles 4:1-5:1 cf. 1 Kings 6:23-38; 7:13-51; the bringing of the ark of the covenant in 2 Chronicles 5:2-6:2 cf. 1 Kings 8:1-13; Solomon's prayer of dedication of the Temple in 2 Chronicles 6:12-42 cf.

1 Kings 8:22-53; and the dedication of the Temple in 2 Chronicles 7:1-11 cf. 1Kings 8:62-66.

2 Chronicles 7:12-22 cf. 1 Kings 9:1-9 is the peak of the whole account of Solomon's temple. It deals with God's answer to Solomon's prayer of dedication. Here, Solomon experienced theophany, that is, the physical manifestation of the presence of God. The account of the first appearance of God to Solomon is given in 1 Kings 3:4-5 at Gibeon, the high place of worship outside of Jerusalem. It was there that Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on the altar to God. Thereafter, God asked to make his request known to Him. Solomon asked for wisdom and it was granted to him.

Even though, 2 Chronicles 7: 12-22 is parallel to 1 Kings 9:2-9; it should be noted that the Chronicler's account is much detailed than that of the Kings. In fact, 2 Chronicles 7:13-15 is not found in King's account. It has been suggested that the Chronicler added these verses primarily to accommodate his ideology and theology (Williamson, 1982).

A Theological Concept of Repentance

According to the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, the verb 'repent' has two meanings: One, it means to be sorry for something you have done, and it is used especially in a religious context. Two, it means to be sorry for something and to wish you had not done it. Thus, repentance is defined as the state of being sorry for something you have done (2013).

Repentance, which is a change of mind, is a key concept that is well discussed in biblical literature. There are two Hebrew words in respect of repentance. The first one is *naham*, a Niphal verb which has four different meanings:

- a. be sorry, moved to pity, have compassion for others as in Jeremiah 15:6 and Psalm 90:13;
- b. be sorry, suffer grief, repent of one's doing as in Exodus 13:17; Psalm 106:45; Jeremiah 20:16; Joshua 2:14; Zechariah 8:14; 1 Samuel 15:29; Job 42:6; Jeremiah 4:23; 31:19; etc.;
- c. comfort oneself, be comforted as in Genesis 38:12; Psalm 77:3; Ezekiel 31:16; 2 Samuel 13:19; Jeremiah 31:15; etc.; and
- d. comfort oneself, ease oneself by taking vengeance as in Isaiah 1:24 (Brown, Driver & Briggs, 1979).

The second Hebrew word in connection with repentance is *shub* which is used in various contexts in the Old Testament:

- a. turn back as in Judges 3:19; 8:13. It also speaks of turning back from following an individual as in 2 Samuel 11:15; 1 Kings 19:21; Ruth 1:16, etc.;
- b. return, come or go back as in 1 Samuel 17:15; 2 Samuel 19:14; 2 Samuel 8:14; etc.;
- c. return unto (Numbers 23:15,16; 2 Kings 1:6; Numbers 17:15; etc.) or come back (Genesis 8:9; Exodus 24:14; 1 Samuel 23:23; 2 Samuel 17:3; etc.);
- d. turn back from dying (Genesis 3:19; Psalms 104:29; 146:4; Ecclesiastes 3:20; Job 34:15; etc.);
- e. figuratively used of human relations. This includes return to leader or king (Judges 11:18 and 1 Kings 12:27) or to a divorced wife (Jeremiah 3:1). It can also be changing the course of action, from good to bad (2 Kings 24:1; Jeremiah 34:11,16) or bad to good (Jeremiah 34:15); and
- f. figuratively used of specific spiritual relations such as turning back from God (Numbers 14:43; 1 Samuel 15:11; 1 Kings 9:6; Jeremiah 3:19; etc.); turning back from evil (1 Kings 8:35; 13:33; Jeremiah 15:7; 18:8; Ezekiel 3:19; 13:22; Brown, Driver & Briggs, 1979).

Hamilton notes that *shub* is the twelfth most frequently used verb in the Old Testament, appearing over 1050 times particularly in the prophetic literature (1980). In terms of its distribution in the Old Testament, he says:

It [*shub*] appears most often in Jeremiah (111 times) followed by Psalms (seventy-one times), Genesis (sixty-eight times), Ezekiel (sixty-two times), 1 Kings (sixty-two times), 2 Chronicles (sixty-one times), 2 Kings (fifty-five times), Isaiah (fifty-one times) (1980, pp.2-909).

The word *shub* is used in connection with passages dealing with the Israelites returning to God and turning away from their, previous conduct, violence, idols or sin (Wurthwein, 1985).

There are two Greek words that explain repentance in the New Testament. The first word is *metamelomai* which means to have a feeling of care, concern or regret. It is the equivalent of *nacham* in Hebrew which expresses emotional aspect of repentance. Jesus used the word in the parable of the two sons in Mat. 21:28-32. The first son was asked to work on the vineyard but declined saying 'I will not.' But afterward, he repented and he went (Matthew 21:29). The same word is used in the case of Judas who was remorse after his betrayal of Jesus (Matthew 27:3); (Michel, 1985). The

second Greek word is *metanoeo* which means to repent or have a change of one's mind or to think differently about something. The preaching of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ is centred on "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (Matthew 3:2; 4:17). Also, apostle Peter, on the day of Pentecost gave a similar message by asking the congregation to "repent and be baptized, every one of you,..." (Acts 2:38) (Behm, 1985).

Incidentally, theologians such as Theissen (1983) have identified three aspects of repentance which include intellectual, emotional and volitional repentance. Intellectually, Theissen argues that repentance is a change of view with regard to sin, God and self. Sin is recognized as a personal guilt; God is recognized as the one who justly demands righteousness, while self is seen as defiled and helpless. The Bible speaks of this aspect repentance as the knowledge of sin (Romans 3:20 cf. Job 42:5-6; Psalm 51:3; Luke 15:17-18; Romans 1:32).

Emotionally, repentance is a change of feelings, whereby an individual feels sorrow for the sin he has committed and then made a desire for pardon. A good example is David who was confronted by Prophet Nathan of his adultery with Bathsheba. He says in Psalm 51: 1-2:

Have mercy upon me, O God
According to your loving kindness;
According to the multitude of your tender mercies,
Blot out my transgression.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.

Another example is Apostle Paul who wrote a severe letter to the Corinthians concerning their sins and he was pleased that their godly sorrow has produced repentance. 2 Corinthians 7:8-10 says:

For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it. For I persevere that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for a while. Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

Volitionally, repentance is a change of will, disposition and purpose. It is an inward change and turning from sin as reflected in the message of

Peter to the crowd on the day of Pentecost when he says "Repent and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..." (Acts 2:38).

Reflecting on the rabbinic view of sin, repentance and forgiveness, Blumenthal (1998) aptly outlined five important elements of repentance: recognition of one's sins as sins, remorse, desisting from sin, restitution where possible and confession.

Interpretation of 2 Chronicles 7:14 in the Nigerian Socio-Religious Context

The Babylonian captivity had come and gone. The aim of the Chronicler was to encourage the remnant to remain faithful to the instructions of Yahweh. Thus, 2 Chronicles 7:14 is within the context of dedication of the Temple built by Solomon. The verse which has been described as the "theological digest of the Chronicler's narrative" is the climax of God's response to the prayer of Solomon (Hill, 2013, p. 400). The verse was originally addressed to the covenant people of God who were not immune from the problems and challenges of life. Also, it is indicative from the verse that these people were proud and fond of doing things in their own ways. In spite of their wickedness, the covenant God is deeply interested in them and so He came to identify with them.

Four important verbs are connected with repentance in 2 Chronicles 7:14 – *kana*^c (humble), *palal* (pray), *baqash* (seek) and *shub* (turn). These four verbs explain important actions the people must take for God to intervene in their situation. Top on the list is humility as noted in 2 Chronicles 7:14 (and also in Leviticus 26:41). Prayer to God with sincerity of heart is the second step. Prayer is very crucial in the process of reconciliation, forgiveness and restoration. Hezekiah used this weapon when he was threatened and while he was sick; and God answered him (2 Chronicles 32:20; 23 and 24-26). The third step in the process of divine reconciliation is seeking the face of God for restoration at the time of crisis. The fourth and final step is turning away from evil to God. When these four steps are taken as humans, God on His part is faithful to His covenant people. Therefore, the assurance of divine intervention, forgiveness and healing by Yahweh is given.

The current socio-religious situation in contemporary Nigeria is somehow similar to what happened in ancient Israel at the time of Solomon. Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa is generally referred to "as the giant of Africa" (Ottuh, 2015, pp.41-55). The population of the country is

growing from year to year. The 2006 census put the population at over 140 million (Lawal, 2011). The current total population of Nigeria as of Monday October 11, 2021 is 212,972,927 (Nigeria Population, www.worldometers.info.nig). Nigeria is endowed with enormous natural resources. Each of the geo-political zones of the nation is blessed with favourable weather that enables an all year round production of food and cash crops. Nigeria also has abundant deposit of mineral resources such as petroleum, iron ore, marble, tin, among others. The country is equally blessed with human resources as Nigerians are doing excellently well in their various disciplines within the nation and in all the continents of the world.

The current state of affairs in the nation calls for a serious rethink on several issues and thereby bringing about a genuine repentance. There is decay and rottenness in every segment of the Nigerian society. The nation is experiencing a high level of wickedness as various atrocities are being perpetrated against humanity. The situation in the country, in spite of the over twenty years of unbroken democracy, calls for a sober reflection on the challenges. Majority of Nigerians today are living in abject poverty. Nigerians in their thousands are fleeing the country in search of greener pastures in other parts of the world. Human life has become so cheap in Nigeria especially in recent times through various insurgencies, kidnapping, ritual killings, among which have led to the untimely death of thousands of Nigerians. Innocent blood is being shed on daily basis in the land. The recent cases of bandits in Zamfara State are disheartening, and reporting on them, Alaka says:

So many people are being killed by bandits on a daily basis, in 50s and hundreds... a whole village, Baje, was sacked, set on fire and 120 people killed. The week before, 52 people were killed in a village called Gidan da Mousa and Kursasa; and last month, 105 people were killed in Kware ward in Shinkafi Local Government, with nobody looking their way in terms of relief or condoling with them (2019).

Indeed, there is a serious depression in the nation as reflected in the rising cases of suicide in the nation especially, among the youths. Unfortunately, religious leaders and the so-called men of God are not exempted from the perpetration of evil in the nation as there are several cases of atrocities connected with them. For instance, how can one explain a 23 year old Lagos prophet, Adewale Adeleke who allegedly scheduled a prayer session at a hotel and then raped the woman? He was thereafter arraigned on

a four count-charge of stealing, obtaining by false pretext, impersonation and rape (See: <https://www.Bellanijia.com/2014/08/23-yearold-lagos-prophet...>). Another case is that of a prophet and founder of St. Moses Orimolade Cherubim and Seraphim Church, Osere, Ilorin together with two others who were charged to court for criminal conspiracy, criminal trespass and unlawful possession of human heads. It was reported that they had regularly gained access to the popular Muslim cemetery in Ilorin since 2009 to commit the crime. They sold a skull between N6,000 to N8,000 (See: *Nigerian Tribune* Tuesday, 16th February, 2016, 18.). Furthermore, a pastor, Adekunle Adeyemi, landed himself into trouble for allegedly impregnating two members of his Church in Ibadan, Oyo State. Consequently, his 18 year old marriage was dissolved by Mapo Customary Court over abandonment, irresponsibility and impregnating church members (See: *Sunday Tribune* 3rd February, 2019, 36). All these atrocities have negative effects on the testimony of Christians and the Church in Nigeria.

Perhaps, the root cause of the current challenges in Nigeria is economic hardship which is having a negative impact on everyone in the nation. Millions of Nigerian are in a helpless situation as they lack basic amenities of life. Poverty is "the state of being poor; the state of existing in amounts that are too small, lack, the state of being inferior, poor quality" (Alamu, 2020, p.125). Currently, Nigeria is regarded as the poverty capital of the world as 93 million Nigerians are living in severe poverty (Iheonu & Urama, 2019). The economic hardship has led to greediness and self-centeredness which makes people grab whatever is available. In other words, millions of Nigerians especially the young people are involved in all kinds of unwholesome practices in the name of 'surviving the economic hardship.' Unfortunately, the situation has metamorphosed into corruption, stealing, injustice, ritual killings among others. Indeed, Nigerians (leaders and followers) must have a change of attitude so as to make meaningful progress and development in the nation.

It is encouraging that concerned individual Christians and Churches in the nation are praying, fasting and organizing vigils for divine intervention in the affairs of Nigeria. However, while this is a laudable idea, the first is for individuals especially Christians to have attitudinal change. Obviously, God may not intervene without a sincere change of attitude of Nigerians themselves. Ehusani correctly notes:

God will not save Nigeria if Nigerians continue business as usual; if they continue to cover one lie with another, and erect one unjust structure upon another. God will not save Nigeria if

Nigerians individually and collectively do not adjust their corrupt and avaricious lifestyle. God will not save Nigeria if Nigerians as individuals and as corporate entities do not make the necessary change of behavior and attitude that will make for peace and prosperity. God will not save Nigeria if the structures of injustice that are at the root of our multiple crises remain in place. Yes, God will not save Nigeria until Nigerians repent of their individual and social sins, and acquire the spiritual vision and the moral virtues, the socioeconomic values, and the political attitudes and disposition that are the foundation of peace (2002, pp. 97-9).

Conclusively, the cardinal point of this article is on repentance and a change of attitude with a view to changing the bad narrative of the nation. The nation is currently in a critical state and the solution lies in positive attitudinal change by all Nigerians irrespective of status. Genuine and lasting solution is possible if the principles outlined in 2 Chronicles 7:14 are imbibed by all Nigerians, especially the Christians. In other words, Nigerians, starting with Christians must sincerely pray to God, seek His face and turn from every form of evil and wickedness. It is on this ground that God Almighty will hear our prayers and heal the nation.

Recommendation

It is appropriate at this point to make recommendations in an attempt to bring about genuine repentance in the nation.

i. **The Government** – The people connected with the running of affairs of the government at different levels (Local, State and Federal) must do the needful. Conscious effort must be made to bring about a peaceful environment that will give room for growth in the economy at the local, state and national levels. In other words, political leaders, career officers and policy makers must resolve to provide necessary infrastructure and enabling environment for individual entrepreneurs to thrive in their businesses. A situation in which individuals are working hard and there is no encouragement from the Government makes repentance a difficult thing to do. Again, there must be justice and equity.

ii. **The Church**– The Church especially those in the leadership of various denominations must be circumspect in their actions. They must lead by example and not be involved in anything that will dent their character and testimony.

iii. **Individual Christians** – Individual Christians are expected to be ‘light and salt’, hence harbingers of peace in their respective communities. Individual Christians (in the nation) must resolve to lead campaigns advocating positive change of attitude towards the happenings in the nation. Christians must eschew every form of selfishness, covetousness, greed and other forms of vices.

Conclusion

The paper examined repentance in 2 Chronicles 7:14 in the context of socio-religious life in Nigeria. In ancient Israel, repentance was the main prerequisite for divine intervention as the covenant people were required to humble themselves, pray, seek the face of God and turn from every form of evil. In the contemporary Nigerian society, the exegesis of 2 Chronicles 7:14 is applicable mainly to the Christian community who are expected to serve as ‘light’ and ‘salt’ in the nation as well as take the lead in the campaign for attitudinal change in the affairs of the nation. Also, the leadership of the Church must live by example. In addition, the Government (Federal, State and Local), must do the needful by providing peaceful and enabling environment for the growth of economy so as to reduce the hardship making life unbearable for Nigerians. The paper recommends repentance as a solution to tackle the diverse socio-religious challenges confronting the nation. This attitudinal change must begin with the Christian community who are expected to adhere to the Biblical injunctions stipulated in 2 Chronicles 7:14.

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