

AFRICAN POVERTY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE:
A SOCIO-ETHICAL APPRAISAL OF *GAUDIUM ET SPES* VIS A VIS
THE CONTEMPORARY SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL
CHALLENGES OF SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

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Abstract:

African poverty is a tragic failure of human solidarity. In a world called global village, global pillage remains the order of the day. Solidarity to human brotherhood has been replaced by a new ontological cross-breeding of the Hobessian Credo of “*Might*” translating to “*Right*” with the crude Darwinian ethos of “*survival for the fittest*”, to midwife a new global feudalistic divide, made up of the rich and the poor. In this metaphysic, the poor are game for the rich. They are condemned to be impoverished and exploited unto extinction. This is the tragic philosophy that has rendered African poverty a scar on the conscience of the world today. This situation of poverty in Africa is never a natural phenomenon. It is a man-engineered situation. A complex interpenetration of man-made factors conspired with bio-geographic factors to brew the scandal that is African poverty.

This situation is a scandal to justice in all ethical traditions. To this end, *Gaudium et Spes*’ call to justice, challenges us to review our ethical assumptions, and commit to a preferential option for the poor. This seminal document in our view, dialogues with our pretences to accuse our indifference that “*If the misery of the poor be not caused by the laws of nature but by our institutions, then great is our sin*”. The paper argues that we have not tried to eradicate poverty and failed. The problem remains that we have failed to try in spite of our posturing, sloganeering, media-showmanship and politicking.

1. Echoes

“I come that they may have life and have it most abundantly”
~ Gospel According to St. John 10:10

“The Glory of God is man fully alive”
~ St. Ireneus

“We have enough for everybody’s need. But not enough for everybody’s greed”
~ Mahatma Gandhi

No man should be allowed or forced to die, because he cannot afford to live
~ Emmanuel Franklyne Ogbunwezeh

If the misery of the poor be caused not by the laws of nature, but by our institutions, great is our sin.
~ Charles Darwin

2. An Obscene Picture

It is night, in a dark sleepy slum, some distance from the centre of reckoning. This conglomeration of shanties, was once a heavily populated Third World “suburbia”, characterised by sub-standard housing, squalor, poverty, noise and bubbling night-life. On this particular night, the town is a ghost of its former self. The town goes to bed early these days. Many of those whom a few years ago, kept the joyful social vigils, characteristic of African night-life; the young men and women that gave the place, its vivacity, flavour and glamour, are now asleep. They are really sleeping in peace, in the various improvised graveyards across the town. They are dead. They are victims of a strange illness that swept across almost all the families inhabiting this stretch. They are dead of AIDS’ related causes. And by the look of things, many more would be joining them soon.

On this exceptionally dark night, three children sat, huddled close to a skeletally-skinny woman, stretched out on the mat in the dimly, paraffin-lamp lit, leaky, squalid ramshackle, which enjoys the pretence of housing them. The woman is dying. She has been lying down in pain, afflicted with bedsores, rashes, and a never-ending spastic cough; as a result of this strange illness, that killed her husband about a year ago, and has progressively reduced her from a once plumb belle, to a crumbled sack of bones. The children clad in tatters, looked on hopelessly as their mother executed a weak attempt to say something with great effort. The last child; 3 years old, is crying. She is hungry. The kids have not had anything to eat since afternoon. And they are not going to have anything to eat. None was there. There is no food. They are going to pass the night on empty stomach. It is possible that the 3 year old will tire himself out with cries, and then fall hopelessly into an exhausted, harassed sleep. The other two 6 and 9 years old respectively could put a little fortitude. Sometimes, they took time crying, when the hunger becomes unbearable. At other times, they keep quiet because they have no energy even to cry. The oldest girl at 9 years old is the new mother. She is now hardened by suffering, which she took upon her young shoulders, when her mother took ill and was confined to bed. She goes out very early in the morning to the garbage dumps to scavenge for food. She treks about 3 kilometres in search of water. She has finally dropped out of the elementary school that she was attending, not only because most of the teachers are dead or are in the hospital, but equally because, there is nobody to pay her tuition, and there is no food to eat. Education cannot be had on an empty stomach. It cannot equally be had, when no one is paying for it, especially in her situation. It cannot be had equally when her mother lay dying and her siblings face gastronomic emergencies for want of food daily. She is not in school, and she has no hope of ever seeing the four walls of a school again in her life. Her fate has been sealed. HIV/AIDS killed her father. It will soon kill her mother. Her 3 year old brother may probably be the next in line. She looks 15. Her 9 year old body has aged real fast.

She was conceived in extreme poverty. She was born and baptised with hunger and deprivations. Now she has been forcefully matriculated by a conspiracy of circumstances, which she was not privy to, into maternal responsibilities, which she is ill-equipped by age and circumstance, to shoulder. Her childhood has been stolen and embezzled, by the disease that ravaged her family, and placed such a heavy, unsupportable burden on her weak

shoulders. She has no name. Insignificance is her name. Her story does not make the headlines. She is simply a piece of statistic in some database or chart. She has been roped into an unbreakable cycle of poverty, which has compromised her childhood and mortgaged her future. With her childhood dropping off the horizon, she is an adult already, at an age when her mates in other climes are still enjoying the patronage of parents and the privileges of childhood.

3. Justifying our Preliminary Approach

Barging into an academic arena with a story may be viewed with some methodological circumspection. Academic forums, in the course of history rose to demand hard data and facts, as currencies of its methodological operation. It reserves almost no place for speculative stories, meant for human emotions, or the contrivances of fictional creativity. Well, these misgivings are anticipated and welcomed. These anticipated misgivings would have been validly canvassed, if the story above is really fiction¹.

Critics are wont to dismiss our choice of a story above, as some enfeebled and cheap attempt to purchase sympathy for the African predicament. Well, be that as it may, one needs not venture far, to see that penury and debilitating squalor attends, and constitutes the basic furniture of the lives of millions of Africans today. We are not shopping for sympathy. We are demanding for justice. We are asking that all the manufactured socio-political, and engineered economic chains manacling Africa's development be removed. Justice demands that unjust structures of greed, like the odious debt burden, hanging like the sword of Damocles on the neck of the continent, be in justice removed. The mortal dangers posed to the survival of Africans by structures like this impoverishing debt overhang, is even recognizable to a blind man. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development was simply stating an obvious known to the millions of African living in unspeakable poverty when they observed:

That Africa's debt burden has been a major obstacle to the region's prospects for increased savings and investment, economic growth and poverty reduction cannot be denied. The continent's debts overhang has inhibited public investment in physical and social infrastructure. It has also hampered private investment, as investors could not be assured of policy continuity in an environment marked by severe external imbalances. And by undermining critical investments in health and human resource development, the debt overhang has compromised some essential conditions for sustainable economic growth, development and poverty reduction²

We are not peddling our plight to purchase pity. Africa is here at this table of discourse because of our belief in our common humanity. We come with open hearts, though our claim to this common humanity has been questioned in some many historical instances, like the slave trade; and is still questioned today in the last pockets of racism and racial discrimination against people of colour everywhere. We seek solidarity and justice from all men of goodwill. Collectively we can liberate people from the bondage of poverty everywhere.

4. The Politics of Poverty

Before visiting facts and statistics, we wish to submit that poverty unfolds daily in its royal ugliness, in Africa. This becomes more painful when we realise that, the poverty we witness today in Africa is not the act of nature. It is the product of human caprice; structuralized and consolidated through centuries of oppressive abuse of the African continent; both by ancient marauders, medieval conquistadors, and modern neo-colonial invaders and their kleptocratic collaborators from within and without. The story above is a tip of the reality that is hidden or most times, skilfully edited out of the front pages of our newspapers and television cameras. And the sad reality is that the nameless children above are found in almost all countries of Africa south of the Sahara

Scientific facts and statistics that are the stuff of academic conferences and forums, are most times, politically deployed to unwittingly hide the facts, and immunize our considerations, from the harsh tragedy that plays out in our immediate, and global neighbourhoods. For instance, despite the 1974 World Food Conference proclamation, that “every man, woman and child has the inalienable right to be free from hunger and malnutrition in order to develop their physical and mental faculties”, and various other follow-up initiatives and conferences, like the 1996 World Food Summit held in the Eternal City, with its avowed goal of eradicating hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition within a decade, the problem of massive poverty especially in Sub-Saharan Africa still stares us in the face, and constitutes what we have elected to identify as the scandal of Poverty in Africa. Decades of United Nations initiatives, conferences, symposia, seminars and even actions have not really scratched the surface, in addressing the complex and multi-dimensional face of African poverty. Most of these conferences have ended up being tagged compassionate showmanship³, or theoretical talk-shops, where armchair theoreticians and blue-collar Washington-based technocrats, gathered in a widely televised charade, to pontificate in the celebration of their academic degrees and connections, over cups of coffee.

Policy failure and lack of funding has been cited as the reasons for the failure of the laudable policy initiatives in this direction.⁴ But this is wooden apology for a fundamental lack of political will and strategic unconcern, displayed by world leaders in seeking an end to the modern enslavement of the black continent. Promises that have been to Africa in the past have been randomly dishonoured in pursuit of the greedy goals of corporate capital and strategic geo-politics. Vivisecting this phenomenon, the Christian Aid 2004 Report, alerting us about the moves being made today, in the Post 9/11 world political equation by donor countries wrote as follows:

For moves currently being made among members of the biggest and most influential ‘rich-country clubs’ betray a worrying shift in how they see aid commitments. Aid is viewed increasingly as a means of promoting and safeguarding the donor’s own interests, particularly their security, rather than addressing the real needs of poor people. Aid, in other words, is being co-opted to serve in the global ‘War on Terror’⁵

Though aid has always, to some extent, been given with at ‘least one eye on the self interests of the giver – be it to secure influence, trade or strategic resources’, but politics should take the second position, when we confront threats to life, peace and stability of our world. And Poverty is the greatest threat to these values we have cause to cherish. Lending credence to the fact that poverty eradication is realisable, Jeffrey Sachs, maintains that:

If the rich countries will follow through on the promises they have made over the past five years to fight extreme poverty and disease – and rely on the best

science and technology in doing so – the world can save millions of lives and extricate hundreds of millions of its poorest people from the trap of extreme poverty. The cost is mere 50 cents out of every \$100 of rich-world income in the coming decade⁶

Consolidating his argument, Sachs laid down concrete instances:

The point is simple. Consider malaria, a silent Tsunami whose devastation washes over Africa at a proportion that dwarfs the recent Indian ocean tsunami. Each month more than 150,000 Africa children die of malaria; that's about the death toll of the Asian disaster. Yet those deaths do not sear the public's mind. Off camera, they are largely unknown. On top of the tragedy and vast economic cost, they contribute to the continent's population explosion, as impoverished Africans have large families to counter the present threat.⁷

The shocker for Sachs, is that “malaria, unlike the Indian Ocean earthquake, largely preventable and utterly treatable”.

There is no excuse for the millions of death that will occur this year. A \$5 dollar mosquito bed net specially treated with insecticides, used widely throughout rural Africa, could dramatically lower the rate of malaria illness and death. Effective medicines, at roughly \$1 dollar per dose, could treat the cases that slip by the bed nets. Yet Africa's poverty is so extreme that rural farm families know about the bed nets and the medicines – and long for them – but can't afford the few dollars they would cost⁸

Arguing further, and heavily supported by the Millennium Report “Investing in Development”⁹, Sachs stated that, “just \$2 to \$3 dollars per American and other citizens of the rich world would be needed each year to mount an effective fight against malaria”¹⁰ But since the rich world is still playing politics with hunger¹¹ and poverty¹², the situation is still there, progressively compounded by the advent of HIV/AIDS. And since then, the statistics has been staggeringly scandalous. Over 24,000 people die daily of hunger worldwide¹³, under our nostrils. Yet, it scarcely merits attention on the front page of major newspapers or major cable channels. Over 800 million people go to bed hungry every night in our world, most of them women and children¹⁴ Almost 200 million children under five years of age are underweight due to a lack of food. One child dies every seven seconds from hunger and related causes¹⁵ The FAO in its 1996 reports concluded that unless progress is accelerated, there could still be some 680 million hungry people in the world by the year 2010, more than 250 million of whom would be in sub-Saharan Africa¹⁶. The irony of all these is that: there is enough food in the world for everyone¹⁷.

During the cold war, Africa was crucified in between two thieving ideologies. In the name and on behalf of these ideologies, the continent was decimated for good measure. Whole nations and regions were blighted by the subsuming of their interests to a global crusade. Poverty eradication or development aid was politicized and allotted on the basis of where a country stood in the great cold war confrontation. Today, after 9/11, poverty eradication and development aid, seems to have reverted to the status it enjoyed during the cold war; in furtherance of the ideological excesses of a unipolar global monolith. The world is back to playing politics, while the major causes of insecurity and terrorism, which is poverty rampages unrestrainedly. But this preoccupation with terrorism, which is no doubt a threat, is simply a treatment of the symptom while abandoning poverty, which is the cause. Mirroring our stand in this direction, the Christian Aid report was emphatic:

Of course there is a genuine threat from terrorism and a duty of governments to do all they can to protect their citizens. But this should not and cannot be done by annexing the language and budgets of aid. This will not only fail to address the real issues of poverty. The risk is that if narrow security concerns are used to shape aid allocation, it could well lead to an intensification of terrorism¹⁸.

Gordon Brown, the British Chancellor of Exchequer, in April 2004, in Paris to garner support for his International Finance Facility, re-echoed this when he stated that:

We understand that it is not just ethically right that developing countries move from poverty to prosperity, but that it is a political imperative-central to our long term national security and peace-to tackle poverty that leads to civil wars, failed states and safe havens for terrorists¹⁹

5. Why Africa, When Poverty is a Universal Given?

Poverty has a universal spread no doubt. No country even the rich economies has a monopoly of poverty. No country in the world has succeed in banishing poverty of some of its members totally from its firmament. But our searchlight focuses on sub-Saharan Africa because nowhere in contemporary times, is poverty so pervasive in its spread and degrading dimension than it is in Africa. And equally because all the indicators project a very bleak future for this continent that modern archaeology situates as the birthplace of the human race.

Our preliminary decision to introduce our subject in this august forum, with a true life story of a family, banished to extremes of wretchedness, deprivations, hunger, sickness and certain death by poverty is not only justified by the statistics submitted below, to the effect that:

There are 830 million undernourished people in the world today and 791 million live in developing countries... The largest number of people who suffer nutritional deficiencies live in Asia and the Pacific region, where poverty, unsafe water and poor sanitation contribute to poor health. But the worst conditions continue to be, largely, in Africa. One out of every three people in Sub-Sahara Africa is undernourished. High government debt burdens, inadequate funding for health and education, pervasive poverty, poor agricultural productivity, weak public institutions and the AIDS pandemic all are major causes. In Sub-Sahara Africa 180 million or 33% of the total population of 539 million suffer from under-nourishment and the worst hit countries include Angola, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia and Eritrea²⁰

The above statistics though compounded by the fact that over 310 million Africans are living in chill penury, squalor and incomprehensible poverty, with no escape in sight. It is accentuated by the fact that in our world today, according to Mahatma Gandhi, and especially in Africa south of the Sahara, there are people so hungry, that God cannot appear to them except in the form of bread. That is why we choose to reflect anew on this situation, which is an affront on the conscience of our world. We would have chosen another path, had the obverse of this present situation obtained or has the immediate possibility of obtaining in Africa. But this situation does seem to have no chance of abating, with the present hyper-capitalistic mindset, that informs the present socio-political and economic metaphysic and anthropology of the modern world.

6. The Harsh Face of Poverty in Africa

According to the World Bank report, Africa's estimated population in 1995 was 580 million. Out of this estimate, 291 million people had an average incomes of below 1\$ per day in 1998. 124 million of those up to age 39 were at risk of dying before 40. 43 million children were stunted as a result of malnutrition in 1995. 205 million were estimated to be without access to health services in 1990-1995. 249 million were without safe drinking water in 1990-1995. More than 2 million infants die annually before reaching their first birthday. 139 million youths and adults were illiterate in 1995. These data may seem anachronistic. But not when one juxtaposes it with the United Nation's Millennium Development goals, which authoritatively reported that:

There were at least 118 million fewer people living in extreme poverty at the decade's end than at its beginning. And if projected growth remains on track, global poverty rates will fall to 12.5 percent – less than half the 1990 level – and 366 million more people will avert extreme poverty. But rapid progress in Asia and a return to pre-transition poverty levels in Europe and Central Asia will do nothing to alleviate the crushing burden of poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa, where more than 314 million people will continue to live on less than \$1 a day.²¹

Africa today is a continent in deep crisis. And the statistics and figures essay in many cases, to cover the tragedy and hardship that lie behind the numbers²². But the statistics despite all reservations, point to the fact that, there has been an Africanization of global poverty.²³ This is because of the fact that

No where, is poverty, ignorance and disease most clearly evident in concentrated, consolidated and more pervasive dimensions, than in Africa south of the Sahara²⁴

Studies show that on the area of income poverty since the late 1980s, Africa's share of those living on less than \$1 a day to have risen. The absolute number of poor in Africa has grown five times more than the figure for Latin America, and twice that for South Asia. According to Howard White et al (2001), the poor economic performance of many African countries for the last two decades implies that these recent changes reflect a long-run trend. Social indicators have improved but more slowly in Africa than else where. For instance, 20 years ago, infant mortality was lower in Africa than in South Asia; today it is substantially higher²⁵ All these indicators prompted the lamentations of Elsa Artadi and Xavier Sala-i-Martin that :

There should be no doubt that the worst economic disaster of the 20th century is the dismal growth performance of the Africa continent ... The total number of the poor in the world declined from 1.3 billion in 1975 to 900 in 2000. During this period of overall improvement, however, Africa's poor increased from less than 140 million in 1975 to over 360 million in the year 2000.²⁶

Today in Africa, over 21% of the population have no access to drinking water. 27% lack access to primary health care.²⁷ The trend keeps getting worse, that the UNDP report submitted that:

Despite the considerable momentum in efforts to reduce poverty and eradicate its extreme forms, the sobering reality is that more than two in five sub-Saharan Africans are income-poor. Moreover, the regions human poverty-as gauged by malnutrition, illiteracy and lack of access to safe drinking water and health facilities-is second only to South Asia's. Today sub-Saharan Africa is

one of the world's most unequal regions. And it is the only region where both income poverty and human poverty are on the rise-both in the number of poor people and in their share of the total population.²⁸

These statistics is equally compounded by the fact that over 3 million people have died in Congo D.R.C since what could be termed the African world war started out there. The world is standing by and consulting political correctness, while thousands of people are daily massacred in a genocidal pogrom in Dafur Sudan. Liberia and Sierra Leone are yet to recover from the effects of the civil wars and the refugee situations in those countries.

7. African Poverty as a Monumental Scandal

Poverty is not merely deprivation. It means shame, degradation; the searing of the most sensitive parts of our moral and mental nature as with hot irons; the denial of the strongest impulses and the sweetest affections; the wrenching of the most vital nerves.²⁹ The poor has no name. Poverty spells irrelevance, inconsequence and insignificance³⁰. It is unfreedom³¹ Mahatma Ghandi named it the worst form of violence, ever perpetrated on human person and dignity. It is equally a tragic threat to world peace and stability. Aristotle bears us out on this, when he opined that "Poverty is the mother of revolutions and crime". David Brooks cannot but agree totally with this when he stated that "If we are going to stop wars on this earth, we are going to have to make war on hunger our number one priority"³²

Poverty is a tragic failure of human solidarity. Credence is lent to this by the practical operations of the solidarity and subsidiarity principle that obtained in the traditional social cosmology of the Igbo people of South Eastern Nigeria³³. In this traditional society, poverty which translates to basic or fundamental deprivations and unfreedoms according to Amartya Sen was simply non-existent. The society cared for its own. Nobody was so poor as to be treated like a piece of trash or excluded from opportunities of actualizing himself. Okonkwo the protagonist of Chinua Achebe's "Things fall Apart" mirrors the fact we are canvassing here. Unfortunately, Ndigbo are gradually losing this traditional safety nets and social insurance to the rampaging and destructive onslaught of colonialism and its aftermath. Today, most of Africa harbour beggars in the streets, vagabonds and people who lack access even to the basic necessities needed for their lives.

In a world that is now called a global village, global pillage is the order of the day³⁴. Solidarity to human predicament has been replaced by a new crude crossbreeding of the Hobbessian credo of "might translating into right", and the Darwinian ethos of "survival being for the fittest", to sire a new feudalistic relationship, where the poor are exploited and impoverished unto death; allowed and even forced to die, through unceasing, and un-abating exploitation, because they are powerless to afford a life. Echoing our stand here, Jan Vandermoortele, reported that James Grant,-the then UNICEF director, in the early 1990s, argued that "the problem is not that we have tried to eradicate global poverty and failed; the problem is that no serious and concerted attempt has ever been made". He went further to underline the fact that without concerted and intensified efforts, 2015 will meet few of the Millennium Development Goals at the global level³⁵ Bemoaning this situation, Nelson Mandela was of the view, that "like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings"³⁶. This becomes an imperative in a situation where "in this new century, millions of people in the world's poorest countries remain imprisoned, enslaved and in chains...trapped in the prison of poverty"³⁷

This dearth of solidarity is witnessed to, by Tom Barry, the author of *The Soft War: Uses and Abuses of U.S Economic Aid in Central America*. He essays to portray the fact that the aid and development assistance policy of the most powerful nation on earth, follows along lines that are termed “selective and strategic”. This implies that aids and assistance to needy countries has nothing to do with poverty eradication considerations, but tied to a compliance with America’s products, technical assistance and compliance to the political or socio-economic ideological prescription issued by Washington. In this regard, Barry wrote:

Foreign assistance is one of the most flexible instruments of U.S foreign policy, since it can be used alternately as a carrot and a stick. Countries that co-operate with U.S national security initiatives-no matter their record on such foreign aid objectives as democracy, human rights, or good governance-receive aid as carrots³⁸

Continuing he stated that

In addition to aid selectivity measured by national security goals, USAID has established its own criteria of “effectiveness” when evaluating how development funds should be spent. In the past, USAID has used its project funding to foster such goals as privatization, economic liberalization, and austerity...development funds are available only to countries that meet strict preconditions-including a commitment to free trade, co-operation with U.S foreign policy initiatives, and no-holds-barred economic liberalization, as well as national treatment for U.S investors.³⁹

That is to say:

Instead of conditioning new aid to agreed-up reforms, countries need to meet U.S imposed political, economic, and governance conditions in advance of new aid commitments⁴⁰

And today the trend continues in that despite the wooden justifications conscripted to that end, “the US administration’s “global war on Terrorism” is the main determinant in the distribution of economic aid-not development needs, not humanitarian disasters, not hunger or the increasing numbers of the world population living on a dollar or less. In providing a new rationale for U.S foreign aid, the war on terrorism has provided a new policy coherence that integrates foreign assistance with foreign and military policy⁴¹

The situation would not have been as terribly scandalous as it is, if an active policy of usurping the sovereignty of poor nations, through odious debts was not actively cultivated and pursued with a religious vigour by what has come to be identified, as the instrument of this cabal, namely, the World Bank and IMF. John Perkins 2004 book, "The confessions of an Economic Hit man, was a description of how this world order is actively created and sustained by the greed of corporate capital. This view found echoes in the work of Joseph Stiglitz⁴². Stiglitz, a Nobel Prize winner in Economics; a one-time chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, and chief economist at the World Bank, particularly concerned with the plight of the developing nations, he became increasingly disillusioned as he saw the International Monetary Fund and other major institutions put the interests of Wall Street and the financial community ahead of the poorer nations⁴³. He was so enraged by the active complicity of the Bretton Woods institutions in creating and sustaining poverty in developing countries that “*Globalization and its Discontents*” became simply an all out attack on the

economic order and policies that the “Washington Consensus” has imposed upon the world⁴⁴ For him, it was scandalous that ideology instead of good economic thinking rule decisions at the highest decision making quarters in Washington, which then goes on to impose this flawed, deficient and ideologically-powered goofs upon the rest of the world. Exploding his exasperations, Stiglitz wrote:

As a professor, I spent a lot of time researching and thinking about the economic and social issues I dealt with during my seven years in Washington. I believe it is important to view problems in a dispassionate way, to put aside ideology and look at the evidence before making a decision about what is the best course of action. Unfortunately, though not surprisingly, in my time at the White House... and at the World Bank, I saw that decisions were often made because of ideology and politics. As a result many wrong headed actions were taken, one that did not solve the problem at hand, but that fit with the interest or beliefs of the people in power⁴⁵

Prior to these two, Obiora Ike and Emeka Ngwoke (1997) lamented this situation, in their terse response to World’s Bank’s report on Nigeria. They observed that the World Bank’s report on Nigeria was not “an unbiased or objective assessment of Nigeria’s socio-economic situation with a view to laying open policy options for the country’s leaders. Rather, one notices a determined defence of an entrenched position and a thinly veiled attempt to sell or rather force down our throat a particular model of fiscal policies and macro-economic management⁴⁶

From all these, one would not be stretching the frontiers of common sense, if one concludes that in spite of the baggage of socio-economic and political disadvantages collected in the course of her chequered history of social and geo-political evolution, which compromised her trajectory of development; Africa’s poverty especially as made manifest in Sub-Saharan Africa of today, was actively engineered, and is being radically sustained by the unholy marriage of non-ethical politics to the vaulting ambitions of corporate greed, ideology, and faulty anthropologic metaphysic that swirls around the “Washington Consensus”.

This faulty anthropological metaphysic is a cocktail of consolidated ideologies erected on the ruins of racism and class consciousness. This view worships only the wellbeing and profit for the privileged classes while, treating the poor as sub-class of the human race. This is a prevailing subterranean pseudo-philosophy operative in many Western socio-political conceptual schemes, where some powerful western ideological blocs, view other countries as being there for the satisfaction of their energy needs, and not as a sovereign nation of human beings, with a life, destiny, and culture that should be respected, and given a fair chance to exist. This disjointed anthropology views human beings, as pawns to be sacrificed at the altars and chessboards of statecraft and political brinkmanship, or a mine to be exploited for the profit of corporate capital, which seems to have hijacked the governments of many powerful nations of the world today⁴⁷. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops was referring to this when they wrote:

Sadly, race and geographical proximity, as well as economic and political factors, it seems, can disproportionately shape our nation’s foreign policy. While genocide in the Balkans attracts a serious U.S. response, Rwandan genocide did not. Conflict in Northern Ireland commands significant U.S. attention, but not war and persecution in Sudan⁴⁸

One understands this clearly, when one realises that American troops quickly abandoned Somalia to be crucified in between competing warlords, because Somalia is a geopolitical and socio-economic backwater, that does not feature or figure in the radar screens of American Strategic interests; citing as reasons; their loss of some Marines in their relief effort. But thousands of their soldiers are dead, and many more are dying everyday in Iraq, and withdrawal is not even considered as an option or part of the agenda, until their aims are achieved. The United States is spending over \$87 Billion dollars in prosecuting the war in Iraq⁴⁹, while the United Nations estimates that less than half of that amount is enough to provide clean water, adequate diets, sanitation services, and basic education to every person on the planet⁵⁰. Is it not a misplacement of values? What kind of philosophy would be driving this culture of death, while lives are screaming to be saved in the poor regions of the world? The only philosophy capable of driving this kind of outright misplacement of priorities in deference to profit, cannot be entertaining a positive philosophy of man. And only a materialistic/hedonistic culture that canonizes greed, worships profit and mammon, can do this while sleeping with a “good” conscience. And this philosophy of man is so misplaced that Kantian ethics forbade it. Gaudium et Spes stands in contradistinction as well as an indictment on this conceptual scheme.

John Berger captured this well. He wrote:

The poverty of our century is unlike that of any other. It is not, as poverty was before, the result of natural scarcity, but of a set of priorities imposed upon the rest of the world by the rich. Consequently, the modern poor are not pitied...but written off as trash. The twentieth-century consumer economy has produced the first culture for which a beggar is a reminder of nothing⁵¹

It is a scandal because the forces of corporate capital and political greed, seems to have hijacked power in major world capitals, and are hell bent on erecting a globalized empire that will cater only to their avaricious blueprints, even if the whole world perishes in the process. To achieve this dream of empire, they have Balkanized the world into great conceptual divides made up of haves and have-nots. It is a neo-feudalistic structure on a global level, where some isolated pockets of political influence conspires with some faceless cabal representing corporate capital, to keep some sections of our globe in perpetual servitude to the conveniences of the others. Today, the poverty of over 850 million human beings world wide is political capital for the strategic geo-political calculations of this corporate cabal, with tentacles in the highest echelons of power and reckoning in the world. Perkins (2004) submits forcefully that this subterranean cabal of influence peddlers that are hell bent on achieving the unholy objectives of greedy capital, groom economic hit men to do the dirty jobs. He describes the job detail of economic hit men, and what they are designed to achieve. The woman who trained him and introduced him into the art told him the following:

We're a small exclusive club. We are paid – well paid – to cheat countries around the globe out of billions of dollars. A large part of your job is to encourage world leaders to become part of a vast network that promotes U.S. commercial interests. In the end, those leaders become ensnared in a web of debt that ensures their loyalty. We can draw on them whenever we desire – to satisfy our political, economic, or military needs. In turn they bolster their political positions by bringing industrial parks, power plants, and airports to their people. The owners of U.S. engineering/construction companies become fabulously wealthy⁵²

Stretching it further in a no-holds-barred fashion, he described a major league of deceit, in which he played for most of his adult life: He speaks for himself thus:

...we are an elite group of men and women who utilize international financial organizations to foment conditions that make other nations subservient to the corporatocracy running our biggest corporations, our government and our banks. Like our counterparts in the Mafia, EHM's provide favours. These take the form of loans to develop infrastructure – electric generating plants, highways, ports, airports, or industrial parks. A condition of such loans is that engineering and construction companies from our own country must build all these projects. In essence, most of the money never leaves the United States; it is simply transferred from banking offices in Washington to engineering offices in New York, Houston or San Francisco. Despite the fact that the money is returned almost immediately to corporations that are members of the corporatocracy (the creditor), the recipient country is required to pay it all back, principal plus interest. If an EHM is completely successful, the loans are so large that the debtor is forced to default on its payment after a few years. When this happens, then like the Mafia we demand our pound of flesh. This often includes one or more of the following: control over the United Nations votes, the installation of military bases, or access to precious resources such as oil...Of course, the debtor still owes us the money – and another country is added to our global empire⁵³

Tom Barry consolidates the submissions of Perkins above citing relevant statistics to that end. He wrote:

A long running measure of the effectiveness of U.S aid has been its ties to U.S. exports and technical assistance. According to USAID, 81% of its procurements come from U.S. sources. This falls short of the 87% U.S. procurement rate for U.S military aid. That figure would be 100% if it were not for a special provision that allows Israel to use U.S. military aid to buy from its own military contractors⁵⁴

Today, the scandal is more accentuated because “we see the results of this system run amok. Executives at our most respected companies hire people at near-slave wages to toil under inhuman conditions in Asian sweatshops. Oil companies wantonly pump toxins into rain forest rivers, consciously killing people, animals, and plants, and committing genocide among ancient cultures. The pharmaceutical industries denies lifesaving medicines to millions of HIV-infected Africans...The income ratio of the one-fifth of the world's population in the wealthiest countries went from 30 to 1 in 1960 to 74 to 1 in 1995”⁵⁵ To this end, therefore we are called upon then, not to rest on oars, in pointing out the wrongness, the injustice and ethical obscenity of a conceptual scheme supporting the manacled and tying of millions of people to the pillars of eternal poverty, while spending billions in projects designed to perfect more efficient ways of killing people and destroying human lives. This is where Gaudium et Spes challenges human sensibilities that have been lulled to sleep by a faulty anthropology and philosophy of man that delights in having more than in being more.

8. African Poverty and Social Justice

The situation of abject poverty; strangulating debt burden; unfair and unjust terms of trade between Africa and the Western powers; the hijacking of many African governments and economies by IMF and World Bank armchair technocrats; the structural adjustment of African economies into pauperization; the globalization and liberalization of poverty in Africa, the destruction of African ecosystem by greedy Trans-national and Multi-national concerns in exploitative and unsustainable search for raw materials and natural resources; the seeming conspiracy of silence, manoeuvrings and inaction that greets this situation; the active fanning of the embers of ethnicity and other primeval allegiances⁵⁶, which has littered the African socio-political landscape with civil wars and other internecine strife and intractable conflicts; the pervasive and widespread illiteracy of majority of African population; the advent and rampaging onslaught of HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other primary health care crises; the African refugee crises and brain drain; a long line of grotesquely incompetent and kleptocratic leadership et cetera: are the facts that encircle daily life-experience in Sub-Saharan Africa today. These retrogressive interpenetrating network of factors, have enjoyed a crosspollination, which borne on the wings of the world's unconcern, has mutated into an almost solution-resistant strain of social malady. The situation has degenerated to the level, where many Africans who can no longer stomach this "luxurious" depreciation of life, flee from the situation into some comfortable slavery in Europe and America; either as commercial sex workers as are seen today in the streets of Rome, and so many other European capitals; or as drug couriers, and fraudsters, in a bid to survive in an equally inclement clime. This is the face of poverty. Wealthy men never go into voluntary exile. It is only the poor, or the unsafe who seek to better their lives that go on self imposed exile to that end. That is a major indicator of the situation of today's Africa. What about the justice of the whole situation?

African poverty is a scandal,⁵⁷ against social justice, more so, at a time in history, when humanity lives in unprecedented opulence and flamboyance. This situation stands as an inexcusable scandal, and a monumental affront to right reason, and ethics. No ethical tradition or socio-philosophical pedestal can ever rise up in justifiable defence of a manufactured situation, where millions of people in one part of the world are terminally exploited, abandoned and actively encouraged to die for want of food, basic health care, clean potable water, shelter, and clothing. Yet these same people are forced to yield up their labour in perpetual repayment of debts which are at best odious⁵⁸. It is really sickening that dogs, cats and other domestic pets in the Western part of this our global village, are deluged with food, health care and other necessities that is unaffordable to over 650 million people in the Third World. Is it not a scandal that these animals enjoy, in these climes, what can be conservatively called a sybaritic lifestyle, equipped not only with the necessities, that the third world needs, but with pleasures that human beings in some parts of the same world cannot even dream of, let alone affording? The Question then comes: Where is ethics in the heart of modern man?

Today, on the morn of the 21st century, African situation confronts us more than ever before, as an obscene affront to every ethical canon and tradition. The fact that extreme poverty still hangs ominously over much of the African continent is nothing but a desecration of social justice. It is really a sickening paradox. This sickening persistence of poverty in a world of plenty must have inspired Amartya Sen, when he observed as follows:

We live in a world of unprecedented opulence, of a kind that would have been hard to even imagine a century or two ago. There have been also remarkable changes beyond the economic sphere. The twentieth century has established democratic and participatory governance as the pre-eminent model of political organization. Concepts of human rights and political liberty are now very much

a part of the prevailing rhetoric. People live much longer, on the average than ever before. Also, the different regions of the globe are now more closely lined than they have ever been. This is not only in the fields of trade, commerce and communication, but also in terms of interactive ideas and ideals⁵⁹

The above observations are laudable, and would have been a cause for benediction to human ingenuity. But unfortunately, that is not the whole story. Sen, in the same breath, flipped the other side of the coin; revealing an unsettling conjunct that really scandalizes the fragile sensibilities of every ethical tradition. How could we celebrate human achievements above, while the obverse rubbishes our humanity? How could we be dinning and wining in jubilations, in good conscience while human suffering unfolds next door? How could human beings sleep in peace and quiet, while their neighbours are noisily escorted by hunger into insomnia? We have laudable achievements that spell development:

And yet we also live in a world with remarkable deprivation, destitution and oppression. There are many new problems as well as old ones, including persistent poverty and unfulfilled elementary political freedoms as well as basic liberties, extensive neglect of the interests and agency of women, and worsening threats to our environment and to the sustainability of our economic and social lives⁶⁰

Lending credence to this, Nelson Mandela coming of out retirement from public life, to honour an invitation on the Campaign to end poverty in the developing world, at Trafalgar Square, London, said:

...as long as poverty, injustice and gross inequality persists in our world, none of us can truly rest...Massive poverty and obscene inequality are such terrible scourges of our times - times in which the world boasts breathtaking advances in science, technology, industry and wealth accumulation - that they have to rank alongside slavery and apartheid as social evils⁶¹

Since all ethical traditions holds that the goods of the earth belongs to all of us. The situation where less than 10% of the world's population, holds over 80% of the goods of all the earth, while the rest are living at the extremities of wretchedness and poverty, simply constitutes a structure of sin, consolidated injustice, and ethical obscenity. It is a social evil.

If development is freedom as popularized by Amartya Sen⁶², then the obverse translates to unfreedom, captivity, bondage and slavery⁶³. This justifies the construction that contemporary African poverty and predicament, is a new, more vicious form of slavery; which superlatively dwarfs the Trans-Atlantic version, both in dimension, intensity and implication. In Africa south of the Sahara today, exists a forlorn situation, where human beings are condemned to a life of denigrating poverty, hunger, ignorance, disease, insignificance, lack of access and permanent capability deprivation⁶⁴, which has arisen to constitute the furniture of their daily lives. The statistical representation of this reality, especially in view of the North-South divide, portrays the fact that the stupendous wealth of the few in the developed world, escorts millions in the Third World into poverty, and compromises the futures of millions more yet unborn. The riches of a few have reduced the Third world into a quadrangle of poverty. This construction gains an ethical currency, when one realises that nature blessed us with enough resources to afford every member of the human race, a chance at a normal life. One is then at

loss to discover that in spite of nature's bounteous blessings, majority of nature's children merely exist at the peripheries of wretchedness.

Studies and every honest assessment have shown that the problem with poverty in the world does not lie with nature, or with nature's God, despite catastrophes like the December 26th 2004, Asian Tsunami disaster. Mahatma Gandhi summarized the origins of the wretchedness of the many, as against the scandalously stupendous holdings of the few. "We have enough for everybody's need, but not enough for everybody's greed". Philosophers in the course of history have essayed to bring it home to us that we are collectively responsible for each other. Martin Buber, with his "I-Thou"; John Rawls, Alasdair McIntyre, Emmanuel Levinas; all essayed to this point in their various philosophies. Prior to them, we could enlist the support of St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas in this direction, to the effect that we are responsible for our brothers. In every positive ethical tradition, the "Cainian Escapism"⁶⁵, namely: "Am I my brother's keeper?", receives a resounding answer: YES. You are your brother's keeper. Perkins may have remotely had this in mind when he soliloquially asked the following questions:

Is anyone in the U.S. innocent?⁶⁶ Although those at the very pinnacle of the economic pyramid gain the most, millions of us depend - either directly or indirectly - on the exploitation of the LDCs (Less developed Countries) for our livelihoods. The resources and cheap labour that feed nearly all our businesses come from places like Indonesia, and very little ever makes it way back. The loans of foreign aid ensure that today's children and their grandchildren will be held hostage. They will have to allow our corporations to ravage their natural resources and will have to forego education, health and other social services merely to pay us back. The fact that our companies already received most of this money to build the power plants, airports, and industrial parks does not factor into this formula. Does the fact that most Americans are unaware of this constitute innocence? Uninformed and intentionally misinformed, yes - but innocent?⁶⁷

To this end, therefore, silence constitutes acquiescence. And we cannot exonerate ourselves from the guilt. We become unwitting collaborators, when we acquiesce or keep timid silence in the face of injustice. We therefore are empowered by ethics and charity, to contend, that an international socio-economic order and situation, that subsists on, and licenses the deployment of hunger and impoverishment, as a political weapon, and bundles development assistance to political grandstanding and dehumanizing ideology, which has little to do with ethics or good economics, save in service to the unadulterated interest of a few powerful conglomerates, and their shareholders, is against all canons of civility, ethics and social justice. This is where our tangents meet the hallowed proclamations of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council's *Gaudium et Spes*, which is really the backdrop of our ethical appraisal of the African Predicament.

We equally wish to question the justice, and the odious nature of the debts that has left Africa marooned in the sandbanks of poverty. UNCTAD report inadvertently exposed the unfairness of the situation thus:

A cursory glance at Africa's debt profile shows that the continent received some \$540 billion in loans and paid back some \$550 billion in principal and interest between 1970 and 2002. Yet Africa remained with a debt stock of \$295

billion. For its part, SSA (Sub-Saharan Africa) received \$294 billion in disbursements and paid \$268 billion in debt service, but remains with a debt stock of some \$210 billion. Discounting interest and interest on arrears, further payment of outstanding debt would represent a reverse transfer of resources⁶⁸

The conclusions of the report is right on the mark. The odious nature of most of these debts contracted by illegitimate governments, and granted by Western governments and banks as a part of the strategy in winning in the cold war, should really be written off, as it violates justice. Only an ethical metaphysic could navigate safely to this construction. This is because, the profit motive is the driving force behind businesses, including international lending and borrowing. But an ethical metaphysic holds that the human person should never be subordinated to profit. To this end, a debtor should be responsible, and honour the contractual obligations imposed on him by his borrowings. A creditor like every business man seeks the maximization of his profits. But when a situation arises which conduces to the creditor and debtor collaborating in connivance to burden a third party with the consequences of their mutual greed, then justice rises in vehement defence of right. For example:

Estimates show that, including imputed interest earnings, the accumulated stock of flight capital of Zaire (now Democratic Republic of Congo) amounted to nearly \$18 billion. The country's public external debt build-up thus appears to have been matched or exceeded by the accumulation of private external assets. Some evidence has been presented to the effect that the official and private creditors of the Mobutu regime knew, or should have known, that there was a high risk that their loans, or a substantial part of them, would not be used to benefit the Congolese people⁶⁹

Have the Congolese people not suffered enough? The history of this country like that of most of Africa, presents a classic case of repeated, un-ending rape down the centuries to the present time First it was the mad orgy for rubber, in which the French and Belgian colonialists raped this country without any qualms of conscience.⁷⁰ Then followed in 60s; the mad craving for Uranium, Diamond, and Copper to fund, the nuclear arms effort of America and her cold war allies. To effectively gain access to these resources, they installed their Man-Friday; Mobutu Sesse Seko; one of the most idiotic of African thieves, whose decades of celebrated indiscretions have burdened this nation with a huge debt burden. Today, war is still actively been fomented by the Multi-nationals in order to gain access to the huge Coltan reserves of this country, to fund the microchips age.

The Congo story has the same spread and ontology all over Africa. Where is the justice then, in the debts Africa allegedly owes to the West? Who owes who on the balance of historical realities? From the pyramid of human skulls of the Belgian colonialists in the reign of King Alfonso, through to the murder of Lumumba, and installation of Mobutu's thieving conglomerate, to the first African world war fought over Congolese Coltan; justice screams that these people should be set free from the grip of international corporate vultures who profits from the instability of the Congo and the consequent poverty it fuels and sustains. Justice demands that Africa should be set free to pursue its path to the rehabilitation of its frame, battered by centuries of abuse.

9. The Christian Church And The Poverty Of Nations

Since Jesus enjoined the rendering unto Caesar all that belong to him, and allowing Caesar unrestricted access to pontificate ex-cathedra in the province of his competence; one may at

face value, frown in askance, at what may seem an attempt to smuggle religion into a sphere where it is “hopelessly ill-equipped” to meaningfully operate, as if there exists a clear distinction or dichotomy, between man as “**homo religious**” and man as “**homo economicus**”. These doubts are not unexpected, since even professional economists have in the past queried the church’s repeated critic of some inhuman economic philosophies, which canonize profit as the sole end of human existence. This stand could be seen in the views of Helmut Schoeck, who writing in “Die Welt am Sonntag”, a German Weekly of December 15th, 1985, under the heading “Does the Church now want to Outbid Adam Smith”, attacked Cardinal Ratzinger’s critic of Adam Smith, as presiding over the introduction of “unbridled egoism in an indiscriminate manner at the heart of his writings”. Schoeck as cited by Lothar Roos, attacked as a hazardous undertaking Ratzinger’s theory that the opponents of Marxism should endeavour to put more ethics into the market economy⁷¹ Schoeck mirrored the views of many sceptics of the Ecclesia versus economy dialogue when he wrote:

It remains a mystery to me to know what we can expect to improve if churchmen and politicians now act jointly, because of the gap between the West and the Third World, in their search for an economy beyond the teachings of Smith and Marx. Moreover the Church should be careful if it now wishes to add to its profile by stepping forward as an authority in the field of economic policy⁷²

We think that the sceptics nurse a fundamental error in their conception of what the church is, and what religion is designed to do in the life and affairs of men. Their conception is further flawed and enfeebled by their introduction of a dichotomy in the human person, that treats man as being compartmentalized into mutually exclusive layers and levels of cognition, and existential operation. This dichotomy contends that the economic side of man should have nothing to do with his religious convictions, or the demands of ethics and conscience. This is a very wrong and dangerous dichotomy, which powers most of the exploitation we witness today in our world and relationships, from the microcosmic level of intra personal relationships, to the macrocosmic level of international relations. Granted that the church is not a business organization or a Wall-street listed company, she still has a stake in the lives and affairs of men, as the moral guide, that speaks her message of peace and salvation to the world and affairs of men. This fundamental error that has been the scourge of world today was anticipated and addressed by Gaudium et spes.

This document teaches that the Christian Church is ontologically a vehicle of integral and whollistic human salvation. To this end, it would have amounted, and will always amount to a chasmic contradiction in terms and in fact, if (and when) the pains and anguish of men anywhere across the face of the earth, fails to find an echo, and sympathetic empathy in her heart, or fails to exact a prophetic as well as an empathic response from her. This is more instructive against the backdrop of the fact that the life of Christ who founded this Church, was played out in the human ambience of the rough Galilean countryside; a Roman colony that was under the socio-political bondage, rude inconvenience, and psychological siege that are all fallouts of a city under the occupation of foreign colonial power and imperial domination. Yet, Christ was neither swallowed up by the ethical insensitivity which such times necessarily engender, nor was he empathically immunized by the egocentric demands for personal survival, which such climes decree. He rose to conquer the challenges imposed by those times, and in the process, wrote for all times with the ink of his blood, that man must have life and have it most abundantly. His life, death and resurrection remain a rebuke to the forces of oppression, which is supremely summarized in the death of the body. His resurrection was a testament to the fact that oppression shall not for long hold the sky. That

was the Good News: namely that Death can never own the final word in the matrix of existential equations. And that man is a more, made in the image of God and endowed with dignity, which cannot be abused without insulting his Creator.

It is an ordinance of reason that man is an end in himself that should not be used as a means for any end whatsoever. This prompted the ancient words of Protagoras, (ca.450BC) who, overawed by the dignity of man, situated man as the measure of all things *“Homo omnia mensura”* His opinions were not very far from that of the Psalmist, who in the sacred rhythms of the 8th Psalm, gave the world one of the most beautiful eulogies to man. To this end, it is aberrational to use man as a means to any end whatsoever, hence William Wordsworth’s poetic lamentations: “Have I not reason to lament, what man has made of man”? Kant’s ethics outlaws it. Philosophy frowns at it. Reason objects to it, and religion condemns it. All because man is a more⁷³ He is the omega point of creation⁷⁴ He is the midway between transcendent divinity and base materiality⁷⁵ as well as the summary of the universe. This means that Man is the measure of all things -“Homo omnia mensura”⁷⁶ and that if anything happens to man, meaning and significance would go extinct. He is, if not the author, the measure of all meaning and significance. The universe would have been a vast ocean of timeless meaninglessness, had man not appeared on the evolutionary landscape. Time exists because mind exists and “outside the mind, there is no time”⁷⁷ Hence meaning would translate to meaninglessness once man bows out of the cosmic existential stage. And that theoretical possibility is too frightening to contemplate. It is frightening whether dressed in the robes of an apocalyptic “battle of Armageddon” or in the form of a cataclysmic cosmic holocaust of an atom bomb. Whatever threatens the continued existence of man threatens meaning. I am sorry to say that God would die in man the day man is immolated in a cosmic catastrophe. The good old Saint Irenaeus has this in mind when he stated in no mean terms that “the glory of God is man fully alive”- And I think I concur with this sacred opinion.

This is why any economic system or socio-political engineering that dehumanizes the human person under any pretext; allows the oppressive exploitation of man; or condemns any man to scandalous poverty, hunger, powerlessness and insignificance is a supreme affront to religion and good conscience. The Priest and Levites of the Good Samaritan parable were indicted for their unconcern at the plight of the downtrodden neighbour. Dives’ wilful ignorance and strategic unconcern at the plight of Lazarus was laid down and condemned by Christ, as the stuff of hell where boundless selfishness reigns supreme. It is on theological basis such as that availed us by Jesus the Christ, who was the Son of God and identified himself as a Son of man, that we essay to argue that the Catholic Church should step up its defence of the rights of human beings anywhere to full access to the goods of the earth; a patrimony which belongs to all of us as children of one Father: God.

The Western civilization was predicated on the social incentives generated by the Christian church. To this end, the history of western civilization has remained the history of the Christian church; in that anyone who had anything worthwhile to say or contribute to the advancement of human civilization in those times was a son the Christian church. Today, as the son of the Christian church, I stand here to re-echo, redirect and refocus the doctrinal treasures of the Christian church on the Scandalous situation of poverty in the African continent.

The Church remains an Assembly of God’s people in whom time and eternity merges and takes on a meaning that transcends time to echo in eternity; who though tenants in the sacred halls of time, are equally citizens of eternity, where God dwells in inaccessible light. To this end, she possesses a Theandric nature, humanity and divinity meeting in a truly mysterious

and salvific manner. And because nothing truly human is foreign to the Church of Christ, then *“the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted”*, have remained *“the joys and hopes the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ”*. This continued the Pastoral constitution, is because:

Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts for theirs is a community composed of men. United in Christ, they are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the Kingdom of their Father and they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for every man. That is why this community realizes that it is truly linked with mankind and its history by the deepest bonds⁷⁸

So to the critics, as well as the genuine seekers of the reasons, why we have chosen to present African poverty in an ecclesiastical or theological forum: We answer in the powerful words of the African Moses; Dr. Nelson Mandela: "Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life. While poverty persists, there is no true freedom"⁷⁹. And the tenets of *Gaudium et spes*, gives us an ample room to navigate to that end, because our views on the dignity of man, and justice does not stand in contradistinction to each other.

10. What Africa Really Needs

Our choice of representing anew, the persistent burden and pain of Africa at the altar of consideration in this august assembly, was informed and ontologically inspired by the very first words of this seminal and revolutionary document, which emits eternally youthful refulgence hitherto unparalleled in the ecclesiological history of the Christian church. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, seating in that sacred synod convoked under the guidance and divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit, were moved and guided by this Spirit of light, as was seen in those beautiful epitome of the mystery and mission of the Christian church compressed in those opening words. From her establishment in human history by Christ who came in the mystery of the incarnation, dwelling among us on the rough plains of the Galilean countryside; *“the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted”*, have remained *“the joys and hopes the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ”*.

This, however is the joys and hopes, which availed us the courage, as well as the platform upon, which not only to review and reappraise the griefs and anguish or the pains and agonies of the peoples of Africa, but also to attempt a re-direction of the refreshing doctrinal waters of *Gaudium et spes*, unto the dry and arid riverbeds of the Scandal of African poverty. The fact is crystal clear:

Nowhere is world poverty most clearly evident and more pervasive, than in Africa south of the Sahara. African poverty is a monumental scandal to ethical sensibilities of all human traditions. Its context and content is so dehumanizing that a constructive response becomes an operative imperative if Africa is not to remain a sore on the conscience of the world⁸⁰.

Though the Synod of Bishops for Africa in 1994, brought the pain of Africa to the synodal attention of the church, the situation today reveals that the African predicament is growing unrestrainedly, so scandalous that a Levitical silence, akin to that of the priest of the Good Samaritan parable, is no longer tenable. In this regard, the US Catholic Bishops Conference,

in the spirit of the Synodal Document *Ecclesia in Africa*, came up with a Pastoral Statement in November 2001, titled “*A call to Solidarity with Africa*”. The American Bishops wrote inter alia:

We write with deep concern, witnessing the proliferation of armed conflict, deterioration in health care and education infrastructures, the weakening of social and community structures, and an increasing spread of disease and other threats to the lives of our African brothers and sisters. Our fear is that Africa’s hopes could be destroyed by indifference and inaction in Africa and around the world⁸¹

Flowing from all these we, with the deepest humility and hope in the Lord Jesus who came to set captives free, bring the wounds and pains, the griefs and anguish of over 650 million citizens of the African continent, over half of who are living in strangulating poverty, harassed daily by want, ignorance and disease; impoverished by exploitative structures of sin, internationalized greedy capital, and grotesquely incompetent leadership: We bring the agonies of these people once more to the altar of the Christian church, seeking solidarity with our situation, which the gospel commanded and *Gaudium et spes* essayed to advance. For the pains and anguish of men anywhere in the world, remains the concern of the followers of Christ. We bring our pains here seeking a declaration from the Christian church to all men of goodwill to come to the aid of this impoverished people who are virtually in the valley and shadow of death. Africa should not be allowed to die or exploited to death because she cannot afford to live.

We seek to awake the moral indignation of men of goodwill by this exploration because, a world socio-economic and political equation, where over 300 million Africans live in extreme poverty, surviving on less than \$1 dollar a day, while the dogs and pets of the West consumes food and health care that far outclasses the annual budget of all African governments put together, if not ethically repulsive in all traditions, is really a “structure of sin,”⁸² if Christian theology is anything to go by. This situation becomes more instructive when one realises as the American Bishops beautifully summed that “the world community owes much to the peoples of Africa. Africa has always served other nations as a source of rich human and material resources”⁸³

Today, what Africa needs now and most urgently is not the "compassionate showmanship" of the rich countries. Ann Loiuise Colgan was right on the mark on this:

If 2005 is to be a decisive year for Africa, the U.S and other rich countries governments must replace compassionate charades with serious action in support of Africa's most urgent priorities. They must cancel Africa's debts, greatly increase their funding to fight HIV/AIDS, fulfil their previous promises on trade-related reforms, and support multi-lateral efforts to promote peace and security in Africa, with the immediate priority of ending the genocide in Darfur⁸⁴

Africa does not need a massive infusion of hypocritical or directionless aid⁸⁵, "motivated by calculations of Africa's geo-strategic significance, with these countries seeking to foster military and security relationships which advance the parochial insularity of their own agenda⁸⁶. Most of these type of aids and assistance, would end up, like before, in dark tunnels, funding the corrupt coffers, and extravagant excesses of kleptocratic governments, and deepening Africa’s dependence on foreign aid. Africa really needs to be weaned of her dependence on this kind of enslaving aid, not only because of the donor fatigue of Western

donors, but because it makes economic and moral sense. Africa needs aids and development assistance quite right, but she needs justice over and above all other considerations. Greater care should be on how those monies are spent. This is because, bad aid are economically so very costly in the long run, that it has in most cases, burdened Africa with an insupportable debt profile, enslaving her to new economic slave masters. It has equally destroyed the local wealth and economic base. Bad aid can equally entrench the poverty it was meant to alleviate⁸⁷. Most of the aids that were tied to the purchase of western products, services and know-how, ended up scuttling the survival of local industries, thereby leading to the extinction of these industries and rendering millions unemployed; bloating and stretching the already anaemic economies beyond the limits of their elasticity. In view of this, the Washington Post Editorial of 19th January, 2005, titled, Fighting Global poverty, argued that the United Nations call for extra aid and big increase in development assistance, in which the World body called upon Donor nations to increase their aid packages to 0.5% of their GNP and then up it to 0.7%, was timely and in the right direction. The paper made a call that:

Donors should not dictate development programs from afar; they should support plans that enjoy political legitimacy in each developing country⁸⁸

Africa needs a global “Marshall plan”, a new vision of development built upon justice and characterised by International solidarity, ethics, partnership, and a more humane operation of the market forces. This vision must of necessity incorporate the dismantling of the international economic apartheid, which shuts Africa out of reckoning to the peripheries of poverty. This economic apartheid led by W.T.O’s many treaties, compels the liberalization and opening up of Africa, as a market for dumping Western products and services, while Western Markets are inaccessible to African products, due to the protectionism actively promoted by these countries. Jacques Chirac, the French President, re-echoed this in his address to the 2005 World Economic Forum at Davos. He said:

Our shared ambition should be to overcome poverty through a partnership between market forces and solidarity. We have made progress in the last few years. We have removed many obstacles. A new global vision of development is required. This vision must break away from archaic outlooks and preconceived ideas. It must be based on the idea of partnership...Left to their own devices economic forces are blind and contribute to the marginalization of the weakest: but if supported by appropriate rules...are powerful stimulants for development⁸⁹

Africa needs to be reconstructed on the paths of political and socio-economic stability. This global plan must equally include 100% debt cancellation, as most of these debts were morally unjustifiable and odious to say the least. Generations of African yet unborn being condemned to the payment of debts, they never contracted, and which were in most cases granted by the creditors, in utter disregard of policy guide-posts, like the presence of democratic government and institutions, cannot but be unjust. The U.S and the rich nations should "apply the same standard they had in calling for the cancellation of Iraq's odious debts to the odious illegitimate debts of African countries"⁹⁰ The attempts by the creditor nations to reduce Africa's debts to sustainable levels is not only hypocritical, but dangerous to say the least. This is because, "even after debt cancellation, additional development assistance will be required for African countries to be able to address the challenges of poverty, HIV/AIDS"⁹¹.

The plan we advocate, must actively seek to divorce the unholy marriage presided over by Western multi-national concerns and governments, between Africa’s resources, conflict, and

poverty. Africa's wealth in natural resources, according to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops;

Which should be such a rich source of blessings – has sometimes become a source of tremendous suffering. The relations between natural resources and conflict in Africa are becoming clear. Two natural resources, diamonds and oil, are of particular concern. In Sierra Leone, Angola, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, conflicts over diamonds have produced intense human suffering and political instability. Oil exploration and development in the Niger Delta have been associated with deeper economic impoverishment, political disenfranchisement, and ecological disasters for the people and the region. Like wise in Southern Sudan, oil exploration has led to the forcible displacement of large numbers of people and is fuelling the government's cruel war against the south. Oil has also fuelled Angola's decades-long civil war.⁹²

And in each of these countries, continued the Bishops:

...foreign corporations—American, European, Asian, and others—reap large profits from diamonds and oil while too often demonstrating little concern for the negative impact their activities may have on the peace, stability, human rights, and the environment. As a part of this exchange for natural resources, individuals, multi-national corporations and foreign governments have provided arms to African governments and non-governmental entities resulting in further instability and deeper human suffering⁹³

To this end, any plan aimed at Africa's liberation from poverty must include the break-up of this exploitative, unethical relationship that fuels massive corruption, environmental degradation, conflict and wars, all over Africa. Without peace and stability, no development is possible in Africa.

Africa needs equally from the international community, a zero tolerance for non-democratic and dictatorial regimes in Africa. Prof. Sen has proved that democracy is the best socio-economic and political system, that ensures the enjoyment of substantive freedoms by the people, as well as the fact, that famine has never in history afflicted a democratic country. Africa then demands that her dictators be not bolstered by Western blocs, in furtherance of their geopolitical cum ideological calculations. Dictatorial regimes once thrived in Africa because they were imposed and bolstered from without, in service to the Western political strategies during the cold war. Many of them were equally armed by some Western government and multi-nationals to keep on subjugating their people. Some choices of the people that did not meet the parochial insularities of western conceptual profile, were either assassinated or overthrown by forces co-opted, funded, trained and loyal to some Western intelligence agencies⁹⁴. Africa demands that the world should never recognize any African dictator or military overthrow of legitimately elected government anywhere in Africa. This will deny African kleptocrats of any legitimacy under which they have successfully looted Africa. This zero tolerance should equally be extended to the world of high financial transactions involving African politicians and leaders. The international community should fashion out ways, in which thieving kleptocrats will find it difficult to steal from their people and stash their loot abroad. Many African leaders and politician succeeded in looting the continent due to the conducive environment, and active support offered them by western banks and governments⁹⁵

11. African Poverty as a Threat to World Peace and Security

Facts show that we are not ill equipped to fight poverty. We have the resources to fight poverty and make it history. Our world can afford it. But we seem to lack the political will to effect such changes. This is where ethics takes us to task. We can never run away from the fact we are collectively responsible for the fate of our world. The gospels went further to impose it on us as a duty we owe to charity, to act to liberate people from captivity. If poverty spells unfreedom according to views of Amartya Sen, then what other captivity could we ever justifiably banish when poverty afflicts millions of human beings in Africa, and sends millions to their untimely deaths every day? What excuse do we have for the persistence of poverty in the Africa? None.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) of the United Nations; is set of international development goals that seek to improve health, education and environment across the world with the overarching aim of reducing by half the number of people living in extreme poverty by 2015.⁹⁶ Meeting the lofty aims and targets of the MDG, the United Nations states, "will require a doubling of annual development assistance from rich countries to impoverished countries throughout the world to \$135 billion in 2006, then rising to \$195 billion by 2015".⁹⁷ Social ethics, solidarity and morality underlies the affordability of this. Our world can afford this. The United Nations describes this estimate as "entirely affordable", particularly when the world's military budget is \$900 billion a year⁹⁸

Resources need to be mobilized on an international scale, to upturn the present socio-economic order that makes a vocation of hopelessly exploiting millions of people for the gains and profit of capital. We need to fight poverty not only because ethics forbids it, or simply because the gospels recommend it as a duty in charity. We need to fight it, to preserve ourselves and our civilization; and then be able to develop⁹⁹: that is, being able to expand the freedoms that we have reason to value, as this not only makes our lives richer and more unfettered, but also allows us to be fuller (social)¹⁰⁰ persons, exercising our own volition and interacting with-and influencing the world in which we live.¹⁰¹ The expansion of these valued freedoms can never be achieved in an environment of war and instability. Aristotle was right. Poverty remains the mother of crime and revolutions. In wars, we lose the peace which is the soil upon, which development germinates, thrives and fructifies. African poverty is a threat to world peace, security and stability. We close our eyes to these facts, to our greatest detriment and future discomfiture. Klaus Schwab had this in mind when he stated that:

Dangers that transcend national boundaries like terrorism, environmental degradation and financial instability accentuate the increasing complexity, fragility and interdependence of the world in which we live. Now more than ever the world is faced with realities that call for collective decisive action¹⁰²

Jacques Chirac re-echoed Schwab's observation a few weeks ago, at the 2005 World Economic Forum in Davos: He stated in clear terms that

This globalized economy concerns only one third of the global population, a privileged minority in a world of insecurity. In Africa, in the emerging countries, a vast majority of the population, in the rural areas and shanty towns is still waiting for this – but it will not wait forever – to see the promises of progress take concrete shape. The situation is fraught with danger. It is morally unacceptable. It is also economically absurd... Development is both the greatest challenge and the greatest urgency of our time. It is a matter of ethics. For the open economic system and humanist civilization we share, it is also the best guarantee for investment in the future...The divide between

rich and poor has widened to a frightening degree...The youth of Africa, Asia and Latin America is rightly demanding its entitlement to a future. These populations will put their energy and talent in service to the future, if given the means to do so. If this prospect is denied them, however, then let us beware of the risk of revolt.¹⁰³

Adding his voice to the fact that poverty is a security threat, Jeffrey Sachs stated that unaddressed sufferings add greatly to instability and insecurity throughout the world. Poverty is the brewery of dissensions. No amount of weapons can succeed in putting down the bottled agitations of a hungry stomach. A hungry man, is an angry man, who then metamorphoses into a danger for peace and security, wherever he is. A man condemned or tied to the pillars of eternal poverty, has no more stake in the community of men. He has nothing more to lose, except ironically like the communists would have it, his chains. Living in absolute poverty is been a neighbour to untimely death, and to frustrated cycle of uncertainties. A man in this condition, who feels he has nothing more to lose, is the most dangerous customer to deal with, especially in a globalized world, where terrorism is now at an export level. There can be no peace without justice. To this end, when an unjust structure of inescapable poverty frustrates a people into nihilism, a seedbed of terror and instability is dangerously enabled.

Besides, according to the Christian Aid report, “If you just present emerging nations with tanks and guns, it might help you further your strategic aims, but it will not eradicate poverty or create wealth. And it will scupper any hope of new markets for your own country’s businesses to exploit”¹⁰⁴ And the politicization of aid opens Africa, and the whole world up to these fears to the Christian Aid report:

The growing politicization of aid...threatens to obscure the real goals of poverty reduction. The allocation of military aid to those perceived to be fighting the War on Terror also has the potential to encourage human rights abuses and to sow the seeds of future conflicts¹⁰⁵

Africa does not need incubators for future conflicts. She has enough on her plate now. And aid politicization harbours in its core, this risk of exposing Africa to more armed conflicts in the nearest future, considering the depth of poverty, which would naturally lead to competition for the scarce resources, which has always been the reason behind most wars that humanity has witnessed.

12. Gaudium et Spes as Witnessing to Freedom, Solidarity and Justice

Gaudium et spes, in the spirit of aggiornamento is really a new opening of the church to its authentic nature. It is a prophetic identification of the Church with the concrete situations of human circumstance and predicament. What lessons does this hold in relation to the scandal of African poverty? It is our considered view, that this document has blazed a trail and has opened all men of goodwill up, towards a new, wholistic view of the dignity of man. This identification with humanity was simply in imitation of Christ who identified with humanity in all things as to take up human form in the mystery of the incarnation. The incarnation was really a kairotic moment, when God in Christ decided to proclaim liberty to captives¹⁰⁶ Christ confronted the oppressive structures of his day, and confronted the ultimate structure of oppression, which is the principle of sin. The church today, as Gaudium et Spes aptly proclaimed cannot be true to her nature, mission and mandate, if she fails to make the pains, griefs and anxieties of men everywhere, especially our most needy brothers, its own. The vociferous and vehement stand of the Church against Communism, which grew to embody

some radical, inhuman, and anti-human elements; denying many of their fundamental freedoms, essays to posit the moral force of the message of Christ.

In *Gaudium et spes*, the church has made the griefs and anxieties of human beings everywhere its own. It is this solidarity to human suffering and pain that is the cornerstone of that document, as it applies to the African situation. Today, unbridled capitalism has increased the gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots" in our world to scandalous proportions, especially in Africa. We must derive inspirations of solidarity from this seminal document which we are celebrating today. We are happy that the modern world is at least catching on to this hallowed recommendation of the Christian church. Solidarity is the word. It transcends mere slogan. It is the practical avenue through which to lift our weakest brothers from the doldrums of poverty, wherever they may be found. Today, these ground principle enunciated by *Gaudium et spes*, has permeated into modern socio-economic and geo-political discourse. Jacques Chirac's address, to the leaders of world governments, and businesses, at 2005 World Economic Forum in Davos, made ample use of this principle. He reminded business leaders, politicians, economists and other experts that:

...the opening up of the economy, good governance and freeing up the entrepreneurial spirit are not enough. There are other obstacles to development...The way to break this vicious cycle, to enable hundreds of millions of men, women and children to become part of the dynamics of positive globalization, is to ensure international aid and solidarity, which will enable funding of basic infrastructures, access to health care, to education, in a word, the building up of the physical, human and financial capital needed for economic take-off. Once again the demands of ethics, peace, security and economic interests converge¹⁰⁷

The outpouring of generosity and active concern to the victims of the December 26th 2004, Asian Tsunami Disaster, proved that human solidarity is possible. It is a "witness to the assertion that a planetary awareness, a sentiment of world citizenship does exist"¹⁰⁸ The Church in her wisdom has always known what politicians are recently coming to acknowledge: namely, that humankind, in all its diversity share a common destiny. *Gaudium et Spes* counsels that it is our vocation to be in the fore-front of the effort designed to bring about what Johannes Hoffmann, aptly described as the "taming of capitalism"¹⁰⁹. This is an ethical option for the poor and the weakest members of the human race. This equally implies that political, economic, development and social policies should always be tailored with a human face that respects the human person as the highest good in God's creation. Man in any clime, should never be subordinated to economics and the worship of profit¹¹⁰. In as much as the church is not expected to abandon the preaching of the Good news (evangelisation) for the distribution of food (economics)¹¹¹, feeding the hungry was and remains a fundamental part of the Good news of Christ. Christ fed the hungry¹¹² and urged his disciples to do same: "give them something yourselves to eat." The dichotomy between spheres of human experience, life and activity strictly does not arise. The Good news is about integral human salvation. Dives sent himself to hell, through his unconcern and blindness to the hunger and afflictions of his poor neighbour; Lazarus. This attempt to divorce the temporal from the spiritual plane is really an artificial creation, and a medieval contraption, that does violence to the ontological constitution of the human person, as a composite of body and soul. Historical experience has repeatedly shown that men hold on to a warped sense of this distinction, whenever they intend to justify or divorce of their actions, from the demands of ethics and justice.

The church should always stand by the whollistic and integral anthropological metaphysic that caters for the welfare of the totality of the human person. This view that has been held by many Church fathers, Theologians and philosophers, and further consolidated by the fresh inspirations of the Second Vatican Council as clearly set down in *Gaudium et Spes*. Evangelisation of love, equally embosoms, feeding the hungry, clothing the sick, visiting the sick, liberating captives and comforting the afflicted¹¹³. This ethical option commands that no man should be allowed to die, because he or she cannot afford to live. It commands that economic considerations should never be allowed to take precedence over human welfare. It commands us to work for the dismantling of all structures that demean the lives of our brothers with extreme poverty. Africa is a testing ground for this war against poverty. Any thing that devalues the human person is really a structure of evil, and should be challenged.

The Church has been the voice of the voiceless. The world needs to hear this voice now more than ever before. And like St. Paul urged Timothy, this message must be preached in season and out of season. Africa expects the church to say with St. Paul: Woe betide me, if I do not preach the Gospel”

Our position should not be misconstrued as an advocacy for reactionary jingoism against these structures. If development:

...requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or over-activity of repressed states¹¹⁴

Or,

has to be more concerned with enhancing the lives we lead and the freedoms we enjoy.”¹¹⁵

Because,

Expanding the freedoms that we have reason to value not only makes our lives richer and more unfettered, but also allows us o be fuller social persons, exercising our own volitions and interacting with--and influencing the world in which we live¹¹⁶

Then, the Christian church should be in the forefront in this drive to remove these major sources of unfreedom. Christ’s mission was to liberate us from our pristine enemy, namely sin and its consequences (cf. Isaiah 61:1ff, Lk. 14:4ff). His mission implied that mankind may have the most abundant of life (Cf. John 10:10), with full dignity that God’s goodness willed for us (Cf. Psalm 8:1ff). That is what *Gaudium et Spes* in this regard essayed to forever remind us: The pains of Africa must become the pains of the Christian Church. The degradation of poverty, engineered by an international economic order, that subsists on a faulty anthropology must never attract a timid acquiescence, from the church of the person, who made it his business to go about doing good; namely Jesus Christ of Nazareth. The Christian Church and all men of goodwill should be abreast of the fact, that

Poverty eradication is not an option for sub-Saharan Africa, which the region has the luxury of adopting or not. Poverty eradication is a **moral** and political imperative, for the region as well as for the International community to embrace with renewed commitment, optimism and focused energy¹¹⁷

The church should be the voice forever reminding big businesses, the trans-national corporatocracy¹¹⁸, the kleptocratic crop of leaders and all other man-made factors holding Africa to a ransom, that theirs remains a structure that oppresses and insults human dignity.

The church should, in confronting the obscene poverty of Africans and other Third World nations, not allow itself to be seen as operating more as a circumspect, and unconcerned behemoth determined to hang to hypothetical exhortations that panders to the structures of oppression, rather than taking a radical stand against oppressive structures of evil, which is really an option for the poor. This option for the poor should transcend mere slogan, to irrigate the perceptual universe of ecclesiastical policies, message, life and action. The fathers of the Second Vatican Council, from all intents and purposes desired that *Gaudium et Spes*, should conduce to the formulation of strong ecclesial policies, that would go beyond discussion tables and church pews to really impact on, gravitate, and make a difference in the lives of the weakest members of our race; whom Christ loved so dearly as to lay down his life. The Church is urged by the Spirit of *Gaudium et spes*, not to stand aloof in the plight of men. Though destined for eternity, she is meant to sanctify time for eternity's God. And since the apogee of all revelation, was in God becoming one of us in all things, in Jesus Christ; who shared our pain, sorrows, joys and perils, even dying our death to liberate us from the bondage, which the principle of sin casts upon us; it then behoves the church to confront every structure of oppression as a structure of sin, from which men should be liberated. The Church for instance, should not stand by, when billions of Dollars, that could be used in bettering human lot, feeding the poor, and restructuring the present global economic imbalance, is deployed to the manufacturing of weapons of mass death. The church should make herself be seen more as a mother and Teacher (*Mater et Magistra*); a partner in the lives of the poor, and not an ally of the oppressors of the poor. St. Lawrence showed the Roman pillagers, who the real treasures of the church were; namely, the poor who are dear to the Lord.

The option for the poor we advocate should not be misconstrued as a baptism of Marxist class conflict model. This has been a major error of some critique of Liberation Theology. They most times are unnecessarily afraid that Liberation theology is a wooden attempt to re-introduce or dress Marxist class struggle in catholic theological robes. For these critics, assenting to the tenets of liberation theology tantamount or equals to politicization of the faith (though man is a political animal) But this dismissive appraisal fails to take cognizance of the fact that the over-riding core of option for the poor lies in the fact, that what it battles against was not the triumph of one group or class of individuals; namely the poor, over and against the rich. Was that to be the case, it would have compromised the fundamental fact that the gospel was made for everybody quite oblivious of tongue, class, or creed. What it is against is not simply a class or group, but simply the reality of exploitation. It cannot in this wise, represent a class option. The removal or dismantling of the structures of oppression, rather than creating or engineering class conflict, as was the overriding idea in Marx, essays to bridge the gap between the classes of society. This is the quintessence of justice. Instead of creating gaps, justice bridges it. In a situation where the oppressive structures are torn down or removed, the people would then in truth and justice, dine together on the tables of brotherhood. Post Apartheid South Africa is a footnote to this.

The weakness of the critics' argument lies in the fact that Christ never shied away from taking a stand for the poor, the weak and the hopeless in all situations. His stand for the poor never excluded the rich. Even in the House of the rich Simon the Pharisee, He had time to host and entertain a woman, who made herself so insignificant, as to sprawl on the bare floor to wash his feet with tears, and wipe them with her hair¹¹⁹ He stood for the weak and the oppressed.

He always had pity on the downtrodden. He was harsh on the oppressors of the poor, even at the risk of being accused of deploying religion to political ends. This seems that anyone who follows Christ in confronting the structures that enslave people in irredeemable poverty, risks being accused, like Christ of politicizing the faith. Christ in and with his life made it abundantly clear that a stand must be taken against injustice, whatever the risks are.

13. Touch Down

Africa may be a continent in crisis, but never a continent without hope. Africa has core values, upon which credible development paradigms could be erected. The Igbo concept of “Onye aghana Nwanne ya¹²⁰” (Solidarity) is a key to finding answers to the poverty question in Africa. Africa needs solidarity and support of the international community in this regard. It is in the interest of all citizens of this planet to work towards a world order, where poverty, hunger, disease and ignorance would be history. We can achieve it. Gaudium et Spes has laid down the path to it. The new solution to the problems of poverty and frightening chasm between the rich and poor lies in this simple word: Solidarity! We can get there, if we will it. We will get there if we, like the opening paragraphs of Gaudium et Spes, make the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, our own. The time to act is now. Africa’s hopes could be destroyed by indifference and inaction in Africa and around the world.¹²¹ It is not late in the day to set the reversal of poverty on course. It is an ethical imperative. It is supported by the harsh realities of our modern existence. If we do not fight poverty today, we would be sowing the seeds of terrorism, through our inaction. And our harvest will be rich in pain and insecurity.

Thanks for your time.

¹ See: The Christian Aid Week, 2004 Report titled „The Politics of Poverty“ <http://www.christian-aid.org.uk/indepth/404caweek/cawreport.pdf>, P.34

² UNCTAD, Economic Development in Africa : Debt Sustainability: Oasis or Mirage?, 2004, New York, P.9

³ See: Ann-Louise Colgan, "Africa Policy Outlook, 2005," (Silver City; NM & Washington, DC: Foreign Policy in Focus, January 2005, <http://www.fpif.org/papers/2005africa.html>

⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization, http://www.fao.org/wfs/index_en.htm

⁵ See: The Christian Aid Week, 2004 Report titled „The Politics of Poverty“ <http://www.christian-aid.org.uk/indepth/404caweek/cawreport.pdf>, P. 1

⁶ Jeffrey Sachs, “A Practical Plan to End Poverty”, Washington Post, January 17th 2005, P. A17

⁷ loc cit.

⁸ loc. cit

⁹ See: <http://unmp.forumone.com/>

¹⁰ Sachs, Op. cit.

¹¹ See the following: http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Life_Death_ThirdWorld/PoliticsHunger_EII.html,

Ignacio Ramonet: <http://www.saxakali.com/southasia/indiaenv3.htm>

¹² See: Christian Aid, The Politics of Poverty, <http://www.christian-aid.org.uk/indepth/404caweek/cawreport.pdf>

¹³ United Nations World Food Program, cited in John Perkins, The Confessions of an Economic Hitman, P.x

¹⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization cited in <http://www.solcomhouse.com/hunger.htm>

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ The Christian Aid Week, 2004 Report titled „The Politics of Poverty“ <http://www.christian-aid.org.uk/indepth/404caweek/cawreport.pdf>, P.2

¹⁹ Loc cit

²⁰ Cf. <http://www.solcomhouse.com/hunger.htm>

²¹ United Nations Millennium Development Declaration, September 2000, <http://www.developmentgoals.org/Poverty.htm>

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- ²² Howard White & Tony Killick, African Poverty at the Millennium, Causes, Complexities, and Challenges, The World Bank, 2001, P. xiii
- ²³ Loc. Cit.
- ²⁴ Ogbunwezeh, Emmanuel Franklyne, The Scandal of African Poverty, <http://globalpolitician.com/articles.asp?ID=195>
- ²⁵ Howard White, et al; Loc. Cit.
- ²⁶ Vila-Artadi, Elsa and Sala-i-Martin, Francesc Xavier, "The Economic Tragedy of the 20th Century: Growth in Africa" (July 2003). NBER Working Paper No. W9865. <http://ssrn.com/>
- ²⁷ UNDP, Progress Against Poverty in Africa, 1998, P.5
- ²⁸ Ibid. P. 6
- ²⁹ Henry George; Progress and Poverty, cited in Mofid, K., P.77
- ³⁰ This view of poverty as insignificance is has Gustavo Gutierrez and the Liberation Theologians as its major proponents.
- ³¹ Cf. Amartya Sen, Development as Freedom
- ³² David W. Brooks, member, Presidential Commission on World Hunger See
- ³³ Cf. Ogbunwezeh, Emmanuel Franklyne, The Tragedy of a Tribe, 2005, P.159
- ³⁴ Cf. Daniel Offiong, Globalization: Post – Neodependency and Poverty in Africa, Enugu, Fourth Dimension Publishers, 2001, P.3
- ³⁵ Vandemoortele, J., Are We really Reducing Global Poverty?, New York , United Nations Development Programme, Bureau for Development Policy, July 2002, P. 4
- ³⁶ Nelson Mandela, Poverty Speech, BBC NEWS, http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/uk_politics/4232603.stm, February 3rd 2005.
- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ Tom Barry, "U.S Isn't "Stingy," It's Strategic" (Silver City, NM: International Relations Centre, January 7, 2005). <http://www.irc-online.org/content/commentary/2005/0501aid.php>
- ³⁹ Ibid
- ⁴⁰ ibid.
- ⁴¹ Ibid
- ⁴² Cf. Stiglitz, Globalization and its Discontents, London, Penguin Books, 2002
- ⁴³ Cf. <http://www.wwnorton.com/catalog/spring03/032439.htm>
- ⁴⁴ Howard Nye, et al, "What is Poverty", <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/15827>
- ⁴⁵ Joseph Stiglitz, Globalization and Its Discontents, London, Penguin Books, 2002, P.X
- ⁴⁶ Obiora Ike & Emeka Ngwoke, Nigeria: Prospects for Development; A Response to World Bank, in the Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology, Vol. 9, No. 1-2, 1997, P.59
- ⁴⁷ For further reading, one can consult, John Perkins; The Confessions of an Economic Hitman, San Francisco, Berret Koehler Publishers, 2004 Patricia Adams, Odius Debts: Loose Lending, Corruption and The Third World Environmental Legacy, London, EarthScan,1991. Joseph Stiglitz, Globalization and its Discontents, London, Penguin Books, 2002
- ⁴⁸ USCCB, A Call to Solidarity With Africa, P. 17
- ⁴⁹ Dave Farris, "A little Perspective on \$87 billion", <http://www.crunchweb.net/87billion/>
- ⁵⁰ Cf. Perkins, J. Op. Cit. P. xii
- ⁵¹ <http://www.quotegarden.com/poverty.html>
- ⁵² John Perkins, Op. Cit. P. 17
- ⁵³ Perkins, J. Op. cit. P. xvii
- ⁵⁴ Tom Barry, Op. cit., P. 3
- ⁵⁵ Perkins, J. Op. cit. P. xii
- ⁵⁶ Biafra, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan are all footnotes to the destructive potentialities of primeval allegiances, like religion and ethnicity; when it is negatively empowered
- ⁵⁷ Loc. cit.
- ⁵⁸ See: Adam, P. Odius Debts, London, Earth Scan, 1991, See also: Kamran Mofid, Globalization for the Common Good, Op.Cit.
- ⁵⁹ Amartya Sen, Development As Freedom, New York, Oxford University Press, 2001, P. xi
- ⁶⁰ Loc. Cit
- ⁶¹ Nelson Mandela, Poverty Speech, BBC NEWS, http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/uk_politics/4232603.stm, February 3rd 2005.
- ⁶² Amartya Sen, Development as Freedom, London, Oxford University Press, 1999
- ⁶³ African debt burden, as a new form of slavery is the contention of Kamran Mofid (See Mofid, K., Globalization for the Common Good, London, Shephard and Walwyn, 2002) and Prof. Ali Mazrui (See Mazrui, A., From the Slave ship to Space Ship: Africa between Marginalization and Globalization, SAIS Review, vol. XXII no. 1, Winter-spring, 2002, P. 14

⁶⁴ Sen, Op. Cit., P. 87

⁶⁵ I am employing this term to represent the answer of Cain in the book of genesis to the question posed by God in that episode: Where is your brother? Cain in an answer that mirrors the attitude of contemporary humanity retorted in an escapist attempt at self exoneration: Am I my brother's keeper. This is the spirit in which this coinage holds and applies here. Extrapolated from the above intendments, it fails to hold or apply.

⁶⁶ In Perkins, U.S. was used because of the obvious circumstance that informed his writing, as was made abundantly clear in his work. But US without the periods could mean all of us, who have failed to speak up in defence of the downtrodden and who profit from the proceeds generated by the impoverishment of Africa and other Third World nations. Similar view may have informed the article by John Robbins titled "Is there Slavery in your Chocolate- http://www.foodrevolution.org/slavery_chocolate.htm. We cannot claim innocence, when the guilt of our companies and the services we patronize, sustains the abuse of other human beings. An ancient legal maxim has it that he who profits by crime is guilty of it.

⁶⁷ Perkins, P. 48

⁶⁸ UNCTAD, Economic Development in Africa: Debt Sustainability: Oasis or Mirage?, New York, 2004, P.9

⁶⁹ loc. Cit.

⁷⁰ See: Chinweizu, The West and The Rest of Us, Lagos, Nok Publishers, 1978, PP.55-79

⁷¹ Helmut Schoeck, cited in Lothar Roos, "Church and Economy in Responsibility for the Future of the World Economy" in Ross, (ed) Ordo Socialis No. 2: Economy and Church in Dialogue, Trier, Paulinus Verlag, 1990. P. 12

⁷² Loc. Cit.

⁷³ See Ben Okwu Eboh's Living Beyond Materialism, (Enugu, Snaap Press, 1991). Man being a more means that he is the author as well as the measure of meaning, significance and reality. This does not dislodge the place of the supernatural.

⁷⁴ This is the view of Teilhard de Chardin, the Jesuit Anthropologist

⁷⁵ Psalm 8

⁷⁶ This assertion is credited to the mid-ancient period sophist, Protagoras of Abdera circa 450BC

⁷⁷ St. Augustine of Hippo, See Civitate Dei

⁷⁸ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Gaudium et Spes; Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, December 7th 1965, No.1

⁷⁹ Mandela, Op. Cit.

⁸⁰ Ogbunwezeh, E.F.O., The Scandal of Poverty in Africa; Re-inventing a Role for Social Ethics in Confronting the Socio-economic and Political Challenges of Africa of the Third Millennium, Frankfurt am Main, 2004, P.1

⁸¹ USCCB, A Call for Solidarity with Africa, July 2002, P.1

⁸² Ibid., P.13

⁸³ Ibid., P.10

⁸⁴ Ann-Louise Colgan, "Africa Policy Outlook, 2005," (Silver City; NM & Washington, DC: Foreign Policy in Focus, January 2005, <http://www.fpif.org/papers/2005africa.html>

⁸⁵ See George Ayittey: "How Western aid helped to Destroyed Somalia", <http://www.aworldconnected.com/article.php/302.html>

⁸⁶ See Anne-Louise Colgan, Op. Cit.

⁸⁷ Washington Post, January 19th, 2005, Editorial, „Fighting Global Poverty“, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A22534-2005Jan19.html>

⁸⁸ Washington Post, Op. Cit.

⁸⁹ See: <http://www.weforum.org/site/homepublic.nsf/Content/B2DA8ED84AECDA10C1256>

⁹⁰ Ann-Louise Colgan, Op.Cit.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, A Call to Solidarity with Africa, Washington, DC, USCCB publishing, 2001, P.17

⁹³ Loc. Cit.

⁹⁴ Patrice Lumumba comes to mind here as an eternal footnote to what we mean here. CIA and the Belgian government conspired to have him murdered and install Mobutu Sesse Seko, who ended up becoming a conglomeration of the worst kleptocratic forces ever to inhabit in one leader. Congo has not recovered from that colonial misadventure, even in 2005.

⁹⁵ Cf. Karl Maier, This House has Fallen, London, Penguin Books, 2000, P. xxii

⁹⁶ Ann-Louise Colgan, Op. Cit.

⁹⁷ Loc. Cit.

⁹⁸ Loc. Cit.

⁹⁹ I am expressing Amartya Sen's views on Development as freedom, which greatly articulates my views of developmental ethics as well. For a clearer treatment of this view, a reading of Prof. Sen's, Development as Freedom, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1999) is highly recommended.

¹⁰⁰ Sen's treatment of "fuller Social persons" and my borrowing of it here cannot be more ad rem, when one considers that Aristotle blazed the trail reminding us that "he who cannot live in society with men is either a god or a beast". In Igbo traditional Weltanschauung, from which roots I arose, a person who cannot live in the society (that is a person who cannot be individually and collectively responsible for the survival of the society) does not exist. This is because; society in Igbo world view is not only the society of men. Society in this conceptual scheme is more wholistic as it incorporates the living, the living dead (the ancestors) and the unborn. One sees this clearly in processes of land alienation or land allocation. An individual in Igbo culture cannot alienate or sell a piece of land, because it belongs to the whole community made of the living, the dead and the unborn. This could serve as a veritable platform for rediscovering solidarity which incorporates and option for the poor and the weakest members of our world, which is the whole essence of this paper

¹⁰¹ Sen, Development as Freedom, Op. Cit., P.15

¹⁰² Klaus Schwab, „Free the Leaders,“ in Newsweek (Issues 2005) Dec.2004-Feb 2005, P. 34

¹⁰³ <http://www.weforum.org/site/homepublic.nsf/Content/B2DA8ED84AECDA10C1256>

¹⁰⁴ Christian Aid, The Politics of Poverty, Op. cit, P. 4

¹⁰⁵ Christian Aid Report, Op. Cit. P.3

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Isaiah 61: 1 ff

¹⁰⁷ See: <http://www.weforum.org/site/homepublic.nsf/Content/B2DA8ED84AECDA10C1256>

¹⁰⁸ Jacques Chirac, Op. Cit. P.1

¹⁰⁹ Johannes Hoffman, The Fight Against Poverty By Sustainable Development in Obiora Ike (ed) Globalisation & African Self-Determination: What is Our Future, Enugu, CIDJAP Publications, 2004, P. 130

¹¹⁰ Obiora Ike & Nnoli Edozie, Development is About People, Business is About Ethics, Enugu, CIDJAP Press, 2003, P.12

¹¹¹ Cf. Acts of Apostles, 6:1ff

¹¹² There exists no dichotomy between earthly realities, or what could be term secular concerns, from eschatological concerns, in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. In John 6:1ff, secular cares and concerns mixes with the eschatological theology of Christ. There was no dichotomy. He fed the hungry, but used their hunger as a pedestal to erect a theology that goes beyond earthly and material food. He gave them bread to eat, but turned around to let them know that he is the Bread of Life. In Matthew 25: 35ff, he laid it down that hospitality to material concerns of the poor would form the basis for the final judgement. In Mark 8:1ff, His love and pity for the situation of the hungry overpowered and overrode the unnecessary cares of his disciples about the financial implications of feeding the hungry. He made them bring the little they have, and taught for all times, that love transforms and could multiply „a little“ into „a great deal.“ In Luke 6:1ff, his disciples even had to break with tradition and violate the Sabbath rest, to eat from a cornfield, because they were hungry. Christ laid down, not only that he is the Master of the Sabbath, but that human welfare overrides every traditions and considerations. When people face gastronomic emergencies, laws should never be deployed in preventing them from saving themselves from extinction. Christ confirmed in this episode that the human person is a greater value to all considerations, that tie him down, be they legalistic, traditional, economic, political or social.

¹¹³ Matthew 25: 35ff

¹¹⁴ Amartya, Sen: Op. Cit., P.3

¹¹⁵ Sen, P.14

¹¹⁶ Sen, P. 15

¹¹⁷ UNDP, Progress Against Poverty in Africa, 1998, Preface

¹¹⁸ Cf. John Perkins, The Confessions of an Economic Hitman, San Francisco, Berret-Koehler Publishers, 2004

¹¹⁹ In the Semitic cultures and traditions of the ancient Near East, washing the feet of visitors is the job of servants or slaves. This woman in washing Christ's feet broke with tradition, where women are treated as inferior to men to venture near Jesus in public view. She equally took up the job meant for slaves, when she washed the feet of Jesus. We are not concerned with the exegesis or the hermeneutics of her action and theological reasons arising therefrom.

¹²⁰ „Onye aghana nwanne ya" - is an Igbo phrase which transliteratively means: "No one should leave his brother behind"-This concept commands that one is never to abandon his brother or neighbour, to his own devices, when danger calls, or inclement circumstance arises. "Onye aghana nwanne ya" as a concept builds on another Igbo concept „Nwanne ka" -Brotherhood is a supreme good! If the question arises: Why shouldn't anyone leave his brother behind or save himself first, the answer comes: „Because brotherhood is a supreme good" These concepts embody a sacred and positive anthropology which values the human person, above every other value or resource; and deeply embedded in the Igbo Psyche. This is why Ndi-Igbo have no exacts words for cousins, or nieces and nephews. Every term connoting sanguinal relationship ends with „Nwanne" which means brother. „Nwanne ka" is equiperable in this situation to „Mmadu ka"- A human being is the greatest value. These concepts are reduced to names that Ndi Igbo give to their children. „Nwa ka ego"- „a child is greater than wealth". All these summarize solidarity, which made the traditional Igbo world, impervious to exploitative capitalism that created extreme poverty.

¹²¹ USCCB, Op. Cit., P. 1