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TOPIC:

TOWARDS AN AFRICAN THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS

*[A Response to bureaucratic corruption
in Africa*

with particular Reference to Nigeria]

Project submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts, Religious Studies.

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DEDICATION

TO

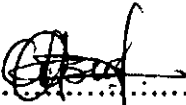
Rev. Fr. Jude-maria Ogbu Nawolisa, OCD

[Nee: Achia],

**beloved brother, friend and mentor,
who preached the message of the cross,
and lived its mystery to the full.**


STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this long essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflections. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in Religions Studies. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

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 Date.....6th February, 2001.....

APPROVAL

This long essay has been submitted for examination with my approval as the college supervisor.

Signed..........
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 Date.....6/2/2001.....

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I give thanks to Our Lord Jesus Christ, who, by dying on the cross, transformed it from an instrument of oppression and repression into a sacrament of reawakening, victory and liberation. I am very grateful to Rev. Dr. Nicholas Fogliacco, whose insights and guidance helped to clarify my thoughts. Many thanks go to all my classmates (1997-2001); and all who have assisted me in this work, especially, the librarians at the Nigerian High Commission, Nairobi, Kenya. Many more thanks to all my confreres at the Carmelite Community, Nairobi, Kenya, for their fraternal love and generosity.

SHALOM!

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Institutionalized corruption is a main feature of African bureaucracies. The African Synod (1994) identified it as an oppressive structure or system that constitutes a major bottleneck on Africa's road to social, political and economic development and progress. As an antidote to the continental malaise, the Synod called for a "serious reawakening of conscience linked with a firm determination of will" among Africans, especially, those who oversee the administration of public affairs, namely, *the bureaucrats*.¹

Six years after the Synod, bureaucratic corruption is still on the increase in Africa; subjecting the people to untold suffering. There is, therefore, the need for a Christian symbol, which will help in "reawakening" the conscience of African Christians and motivate them towards the eradication of corruption and liberation from its shackles.

The *Cross*-the unique Christian symbol-serves this purpose. This essay, therefore, attempts at an honest look at bureaucratic corruption in Africa, with specific reference to Nigeria; and proposes the cross as a reawakening or liberating symbol for African peoples oppressed by bureaucratic corruption. Hence, the title: *Towards an African Theology of the Cross*. It is thus hoped that the popular notion of the cross as a purely spiritual symbol with little or nothing to do with life in society, will be corrected.

For a better presentation of the work, the pastoral cycle methodology of *see, judge* and *act* is followed. Also, the essay is divided into four chapters. Chapter one exposes the dynamics of bureaucratic corruption in Nigeria. It defines and clarifies related concepts. Chapter two examines the development of the theology of the cross in scripture and

¹ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no.110, 1995.

history of Western theology, with particular interest in contemporary theology of the cross as resourceful for a contemporary African theology of the cross. The third chapter attempts to develop a theology of the cross that flows from and addresses the African experience of oppressive social ills, especially, bureaucratic corruption. In the fifth, final chapter, some pastoral implications of an African theology of the cross are explored, with suggestions on how the Nigerian and African church can re-educate the people on the liberating or reawakening aspect of the cross, for social transformation. Some concluding remarks then follow.

CHAPTER ONE: BUREAUCRATIC CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA.

1.1 INTRODUCTION.

This chapter exposes bureaucratic corruption as a major cause of Nigeria's socio-political and economic plight. Related concepts are defined and clarified for better understanding of the topic.

1.2 A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF NIGERIA: A NATION IN DISTRESS

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is located in the West Coast of Africa. It shares boundaries with the Gulf of Guinea on the south; Cameroon on the east, Chad and Niger on the north, and Benin Republic on the west. Nigeria gained her independence from the British colonialists on October 1, 1960; and became a republic on October 1, 1963. Since then, the history of Nigeria, has been a mixed tale of hope and frustration: Hope, "because it is expected that it should be able to use its abundant resources to achieve rapid economic development"; and, frustration, "because the expectation is unfulfilled".² In fact, Nigerians have every reason for hope. And the world has every reason to hope in Nigeria, and expect a high level of socio-economic development from this great African nation. This is because Divine Providence has richly blessed Nigeria with unquantifiable amount of human and non-human resources, enough to give it a pride of place among the

² Toyin Falola, "Nigeria: History and Government, Nigerian Republic". In John Middleton, ed., *Encyclopedia of Africa South of the Sahara*, vol. 3 (New York: Charles Scribner, 1997), 313.

nations of the world. With a large population of about 124 million,³ the largest in Africa and the tenth largest in the world,⁴ and consequently, a large labour force; Nigeria produces and exports, in varying quantities, food crops (yam, plantains, cassava), cash crops (cocoa, rubber, palm oil/kernels, cotton, timber), livestock (cows, sheep, goats), and minerals (petroleum, natural gas, tin, coal, columbite, iron, gold).⁵

These endowments notwithstanding, sadly, frustration is discernible on the face of the average Nigerian because of the socio-political and economic situation of the nation.

Within the span of forty years (1960-2000), Nigeria has had eleven heads of state: eight military juntas and three civilians. One would have expected each regime to correct the ills of the previous one and lead the nation to better times. Unfortunately, the reverse is the case. Each regime ended up repeating and even adding to the mistakes of the previous one; thereby afflicting the country with untold socio-economic wounds. Consequently, the socio-political situation of Nigeria has remained “volatile and unpredictable”.⁶ With such an unstable socio-political climate, the economic state of the country has been subjected to unprecedented crisis, thanks too to the drastic drain in external and internal revenues, indiscipline, under-utilization of ample resources. The adoption of various austerity measures (1983) and Structural Adjustment Programmes (1996) in the bid to arrest the situation, “wrought untold havoc on the standard of living and quality of life of most Nigerians”.⁷ Thus Nigeria has retrogressed from a donor to a debtor country.

³ World Bank, *Africa Region Live Database*, 2000, 1.

⁴ Ade J. Ajayi, “Nigeria”, in *World Book Encyclopedia*, vol. 2 (Chicago: World Book Inc., 1994), 410.

⁵ Akin L. Mabogunje, “Nigeria: Geography and Economy”, in John Middleton, ed., 308-309.

⁶ Falola, 313.

⁷ Mabogunje, 312.

One question is inevitable: What is the problem with Nigeria? The inevitable answer is that at the heart of the socio-political and economic crisis in Nigeria, is the problem of bureaucratic corruption. Undoubtedly, bureaucratic corruption is a major debilitating cog in Nigeria's wheel of progress.⁸

1.3 DEFINITION AND CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

1.3.1 CORRUPTION: ITS NATURE AND DYNAMICS

In spite of its undeniable existence, corruption is a complex and elusive phenomenon. Thus, a concise and comprehensive definition of corruption is hard to arrive at. Economic and socio-political analysts differ, and at times disagree in their description of this volatile but real phenomenon.⁹ From an economic dimension, Klaveren conceives corruption in terms of economic malpractice. Thus, a public official engages in corruption if he/she regards his/her office as a personal business center, a personal income maximizing unit.¹⁰ In the same vein, Chander Mehra describes corruption in terms of bribery, extortion, fraud and embezzlement of public funds.¹¹ He also argues that the dynamics of corruption can only be better explored by considering, not only the giver, but both the receiver and the giver. This is because both parties to corrupt deals conspire to attain their selfish ends, and thus defraud the public.¹² From a legal and moral stance, corruption is defined in the context of ethical ethos. It is the

⁸ Chinua Achebe, *The Trouble with Nigeria* (Nairobi: Heinemann Educational Books, 1984), 38.

⁹ Robin Theobald, *Corruption, Development and Underdevelopment* (London: Macmillan, 1990), 1-2.

¹⁰ Wanjala Kibwana K., and Okech-Owiti S. (eds.), *The Anatomy of Corruption in Kenya: Legal, Political and Socio-Economic Perspectives* (Nairobi: Claripress, 1996), 29.

¹¹ Chander Mehra, *Corruption: Dealing with the Devil* (Nairobi: Shiv Publications, 2000), 23

¹² Mehra, 39.

transgression of the rules or legal codes, the breach of ethical standards set up by the common will for the smooth running of the polity. Thus, James Scott depicts corruption as basically an illegal and unethical behaviour. It is a deviation, for personal gains, from ethical standards of conduct. The basis for these standards of behaviour, says Scott, are public interest, public opinion, as well as legal norms.¹³ The socio-political view of corruption stresses the abuse of office, whether socially, culturally or politically instituted. This is often done through misuse of power and authority vested on one by virtue of one's office. Power and authority is abused when it is extended beyond its boundary or used for the satisfaction of selfish designs, rather than in the interest or common good of the people. Office becomes the tool for egotistic aggrandizement. Mindful of this, Charles Aikin defines corruption as "a violation of a public duty...the use of public power for private profit, preferment, or prestige, or for the benefit of a group or class".¹⁴ Attempting a comprehensive list of corrupt practices, Rudizana includes the following: bribery (illegal payments to public agents so as to enjoy legal or illegal, deserved or undeserved benefits), extortion (unlawful appropriation of another's property), illegal use of public assets for personal gains, deliberate inflation of contracts, frauds and embezzlement of public funds, misappropriation or misallocation of public assets for personal or sectarian gains, abuse and misuse of the legal process, creation of artificial scarcity of public goods and services, illegal custody or hoarding of public records, documents or essential commodities.¹⁵

¹³ James Scott, *Comparative Political Corruption* (New York, Prentice-Hall, 1972), 3.

¹⁴ Charles Aikin, "Corruption". In Julius Gould and William C. Koll, eds, *A Modern Dictionary of the Social Sciences* (New York: The Free Press, 1964), 147.

¹⁵ A. Rudizana, Comment on what can be done by Michael Johnston Cited by Ademola Ariyo, In "Corruption, the Economy and the Private Sector" a paper prepared for the conference on "fighting Corruption in Developing Countries and emerging Economies (USAID, Washington, 1999), 1-2.

However, an operational, succinct, and more holistic approach to corruption was proffered by Kivutha Kibwana and others, who defined it as: “an act or omission perpetrated by an individual or group of individuals which goes against the legitimate expectations and hence the interests of society”.¹⁶

I.3.2 TYPES OF CORRUPTION

Hussein Alatas, in his exploration and analysis of the nature of corruption, distinguishes seven distinct types of corruption: autogenic, defensive, extortive, investive, nepotistic, supportive, and transactive corruption. Corruption is *autogenic*, when only the perpetrator is involved. This occurs, for instance, in inside trading, when a clerk, upon learning of some vital information that will affect future stocks in the company, acts upon the information by buying or getting rid of huge amounts of stocks. This is done so as to reap, as much as possible, the fruits accruing from later change in stock. *Transactive* corruption involves more than one party. It occurs within the context of mutual arrangement between two parties, both of which will share in the profit accruing from the deal. This is exemplified when a corrupt businessman or woman or a company bribes one or more corrupt government officials, so as to be awarded a government contract. Corruption becomes *extortive*, when it is demanded as personal compensation for services rendered. A policeman, for instance, is involved in extortive corruption when he compels a complainant to pay him some money to ensure speedy investigation into the reported case. *Defensive* corruption is the response of a helpless victim of an extortive

¹⁶ Kibwana, Wanjala and Okech-Owiti, 34.

corruption. Here, one is compelled to bribe the officer in charge in order to have one's needs or interests met. This happens when, a job seeker, after being declared qualified for the job, is informed by the personnel manager or clerk, that in order to secure that job, he/she must offer his/her salary for the first two months to the official. Since a refusal means losing the scarce job opportunity, the job seeker accedes to the demand in defence of his/her need for a means of livelihood. *Investive* corruption refers to the offering of goods or services to an official, without a direct or clear connection to any specific proximate favour, but with an eye on some remote occasion when the favour may be needed. It is like a well calculated present investment in anticipation for future returns. Often, this corrupt practice is justified or euphemized with the dictum, "*One good turn deserves another*". *Nepotistic* corruption covers the area of favouritism based on familiarity. It occurs when relations, acquaintances or friends are accorded favoured treatments or appointed to public offices thanks to their relationship with the official. A good example here, is when a daughter of the Internal Affairs Minister receives her international passport without passing through the same ordeal to which her mate, whose father is a clerk in the same establishment, is subjected. Finally, corruption is *supportive*, when it involves action or actions taken to hide and consolidate the already existing corruption. The immediate issue, here, is neither monetary nor any other gain, but that of safeguarding and maintaining the status quo. This is exemplified in politics, when one government constantly aborts the rise to power of another government, dreading a possible probe and public humiliation. Military and civilian dictators are the wizards of this infamous art.

1.3.3 BUREAUCRACY

The term, *bureaucracy*, comes from the French word, *bureau*, which means *office*.¹⁷ *Office*-a basic concept of bureaucracy-refers to a well-defined status or role created and sanctioned by an authority, and separated from the one occupying and performing it.¹⁸ The one occupying the office is obliged to abide by the regulations set by the society; since the society is the authority behind the creation, definition and sanctioning of an office. Literally, *bureaucracy* means “rule by the office” or “rule by officials”; and, as popularized by the German sociologist, Max Weber, it refers to a formal, principled system of organizing and administering roles, functions and services within modern, civilized and developing societies.¹⁹ This system, Weber believed, assures the successful planning and efficient running of the modern state and economy, thanks to its structural features, which include: centralization of authority, rationality in decision-making, impersonality in procedures, precedence of personal qualification in appointments, differentiation and routinization of tasks, discipline/accountability by adhering to laid-down rules defining the procedures.²⁰

While pointing out that bureaucracy, as described by Weber, is an ideal to be constantly aimed at, George and Achilles Theodore limit the term only to the “administrative aspect” or “hierarchical apparatus of control” of a formal organization, as distinct from the organization itself. For instance, though they form part of the formal organization, the factory workers, since they do not consist part of the factory

¹⁷ World Book Encyclopaedia, vol. 2 (Chicago: World Book Inc., 1991), 713

¹⁸ Fred Cotrel, “Office”, In A Dictionary of the Social Sciences, 174

¹⁹ Robert Stone, “Bureaucracy”, In A Dictionary of the Social Sciences, 61.

²⁰ Stone, 61.

administration, “would not be considered part of the bureaucracy”.²¹ While bureaucracy exists in both the governmental (public) and nongovernmental (private) sectors, this essay focuses on the governmental bureaucracy as the crucial locus of corrupt practices. Hence, keeping to the Theodorsons’ definition, *bureaucratic corruption*, in this essay, refers to the corrupt practices perpetrated in Nigerian offices, especially in governmental (public) offices, by top officials (*bureaucrats*).

1.3.4 THE NIGERIAN BUREAUCRACY: ITS EVOLUTION AND CONSTITUTION

Three classes of citizens, vital to the realization of national objectives, form the major constituents of the Nigerian bureaucracy, namely, the senior/higher civil service, the armed forces officers, and the business-political class.²²

The remote roots of the Nigerian bureaucracy is traceable to the various social, political and economic classes existent in the traditional, pre-colonial societies or kingdoms that form the present day Nigeria. These societies, states or ancient kingdoms such as Oyo, Kanem-Borno, Nupe, Benin, Igbo, had already established their respective traditional ‘bureaucracies’ long before the advent of colonialism.²³ But the proximate root of the Nigerian bureaucracy is the colonial era. Olukoshi contends that the Nigerian

²¹ George Theodorson A. and Achilles Theodorson G., *A Modern Dictionary of Sociology: The Concepts and Terminology of Sociology and Related Disciplines* (New York: Thomas Crowell, 1969), 34.

²² Adebayo Adedeji, “The Political Class, the Higher Civil Service and the Challenge of Nation Building”, In J.C. Senghor, ed., *Towards A Dynamic African Economy: Selected Speeches and Lectures of Adebayo Adedeji (1975-1986)* (London: Frank Cass, 1989), 113.

²³ Adebayo Olukoshi, “Bourgeois Social Movements and the Struggle for Democracy in Nigeria: An Inquiry into the ‘Kaduna Mafia’ ”, In M. Mamdani, and E. Wamba-dia-Wamba, eds., *African Studies in Social Movements and Democracy*, Dakar: CODESRIA, 1995, p.249.

bureaucracy ultimately remains the brainchild of the political, economic and administrative policies of British colonialism. The direct and indirect rule systems used in the southern and northern Nigeria respectively, with their goal of exploitation and capitalistic accumulation through the instrumentality of the natives, reproduced classes of indigenous persons and groups, whose participation in the colonial administration, eventually constituted them into an elite group. Drawn from different parts of the country; trained and absorbed into the colonial administration, this elite group gradually became an influential force to reckon with in every dimension of national life and interest.²⁴

However, three events are crucial to the growth and expansion, national status and present relevance of the Nigerian bureaucracy. First, the 1954-59 constitutional reforms and the 1960 declaration of independence, which led to the massive election and appointment of Nigerian politicians and civil servants into prominent governmental offices/positions vacated by the colonialists. Second, the 1966 coup d'état and the Nigerian-Biafran Civil War [1966-70], which saw the rise of military bureaucrats and dictatorship in Nigeria. Third, The Oil Boom of the 1970s, which occasioned an unprecedented inflow of foreign currency into the national treasury; and consequently the past and present mad rush, by the bureaucrats, for official positions as the key to personal appropriation of the national wealth.²⁵

²⁴ Olukoshi, 249.

²⁵ Shehu Othman, "Nigeria: Power for profit-Class, Corporatism, and Factionalism in the Military", In D.B Cruise O'Brien, Dunn J., and R. Rathborne, *Contemporary West African States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 113-144.

Thus, at independence, Nigeria already had a class of bureaucrats ready to assume full responsibility of her bureaucracy. It is in the hands of these “crop of bureaucrats” that the destiny of the young nation was entrusted, as they took over from the colonialists.²⁶

1.4 BUREAUCRATIC CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA: AN EXPOSITION

Sadly, the Nigerian bureaucrats have consistently marred her post-colonial and post-independent dream of nationhood and socio-economic advancement. Hardly had they replaced the colonialists when they turned the national treasury into personal and ethnic property to be pillaged at will. Since the oil boom days, Nigerian bureaucrats have been radically converted from public servants to public merchants and parasitic overlords.²⁷ Presently, every dimension of the bureaucracy: senior civil servants, armed forces officials and politicians, is still entrenched in massive corruption—a formidable institution within the Nigerian bureaucracy. Thus, bureaucracy, constituted for the effective and efficient national productivity and progress, has become a major contributor to the national woe, an embodiment and instrument of socio-economic regression.

²⁶ S.G. Tyoden, “The Kaduna Mafia as a Faction of the Nigerian Bourgeoisie”, In B.J. Takaya, and S.G. Tyoden, eds., The Kaduna Mafia: A Study of the Rise, Development and Consolidation of a Nigerian Power Elite (Jos: Jos University Press, 1987), 68-83.

²⁷ Othman, 113.

1.4.1 BUREAUCRATIC CORRUPTION IN THE SENIOR CIVIL SERVICE

Within the first few years of independence, the Nigerian senior civil service was noted and lauded for its high ethical and technical standards. Impartiality, objectivity, moral and pecuniary rectitude-features of authentic bureaucracy-were its hallmark. Today, the story is different. The Nigerian senior civil service has been turned into a haven of bureaucratic corruption.²⁸

It is no longer a secret that senior civil servants in the local, state and federal government levels, not only encourage and supervise corruption among the junior cadres, but have turned it into a lucrative trade, a permanent means of livelihood, wealth and power. Still fresh, is the recent scandal involving senior civil servants who delay the payment of their juniors by banking their salaries, thereby amassing fortunes.²⁹ The Nigerian civil service, observes Olowu, "is locked into a vicious circle of corruption-poor performance-low image and more corruption."³⁰ The findings of the 1991 Public Accounts Committee still holds true: senior civil servants engage in fraudulent practices resulting in loss of public funds, deliberate destruction of documents to conceal implicating information, embezzlement of public funds for personal seasonal celebrations, circumvention of tender procedure in award of contracts, payments for non-or-half-executed contracts.³¹ Also, many senior civil servants are illegally recruited; spend official working time and resources on private business activities and moonlighting

²⁸ Dele Olowu, "Ethical Violations in Nigeria's Public Services: Patterns, Explanations and Remedies", In D. Olowu, and S. Rasheed, *Ethics and Accountability in African Public Services*, (Arusha, AAPAM, 1993), 91.

²⁹ Falola, 313.

³⁰ Olowu, 95.

³¹ Olowu, Dele. 101-102

(holding more than one paid job). Others create irrelevant vacancies for their relations and friends, and employ 'ghost workers'. Further, uncontrolled acquisition of public land, procurement, hoarding and resale of government subsidized commodities are ubiquitous among senior civil servants.³²

1.4.2 BUREAUCRATIC CORRUPTION IN THE ARMED FORCES

In Nigeria, the military bureaucracy is associated with glamour and power, and is one of the quickest ways to the national wealth. It is incredible how unbridled material acquisition through systemic corruption has turned the Nigerian military bureaucrats into uniformed merchants, oppressive billionaires, an incontinent, spendthrift, power-besotted class which raised corruption to Olympian heights.³³ Through the militarization of the Nigerian society (by coups and counter-coups, indiscriminate abrogation of existing laws and enactment of repressive decrees, silencing or eliminating of critics) and politicization of the military (by direct and indirect involvement in partisan politics), the Nigerian military bureaucrats pave the way for and perpetuate their corrupt practices.³⁴ Considering themselves above the law, they flaunt every ethico-legal system-not so much for national interest-as for selfish ends. Consequently, intermittent usurpation of the democratic process, embezzlement of public funds under cover of high military spending, indiscriminate property acquisition, lack of financial discipline and accountability,

³² Achebè, 23.

³³ Wole Soyinka, *The Open Sore of A Continent: A Personal Narrative of the Nigerian Crisis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 59.

³⁴ Othman, 115.

nepotism, deflection of the national treasury, have become the stigma of the Nigerian army officials.³⁵

Military bureaucratic corruption, rampant in all military regimes in Nigeria, reached its crescendo during the Babangida (1989-95) and Abacha (1995-98) regimes. In this period, institutionalized bureaucratic corruption was consolidated and accorded official legitimacy.³⁶ Together with their collaborators, Babangida and Abacha wasted incalculable amounts of public funds in financing their favoured political parties and politicians; donating recklessly to frivolous causes; promoting numerous army and police officers with gifts of cars and landed property; awarding multi-million dollar contracts with high foreign currency components, and banking licenses with take-off government deposits to favoured contractors; offering gifts of gold watches, cars, choice property, free overseas travels, shopping, medical attention to newspaper publishers, journalists, traditional rulers and public opinion leaders. All, in the bid to buy their conscience and attain selfish ends³⁷. While Babangida and his collaborators never accounted for the twelve billion dollars realized from oil sales; a total of 3.6 billion Pounds Sterling was discovered in Abacha's local and foreign bank accounts, at his death!³⁸

³⁵ J.I. Oko-eguale, . The Nigeria of my Time, A Legacy for Future Generations: Indiscipline and Social Malady (Lagos: Jofabris & Associates, 1995), 24-25.

³⁶ Tunde Obadina, "Abacha Bequeathes a Crippled Economy" In Africa Today, vol. 4 no. 17, July, 1998, 16-17

³⁷ Rose Umoren, "Nigeria: Gangster's Paradise", In Business in Africa, vol. 7, no. 3, June, 1999, 20.

³⁸ Anietie Usen, "Happy New Beginnings?", Africa Today, vol. 4, no. 8, August, 1998, 25.

1.4.3 BUREAUCRATIC CORRUPTION IN THE POLITICAL CLASS

The history of Nigerian politics is blurred with bureaucratic corruption. The failure of democracy in Nigeria has been largely attributed to the alarming level of bureaucratic corruption among politicians who pillage the national treasury.³⁹ Nigeria is yet to experience a political, electoral process free from corrupt practices. Her politicians secure public offices and perpetuate their tenure by hook and crook. Through the 'lobby system' (eliciting votes through payments in cash or kind), politicians pay their way to party offices, and eventually to national positions. In turn, they use their first years in office to loot and net in enough money to replenish their emptied pockets. They reward their collaborators with undeserved, juicy employment or appointments, unmerited promotions and benefits, awards of contracts they are ill-qualified for.⁴⁰

Nigerian politics is basically flawed by ethnocentrism. Rather than a test of personal competence, politics or political office is an ethnic contest. Consequently, incompetent personnel occupy prominent positions, thanks to their ethnic backgrounds. The recent nation-wide retrenchment of civil servants has been blamed on unproductivity. But the fact is that the civil service has been overstaffed with unqualified, inefficient friends, relatives, party members and campaigners of the ruling politicians.

The Nigerian experience shows that politics makes the corrupt poor rich and the rich richer. Various Nigerian political leaders, especially former President Shehu Shagari (1979-1983), Ministers, State Governors, Commissioners, Local Government Chairmen

³⁹ James O'Connell, "Nigeria", in Mews, Stuart (ed), Religion in Politics: A World Guide (Essex: London Group, 1989), 197.

⁴⁰ Oko-eguale, 49.

and other political bureaucrats, turned their offices into private business bureaus. They awarded multi-million-dollar contracts and projects, importation of all manner of consumer goods and very exorbitant heavy machinery (even irrelevant ones!), so as to get a proportion of the cost as 'kick-back' from such projects. They siphoned the national treasury to finance party and personal projects. The plethora of abandoned white elephant projects all over the country tell it all.⁴¹ Nigerian political bureaucrats, live ostentatiously at the expense of tax-payers. No wonder they are daubed 'Money Bags' and 'Fat Cats'. To cover up their scandals, they attempt to buy over the mass media, judiciary and law enforcement agents.⁴²

1.5 CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF BUREAUCRATIC CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

Economic, socio-political, cultural and epistemological factors have been proffered for the rise and persistence of institutionalized corruption in the Nigerian bureaucracy. The official remuneration of the bureaucrats, it is argued, is relatively low. Also, for the past two decades, the country has been plunged into grim economic conditions exacerbated by the Austerity Measures of the 1980s and the Structural Adjustment Programmes of the 1990s. This situation increased the temptation for the bureaucrats to embezzle public funds.⁴³ In Nigeria, affluence is the ticket to political power and social prominence. Politics is a calculated business venture between patrons or benefactors (wealthy businessmen) and client or beneficiaries (politicians). Politicians,

⁴¹ Soyinka, 70-75.

⁴² Oko-eguale, 61-69.

⁴³ A.D Yahaya, "The economic Crisis, Resource Scarcities and the Decline in Ethical Standards in Public Agencies", In D Olowu and R. Sadig, 71.

after securing office, dance to their patrons' whims, even at the detriment of the national economy.⁴⁴ African culture values gift-giving as token of appreciation for selfless service. Sadly, this noble custom has been abused. Rather than wait for free-will offerings, bureaucrats demand and extort "gifts" in cash and/or in kind-even for work undone or badly done-from the citizenry. Also, the extended family system, with its materialistic expectations, increase the bureaucrats' financial responsibilities.⁴⁵ It has also been observed that ignorance or false conception and expectations regarding the true meaning and aim of public office lead to bureaucrats' abuse of office. Obviously, most Nigerian public servants regard and treat their office as a means of self-enrichment.⁴⁶

Bureaucratic corruption has caused devastating socio-political, economic and moral crisis in Nigeria; sapped, fleeced and caused untold anguish to the majority of the citizenry. It has created a constant situation of potential instability and insecurity in the nation by undermining the confidence and trust of the people on the leadership. Not even the legal system is reliable! The ethno-centric conflicts that bedevils Nigeria is largely fuelled by the selfish and sectarian interests of the bureaucrats.⁴⁷ Bureaucratic corruption, like a virus, endangers the very existence, vital structure and progress of the Nigerian society. The bureaucrats' diversion of public funds to private ends has devastated public utilities. The occupation of strategic offices by unqualified and incompetent personnel spells gross inefficiency and indiscipline. The bureaucrats' insistence on 10% kickbacks from contracts endanger the viability of government projects. The present sorry state of

⁴⁴ W.N.Wamalwa, "Causes and Consequences of Ethical Crisis in African Public Services". In D Olowu and R. Sadig, , 45.

⁴⁵ E.E.Otenyo, *Ethics and Public Service in Africa* (Nairobi: Quest & Insight, 1998), 61.

⁴⁶ U. Ojinmah, *Chinua Achebe: New Perspectives* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1991), 40.

⁴⁷ Achebe, 5-7.

multi-billion dollar roads, steel, oil and gas projects, tell it all.⁴⁸ The culture of massive corruption in the *high places* has weakened the national conscience and morality. Hence, the general feeling of powerlessness and passivity among the citizenry in the face of the enormity of bureaucratic corruption. This strengthens the stranglehold and vicious circle of corruption, as junior employees in the private and public sectors emulate their leaders.⁴⁹ Thus, corruption in the head spreads to the entire body. By distorting market mechanisms, exacerbating local/foreign debts, causing the bankruptcy of many public parastatals and financial institutions, bureaucratic corruption has polluted the Nigerian economy; thereby scaring away local and foreign investors. Consequently, poverty, unemployment, nonpayment of workers prevail; as the yawning gap between the rich and the poor widens. With per capita income of less than \$300 (Three hundred dollars) per annum, life has become a heavy burden for the average Nigerian. “The people are groaning, hungry and dying; even the life of future generation is endangered”, laments patriotic Mbazi.⁵⁰ Peter Eigen of Transparency International concludes that “the massive damage that corruption has caused and is still causing to the country needs no elaboration”.⁵¹

⁴⁸ James Gire, “A psychological Analysis of Corruption in Nigeria,” In Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa, vol. 2, 1999, 1.

⁴⁹ Wamalwa, 43.

⁵⁰ L.C. Mbazi, , The Rise and Rape of the Great Songhai: Poetry of Historical Perspective of Songhai (Enugu: Environcare & John Jacobs Publishers, 2000), 24.

⁵¹ P. Eigen, “Tackling Corruption: New Challenges for Nigeria”, In New Democratic Nigeria, vol.3, January, 2000, 16.

1.5.1 THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Central to the Christian revelation, is God's plan to establish His Kingdom on earth; His dream to share not only His blessings but also Himself; to have a communion of peoples united by bonds of mutual love that is concretized in sharing of God-given resources for mutual benefits. To this end, God chose Israel. Israel's failure to live up to this vocation, explains the massive corruption practiced under politico-religious camouflage, that roused the holy indignation of its eighth-century prophets.⁵² Driven by Yahweh's love and righteousness, the prophets saw and condemned corruption-in all its varieties-as a terrible crime against God and people, an act of social injustice that does violence to God's plan (Cf. Am.4,5,8; Hos.6:6; Is.1:2-24;10:1ff; Jer.22:13-17; Ezek.18:4; Zeph. 3:3ff). They called the people, in the words of Micah, to "do justice, act kindly, and walk humbly with God"(6:8). In the New Testament, Jesus, confronted with socio-economic and political situation akin to the prophets', reiterated their denouncement of social injustice (Matt.6:20; Lk.20:20; Mk.12:13). Jesus announced the in-breaking of God's Reign among His people, a Kingdom of holiness, justice, peace and love. The condition for admittance into this Kingdom is *metanoia*- a turning of the whole person to God and neighbour in love, and faith in Jesus (Mk.1:15). This is the antidote to corruption and all unjust practices.

Nigeria, today, is bedeviled with massive scale of corruption, perhaps unknown to Israel of old. The same message of the prophets and Jesus needs to be proclaimed (and

⁵² Ronald Clemens, "Poverty and the Kingdom of God - An Old Testament View", In R. S Barbour, ed., The Kingdom of God and Human Society (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 25-26.

heard anew) to Nigerians in general and her bureaucrats in particular. There is something naturally, legally, theologically wrong with corruption. It thrives on the denial of individual or group's God-given right to self-determination, fulfillment and progress. It is, therefore, a crime against God and humanity.⁵³ The entire Christian revelation affirms with St. Irenaeus that "The glory of God is a human being fully alive". Hence, nothing is more abhorring to God than the exploitation and dehumanization of humans by fellow humans, especially by the leadership. By engaging in corruption, Nigerian bureaucrats, instead of serving the people, as their office demands, serve themselves, by lording it over the people, robbing and impoverishing them. Thus they abuse their office as well as the citizenry. Corruption is, therefore, a social sin that must be eschewed and rooted out. Bureaucratic corruption in Nigeria has its roots in the brazen selfishness enthroned in the hearts of our bureaucrats. Consequently, the efforts of the government, private organizations and concerned individuals to deal with this *hydra-headed monster*, have proved futile.

The insight of the prophets and Jesus is that any serious effort against such an unjust institution as bureaucratic corruption in Nigeria, must begin from the heart-the hearts of our bureaucrats-the wellspring of corrupt practices and other selfish acts. While Jesus did not map out some socio-political and economic theories, the change of heart and mind, and faith to which he called people, would, if accepted, inevitably cause the transformation of the social order for good.⁵⁴ The Good News of the Kingdom proclaimed by Jesus challenges institutionalized corruption in Nigeria. It calls for the dethroning of *worldly* or *selfish values* of avaricious lust for money, power and fame at

⁵³ Bruce Malchow, *Social Justice in the Bible* (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1996), xi.

⁵⁴ Henry Townsend, *Society and the Gospel* (Cork: The Mercier Press, 1976), 27.

the expense of others, which lie at the root of all corrupt practices; and the enthronement of *Kingdom/Godly values* of *self-less-ness* (authentic love of God, self and others).

Since about 40% of Nigerians are Christians, there is need for a Christian symbol which opposes the worldly values that enthrone corruption: portrays the Kingdom-values that expose and condemn it; and can reawaken Nigerians, mobilize and motivate them to eschew and eradicate corruption in all its ramifications. I opine that no Christian symbol serves this purpose better than the *Cross*. Hence, the need for a *Theology of the Cross* that addresses systemic corruption in Nigeria specifically, and in Africa generally.

CHAPTER TWO: THE THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS; BIBLICAL, HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the historical unfolding of the understanding and articulation of the cross and its significance in scripture and theology.

2.2 THE CROSS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

There is no mention of the cross in the Old Testament. The Jewish messianic expectations never associated the expected Messiah with a salvific death by crucifixion. In fact, for the Jews, crucifixion was the disgraceful lot of the godless, lawless, blasphemous, the accursed (Dt.21:22).⁵⁵ However, early Christian faith and thought found in the Hebrew writ the basis for its theological justification of the scandalous cross. New Testament writers unanimously affirm that Jesus' death was scriptural (I Cor.15:3; Lk.24:46-48;). Early Christians saw in some Old Testament events, personalities and images, the prefiguring of the cross: the tree of life in Eden (Gen.2:9), Isaac (Gen.22), the staff of Moses (Ex.17:8-13), the bronze serpent (Num.21:4-9), the Suffering Servant of Yahweh (Is.65:2ff)⁵⁶

⁵⁵ G. O'Collins, "Crucifixion", In D. Freedman, , ed, The Anchor Bible Dictionary. vol. 1 (New York: Double Day, 1992), 1209.

⁵⁶ Jean Danielou, "Cross", In J. B. Bauer, ed, Encyclopedja of Biblical Theology, vol. 1 (London: Sheed & Ward, 1970), 155.

2.3 THE CROSS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT: THE GOSPELS AND ST PAUL

The horrible and repulsive death of Jesus on the cross was a scandal, not only to the Jews and Greeks, but to Jesus' followers too. Thus, while the shameful tale of the cross circulated among the early Christians, only in the course of time, thanks to the Easter-experience, would the cross be recognized as "the very center and sum of the Christian faith and life"; and the infamous sign of humiliation and curse became a symbol of triumph and benediction.⁵⁷

2.3.1 THE CROSS IN THE GOSPELS

The Gospels present the cross as both a necessary and perfectly free act of Jesus; a crucial moment in his life and mission and in human destiny (Mk.8:31; Mt.16:21; Lk.17:22; Jn.3:14;10:18). They present Jesus' death as a dynamic interplay of three freedoms: God the Father (who sent Jesus to proclaim the Good News of His Kingdom), human beings (Jewish and Roman authorities who rejected Jesus' mission), and Jesus (who freely accepted and faced the consequences of his mission and rejection) (Mk.14:8; Mt.26:12; Lk.22:22-25; Jn.8:7). Also, the evangelists portray the Christian life as a discipleship of the cross (Mk.8:34; Mt.16:24; Lk.14:27; Jn.12:26). In Mark, the cross is the climax of Jesus' life and mission: a life lived in the humble service of others; a mission of word-deed proclamation of and commitment to the Kingdom of God. The cross is the locus of the distinctive revelation of Jesus' messianic identity (the suffering

⁵⁷ Hans Kung, *On Being A Christian* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), 397.

Son of Man, Servant of Yahweh) and divine Sonship (Son of God); and the theophany of God in human weakness and suffering (Mk.2:1-3;6;14:24ff;15:34,39).⁵⁸ Matthew depicts the cross as the ultimate sign of Jesus' identity as the obedient, faithful Son of God in whom God's will, word and promises find fulfillment; the expected royal Messiah, Servant of God who accepted death for the redemption of God's people from the slavery of sin and death (Mt.1:22;3:15;26:1ff;11:2-6).⁵⁹ On the cross, the Lucan Jesus-the innocent prophet-martyr, Son of God, saviour and liberating messiah died for all peoples. The cross is the sign and reality of the fullness of the blessings of God's healing love, forgiveness and liberating, transforming power lavished upon humankind.⁶⁰ For John, the cross is the supreme symbol of the free, loving act of total self-donation of the Son of God, the Word-incarnate, in and through which the Father's saving love for the world is revealed. Thanks to the cross, God's judgment on the forces of darkness and an unbelieving world is manifested. It is a decisive moment in the *hour* of Jesus' glorification by the Father, the hour in which Jesus-the Life of the world-communicates fullness of life to all who come to him in faith.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Donald Senior, The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark (Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1987), 139-158.

⁵⁹ Donald Senior, The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew (Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1985), 163-172.

⁶⁰ Donald Senior, The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke (Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1989), 161-179.

⁶¹ Donald Senior, The Passion Of Jesus in the Gospel of John (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 144-154.

2.3.2 THE CROSS IN ST PAUL

Paul is regarded as the first theologian of the cross.⁶² For Paul, the cross lies at the heart of the Good News of salvation (1Cor.1:17). Thus he desired to know nothing and boast of nothing, but Christ crucified (1Cor.2:2; Gal.6:14). In fact, the Good News he proclaimed was “the word of the cross” (1Cor.1:18). Paul developed his theology of the cross against the libertine spirit of Resurrection, Spirit-intoxicated and Judaic-minded early Christians (1Cor.6:12;9:1;10:23-29; Gal.3-4). Thanks to his personal experience of the crucified, risen Christ, and backed by the apostolic tradition,⁶³ Paul proclaimed unequivocally that the cross which, to the miracle-hungry Jews, is a stumbling block (*scandal*), and utter foolishness to the wisdom-hunting Greeks, remains the supreme manifestation of the power and wisdom of God (1Cor.1:18-24). Therefore, he maintained, the cross must not be emptied of its scandalous nature; for therein lies its power (1Cor.1:17). Paul saw the cross as primarily a divine love-in-action, in which each person of the Godhead plays an active part. Consequently, the cross becomes the basis for his doctrines on the various aspects of the Christian experience: *divine love* (Gal.2:20), *reconciliation* (2Cor.5:17; Gal.6:14), *justification* (Rom.4:25), *righteousness* (2Cor.5:21; Rom.5:15-21), *divine election*, adoption and *life in the Spirit* (Eph.1:4;Gal.4:2;Rom.5:5), *common life* (1Cor.10:14ff). In Paul’s theology, therefore, “the cross is the mid-point of saving history” in which all God’s promises are realized; “the center of the world’s history” in and through which all peoples of the world are reconciled and unified.⁶⁴ An

⁶² Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Study of the Faith* (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1986), 309.

⁶³ Joseph Fitzmyer, *Pauline Theology* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1967), 14.

⁶⁴ Hans Urs Von Balthazar, *Mysterium Paschale* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 16.

essential dimension of Paul's theology of the cross, is the Christian existential dimension. True Christianity is a life lived under the lordship of the crucified (and risen, living) Christ. It demands an imitative participation and co-operation with Christ, who in total self-emptying, impoverished himself for our enrichment (2Cor.8:9). The Christian life is, therefore, characterized as a voluntary dying to self for the well-being of others (2Cor.4:10). Thus Paul's theology of the cross produces an "ethics of the cross"- a life marked by charity, generosity, humble service in the footsteps of Jesus Christ crucified.⁶⁵ Paul testifies to the importance of this dimension of the cross by pointing to the marks of the cross (suffering) in his life as the confirmation of his apostleship (2Cor 4:6; 11:24ff.).

It must be underlined that Paul situates his theology of the cross within the firm basis of the resurrection as the cornerstone of the Christian faith. Hence his faith-confession: "If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is in vain, your faith is in vain" (1Cor.15:14). Nonetheless, an indispensable aspect of this faith is that the condition for a share in the glory of Christ's resurrection, is a fellowship in his cross (Phil.3:10-12).

2.4 THE CROSS IN TRADITIONAL THEOLOGY

The death of Christ as presented in the New Testament, was a constant feature in the reflections of the early Fathers of the Church. Though none of them developed a systematic theology of the cross, they all, in line with the scriptures, underscored the cruciality of the cross in God's plan of salvation. They saw in the cross (Christ crucified): the sign of the New Covenant; God's outstretched arms, welcoming and embracing

⁶⁵ Jurgen Moltmann, The Crucified God, The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criterion of Christian Theology (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).

humankind, drawing them into one universal brotherhood; Jesus' total self-surrender and worship of the Father: a call to service.⁶⁶ In their sermons, prayers and writings, they sought to articulate the essence and significance of the cross in the Christian life and the cosmos. Cantalamessa sums up the Father's theological reflection on the cross thus:

Truly, "all is accomplished" on the cross;
 Nothing greater can be thought of or done;
 It was there that every human and divine resource was consumed:
 all evil is conquered at its roots, salvation is obtained
 and every glory is given to the Trinity.⁶⁷

As for the precise articulation of the salvific efficacy of the cross, the Fathers (especially, Justin, Irenaeus, Origen, Athanasius, Tertullian, the Cappadocians) borrowed categories and images from scripture and their socio-cultural, political, economic and religious milieu. Two categories in the patristic theology of the cross, namely, *ransom* and *vicarious sacrifice*, were popularized in the Western Church by St. Augustine and Pope Gregory VII: Through sin, humankind fell under the devil's dominion. There was a dire need to *buy* humankind *back*. Jesus' death on the cross was the prize (*ransom*) paid to the devil for the release (*redemption*) of enslaved humankind. Also, the cross was interpreted as the supreme bloody sacrifice through which Jesus atoned for humankind's sin, appeased God's anger, and reconcile humankind to God.⁶⁸ These categories spoke to the patristic world of religious cults and brigandage. Almost eight centuries later, St. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury (+1109), rejected ransom theory for a different category that can appeal to his flock. He explained Christ's death on the cross as *satisfaction*- an

⁶⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 189-190.

⁶⁷ Raniero Cantalamessa, *The Eucharist, Our Sanctification* (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 12.

⁶⁸ Kung, 420.

understandable category for the feudal, order and honour-conscious medieval Europe. Through sin, humankind violated divine honour, order and justice, resulting to cosmic disorder and evil. For the restoration of cosmic order, the offended, just God must be appeased (*satisfied*); and can only be appeased by a being who is both human and divine. Only Jesus Christ, the God-man, qualifies for this cogent task. And this is what he did on the cross. Anselm's satisfaction theory dominated the church's theology and liturgy, with slight modifications by Aquinas and the Scholastics, way into the post-reformation era. Its traces are still with us today.⁶⁹ The post-Reformation theologies, dominated by the categories of law and jurisprudence, thanks to the patrimony of the Latin Church Fathers (Tertullian, Cyprian), the neo-Scholastics and the Reformers (Luther and Calvin), interpreted Christ's death on the cross as a *substitutionary atonement*. On the cross, Jesus underwent the punishment-suffering and death-due to humankind for sin. Thus he earned forgiveness of sin, since he made amends *for-and-on-behalf-of* all.⁷⁰ Despite its merits, the traditional Western church's theology of the cross leaned heavily on an exaggerated mysticism of the cross. This led to the proliferation of overly spiritualized, moralized and self-centered devotions to *the passion of Christ*; and found expression in rigorous, morbid asceticism lacking in zeal or strong commitment for social change.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Kung, 437.

⁷⁰ Dickson Kwesi, *Theology in Africa* (New York: Orbis Books, 1984), 185.

⁷¹ John Sobrino, *Christology at Crossroads* (New York: Orbis Books, 1978), 179.

2.4.1 MARTIN LUTHER'S THEOLOGY

It was Martin Luther who, to a large extent, rediscovered and drew renewed attention to the theology of the cross, making it the theoretical basis for his reformation project. Luther publicized the *Theologia Crucis* in his 1518 Heidelberg Disputation as a critique of the medieval church's *Theologia Gloriae*.⁷² While the Scholastic speculative *theologia gloriae* extolled human ability or efforts to comprehend and experience God and divine truths; Luther's *theologia crucis* preached that true knowledge and experience of God and reality is found only in and through the cross (passion and death) of Christ. Convinced that the *theologia gloriae*, based on human efforts, leads to human hubris and alienation from God, Luther advocated for the *theologia crucis* which is grounded on God's initiative and descent to the level of sinful human nature, condemning the sin and justifying the sinner.⁷³ According to Luther, the true nature of God as hidden (*Deus absconditus*) and self-revealing (*Deus revelatus*) is manifested on the cross. Thus in Jesus crucified, the concealed God makes Himself visible, knowable and touchable. It is, therefore, in the suffering and humiliation of the cross that sinful humankind can encounter God.⁷⁴ In spite of his courage and insights, Luther's theology of the cross, Moltmann rightly observed, is flawed by its lack of clear social orientation. It succeeded in critiquing the medieval-Scholastic *theologia gloriae*, but failed to lift a finger on the corruption-ridden, enslaving, feudal society of his time.⁷⁵ However, Luther's theology of the cross was an epoch-making rediscovery of the power of the cross, especially as found

⁷² Regin Prenter, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 2.

⁷³ Prenter, 5.

⁷⁴ Alister McGrath, *The Enigma of the Cross* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1987), 120.

⁷⁵ Moltmann, 213.

in the Pauline corpus. It provoked renewed reflection on the cross within the contemporary Protestant (Barth, Moltmann) and Catholic (Rahner, Von Balthazar, De Chardin, liberation theologians: Boff, Sobrino, Gutierrez) theological circles.

2.5 THE CROSS IN THE CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY

Karl Barth affirmed Luther's thesis that the cross reveals God in a unique way; and that Jesus' death "on behalf of all" effects justification, "salvation, liberation and exaltation" for believers.⁷⁶ Faith in and acceptance of the cross marks a life of fellowship with Christ; and entails "hardship, anguish, grief, pain and finally death".⁷⁷ However, Barth saw Luther's *theologia crucis* as incomplete without the *theologia gloriae*. Barth acknowledged the unity and correspondence between the human and divine natures in Jesus; such that his humanity is revealed in his exaltation, while his divinity is revealed in his humiliation on the cross.⁷⁸

Karl Rahner critiqued the traditional overly juridical and cultic theology of the cross (Luther's inclusive) for separating the cross from the incarnation and resurrection which give redemptive value to the cross.⁷⁹ Because the Logos became a full member of the human family (incarnation), his voluntary death in loving obedience to the Father, has an ontological impact on the entire human reality, thanks to the resurrection.⁸⁰ Rahner

⁷⁶ Karl Barth, "The Doctrine of Reconciliation" In *Church Dogmatics*, IV. 2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1958), 605.

⁷⁷ Barth, 602.

⁷⁸ Moltmann, 202.

⁷⁹ Karl Rahner, "God, Christ, Mary and Grace", In *Theological Investigations*, vol. I (Maryland: Helicon Press, 1968), 193.

⁸⁰ Karl Rahner, "More recent Writings", In *Theological Investigations*, vol. IV (Maryland: Helicon Press, 1966), 128.

then called for a contemporary “Christology from below”, an “existentiell Christology” that will explore Jesus’ passion and death in relation to the human experience of pain, suffering and death, as events that really “touch” the being of God. In this way, the theologico-anthropological implications of the cross will be better appreciated.⁸¹

Hans Urs von Balthazar’s aesthetic theology sees in Christ crucified the locus of divine glory. Any authentic Christology, he argues, must contemplate and find in the cross (as it does in the incarnation and resurrection) the full manifestation of the triune God’s glory and self-giving love for humankind. Such a love calls humans to loving service of one another. Through the cross, the divine image in humans and the fellowship between God and humans ruptured by sin, was healed and restored. Thus the cross is the meeting point of divine self-revelation and glorification and human salvation.⁸²

Jurgen Moltmann identifies an intrinsic link between the cross and every mystery of the Christian faith. Hence his theology of the cross holds the hermeneutic key to his theological system. The centrality of the cross to the Christian faith necessitates that Christian theology and life be based on the theology of the cross. For Moltmann, in Jesus crucified, God manifests Himself as *the crucified God*. Thus, on the cross, the dynamics of the immanent and economic is depicted.⁸³ The cross is the simultaneous revelation of human sinfulness and predicament and God’s empathetic love and solidarity with human suffering and genuine struggles against oppressive forces in society. The historicity of the cross demands that a true theology of the cross must break out of the mystico-metaphysical realm, and sink its heels deep into the socio-economic, politico-cultural domains where people struggle daily for survival, as “a critical and liberating” theory and

⁸¹ Karl Rahner, Foundations of Christian Faith (New York: Seabury Press), 288 -305.

⁸² Von Balthazar, 12-13.

⁸³ Moltmann, 207.

praxis of God and human beings.⁸⁴ Only in this way, can it liberate people from the “vicious circles of death”: *poverty, racial/cultural alienation, industrial pollution of nature and hopelessness*.⁸⁵

Surprisingly, in his resurrection-dominated evolution-theology, Teilhard de Chardin gave a prominent place to the cross. His theology of the cross is based on his vision of the cross as “the symbol of progress and victory won through mistakes, disappointments and hardwork”.⁸⁶ His progress-oriented theology of the cross influenced Vatican II’s articulation of the Church’s active involvement in the *modern world*.⁸⁷ While acknowledging the traditional negative aspect of the cross (Christ’s redemptive death in reparation for sin), Teilhard stressed the positive dimension (the unification of the world with God and within itself). He found in the cross a suitable symbol of the three complementary movements necessary for any form of authentic human or social development and progress, namely, “Centration”: movement towards self, aimed at personal development and maturity; “Decentration”: movement towards others in solidarity and co-operation for social action; and “Surcentration”: movement towards God for intimacy. ⁸⁸ For him, rather than “penitential expiation”, the cross is “more evocative of hard won progress”.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Moltmann, 25,63,40.

⁸⁵ Moltmann, 327

⁸⁶ Robert Faricy, “The Cross in Context Cross” In G. O’Collins, R. Faricy and M. Flick, eds, The Cross Today: An Evaluation of Current Theological Reflections on the Cross of Christ, (Sydney: E. J. Dwyer, 1977), 54.

⁸⁷ Robert Faricy, “Teilhard de Chardin’s Theology of the Cross”, In The Cross Today: An Evaluation of Current Theological reflections on the Cross of Christ, 20.

⁸⁸ Faricy, 24.

⁸⁹ Faricy, 15.

2.5.1 THE CROSS IN LIBERATION THEOLOGY

More than any other theological system, liberation theology has revolutionized theological reflection on the cross. It did-and still does-this by rejecting the traditional “mystique of sorrow and suffering”, and emphasizing the radically liberating power of the cross.⁹⁰ Focusing on the historical Jesus as the Liberator of the downtrodden, liberation theology sees the cross as a paradoxical symbol. On the one hand, it is the fullest possible depiction of institutionalized human sinfulness (wickedness, violence, pride, oppression, injustice) at work in the world. On the other, it is the best portrayal of God’s response to human depravity: aversion and condemnation of injustice, bestowal of gracious love, liberating solidarity with the victims, empowering all to stand up against unjust oppressive systems and forces.⁹¹ According to Boff, the liberating power of the cross, lies, not in Jesus’ mere suffering and death, but in its sacramentality as the concrete expression of God’s enduring, saving love for humankind.⁹² Jesus was executed for proclaiming God’s reign-the reign of justice, peace and love, of authentic freedom for the oppressed. Thus the cross is a symbol of God’s gift of freedom and liberation (liberation from sin, which underlie all forms of institutionalized injustice) for which Christ lived, laboured and died; and the concerted efforts necessary for maintaining this liberation, in active, nonviolent, opposition to the forces that seek to suppress it.⁹³

⁹⁰ Sobrino, 179.

⁹¹ Leonardo Boff, Passion of Christ, Passion of the World. The Facts, their Interpretation, and their Meaning. Yesterday and Today (New York: Orbis Books, 1978), 110-116.

⁹² John Sobrino, Jesus The Liberator, A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth (Kent: Burns & Oates, 1994), 231.

⁹³ Gustavo Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, History, Politics and Salvation (New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 23-25.

The above exposition show that theological reflection on the cross has moved from an *other-worldly* to *this-worldly* emphasis, thanks to contemporary theologians, especially, liberation theologians. They are optimistic that a serious look at the cross radicalizes the Christian conception of God, humankind, the church, and radicalize our commitment to human liberation and progress. Their insights will serve as a wealth of resources for a contemporary African theology of the cross, which will be developed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: TOWARDS AN AFRICAN THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Is there a need for an African theology of the cross? How can it relate the Good News of salvation to particular African realities? What message has the cross for Nigerians in particular and Africans in general? These are the concerns of this chapter.

3.2 THE AFRICAN [NIGERIAN] EXPERIENCE OF THE CROSS

African Christianity received and has retained the legacy of the medieval-scholastic theology of the cross-with all its merits and demerits-from the early missionaries. The latter, as people of their time and cultural milieu, employed the traditional or classic cultic, mythological, forensic categories in their evangelizing and catechizing mission to Africa. These categories found a welcoming niche among the Africans; since the concepts and experience of vicarious, substitutionary sacrifice or atonement, ransom, satisfaction, are not alien to African socio-cultural and religious life and thought.

However, while these categories helped the Africans to comprehend the Good News of salvation, their inherent adverse theological, socio-political and economic potentials should not be minimized or dismissed.⁹⁴ They often distort the true image of the Christian God, giving him the semblance of the blood-thirsty, vengeful, impassible

⁹⁴ John-Mary Waliggo, "African theology in a situation of suffering", In R. J. Schreiter, ed, Faces of Jesus in Africa (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 168.

African deities or gods. In Africa, the theology of the cross has been abused and misused to maintain unjust, oppressive, death-dealing structures; and encourage passive, uncritical acceptance of such evil, dehumanizing structures by pious Christians.⁹⁵ It was under the *royal banner of the cross* that the colonialists exploited and impoverished their African colonies; while many a missionary preached the gospel of pacifism in the name of the cross.⁹⁶ Today, the situation remains more or less the same, as African political and religious leaders emulate their forebears. More often, the unjustly deprived and downtrodden are persuaded to “offer it up”, “carry your cross in humility and silence like Christ”, “don’t complain, you have a reward in heaven”; while the oppressors are neither confronted, criticized nor challenged. Thus, Nolan sadly observes, the cross, a symbol of liberation, has become so much spiritualized, “tamed and domesticated”, that it has turned out to be a means of maintaining unjust, oppressive systems.⁹⁷ Consequently, institutionalized corruption in all its ramifications, with its harsh repercussions, has become a distinguishing mark of African public and private sectors, thanks too to the uncurbed selfishness and greed of African bureaucrats whose “interest (their god) is their stomach.”⁹⁸ African bureaucrats, says Uzukwu, are guilty of a “double” crime: they are not only “robbers” but “destructive robbers” of their countries; for, rather than re-invest their loot for their retrogressive nations’ development, they “buy up medieval castles in Europe, skiing resorts in Switzerland, streets in Belgium, or simply lodge the money in

⁹⁵ Manas Buthelezi, “Liberation and Reconciliation in Southern Africa”, In K. Y. Best, ed, African Challenge, (Nairobi: Transafrica Publications, 1975), 46.

⁹⁶ E.E.Uzukwu, A Listening Church: Autonomy and communion in African Churches (New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 70.

⁹⁷ Albert Nolan, God in South Africa: The Challenge of the Gospel (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988), 58.

⁹⁸ Uzukwu, 70.

classified accounts in Swiss or other Western banks.”⁹⁹ Hence the preventable hunger, poverty, disease and low life expectancy that is devastating sub-Saharan Africa, despite her unquantifiable human and nonhuman resources.

Obviously, Africans have to re-experience the cross so as to discover its liberating power. Jean-Marc Ela believes that it will be harmful to the African church, if theological reflections succeed in “separating the cross from ‘the ways of African Christology’.”¹⁰⁰ Such a move will deny Jesus “any real rooting in the historical experience that mark the life of the Africans.”¹⁰¹ To this end, therefore, there is need for a contemporary African theology of the cross, “a theology under the tree”; which, while remaining biblical and systematic, will re-interpret or replace the traditional or classic theology of the cross, from the historical, contextual experience of the “African cry”.¹⁰²

3.3 AN AFRICAN THEOLOGY OF CROSS

An authentic African theology of the cross ought to retrieve the cross of Christ from the romantic mysticism of the Middle Ages, and restore to it its true theologico-historical interpretation and implications. It needs to paint the picture of the Christian God as revealed on the cross; and underscore the ineluctable necessity of Christian commitment to social change. Thus, it becomes, borrowing Sobrino’s words, “a critical theory and a liberative praxis” of God and humankind.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Uzukwu, 71.

¹⁰⁰ Jean-Marc Ela, “The Memory of the African People and the Cross of Christ”, In Yacob Tesfai, ed, The Scandal of a Crucified World: Perspectives on the Cross and Suffering (New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 20.

¹⁰¹ Ela, 21.

¹⁰² Ela, 34.

¹⁰³ John Sobrino, Christology at Crossroads (New York: Orbis Books, 1978), 182. (Cf. p.181).

3.3.1 THE CROSS AND GOD: THE LANGUAGE OF DIVINE LOVE

That the all-powerful, invisible, transcendent God has fully pitched His tent among humankind in and through Jesus Christ, the God-man, is central to the Christian faith (Jn1:12). Vatican II hits at the Christological implication of this belief by stating that Jesus Christ reveals God to humans, and reveals humans to themselves.¹⁰⁴ Jesus revealed God precisely as Love in Himself and towards humankind (Lk.15:11-32; 1Jn.4:8,16). Scripture and theology agree that it is on the cross that Jesus reveals this immense divine love in an unsurpassable, unique manner.

Africans should realize that what is manifested on the cross, is not just Jesus' love for us in contradistinction with the Father's vengeful wrath and the Spirit's passivity, as traditional/classical theology of the cross tended to insinuate. Rather than promote dichotomy, the cross portrays the external manifestation of the unity-in-loving-activity of the Godhead. The *work of the cross* is the work of the Blessed Trinity: Father, Son and Spirit.¹⁰⁵ The Father expressed His immense love for the Son and humankind by entrusting him with His reign, and sending him to establish this liberating reign in the world (Jn.3:16). The Son reciprocates this love by willingly obeying and carrying out, in the power of the Holy Spirit, this liberating mission and will of the Father. So strong was the Son's love for the Father and humankind that nothing- not even the prospects of a

¹⁰⁴ Vat. II, Dei Verbum, (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation), no. 4.

¹⁰⁵ Moltmann, 207-244.

humiliating death could deter him from accomplishing it. When confronted with the most ignominious and *pain-full* death, he consciously, willingly, freely accepted and faced it. So strong was the Father's love for the Son that He "suffered" and "died"-in a manner that only God can-in His Son. (The Father "suffered" the "loss" of his Son-an "incompleteness" or "emptiness" in His Being! He sacrificed His Fatherhood!). It is in and through this experience of "dying", "self-emptying", "self-giving", "self-sacrifice" in the Godhead that the Spirit (the very sacrificial love and life of the Father and the Son) was released, "out-poured", that is, "poured out" (sacrificed as in libation!). It is the Spirit's free self-giving that effects the reconciliation, adoption or co-option of humankind into the life and fellowship of the Godhead. Hence, Paul proclaimed that when he hung on the cross, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (2Cor.5:17).

So, Africans should see in the cross the dynamic of love in the Godhead, and this love as graciously lavished on them. God (Father, Son, Spirit) is fullness-of-love in Himself, and love-unto-folly towards us all. Africans should look at the cross and say "God has loved us so much as to risk non-existence for us" (Cf.Gal.2:20; 1Jn.4:7-10). And their joyful acceptance and mutual sharing of this love can heal the feelings of hatred and rejection engendered by the selfishness of their corrupt leaders (bureaucrats).

3.3.2 THE CROSS AND HUMANKIND: THE MOST ELOQUENT CRITIQUE OF HUMAN SINFULNESS, LIBERATION AS A GIFT AND TASK

True love saves. Rather than possessive or oppressive, it liberates; instead of death-dealing, it is life-giving. This is perfectly true of divine love for humankind. Hence, humankind's liberation from every kind of oppression and slavery-spiritual, psychological, physical (socio-political and economic)-that hinder them from experiencing the fullness of divine love and blessing, is at the heart of God's salvific plan.¹⁰⁶ And, at the root of all human oppression, enslavement and dehumanization; at the root of all the social ills that bedevil humankind; at the root of the compulsive greed that lead African bureaucrats to subject their peoples to phenomenal suffering and pain by pillaging their national treasuries through systemic corruption; is sin – “sin and the structures produced by sin”.¹⁰⁷ Essentially, sin is an abuse of God-given human freedom through choices and acts contrary to authentic love of God, self, others and nature.¹⁰⁸ No where is the extremities of human sinfulness depicted in all its gruesomeness, than in the cross. In the unjust apprehension, trial, terrible torture, violent crucifixion and death of Jesus of Nazareth human depravity, wickedness and inhumanity is seen at its worst. It is within this historical context that the cross becomes, in a special way *the sacrificial work of Christ*. It is the logical consequence of Jesus' life-a life fully dedicated and committed to the establishment of God's reign in all dimensions of his people's (all peoples', the Africans') life. In so doing, he confronted and challenged the corrupt religious, socio-

¹⁰⁶ J. Mugambi, cited by Cone, James, “A Black American Perspective on the Future of African Theology”, In Tesfai, 181.

¹⁰⁷ John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (Nairobi: St. Paul's Publications Africa, 1987), no. 48.

¹⁰⁸ John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et poenitentia* (Massachusetts: Daughters of St. Paul, 1984), nos. 14-16.

political and economic structures that enslaved and exploited his people. The individuals and groups (Jewish and Roman authorities) who made fortunes from these oppressive structures rejected Jesus' insistent call to a change of heart and life, selflessness, non-possessive love. Afraid of the new order Jesus' *orthodoxy* and *orthopraxis* would engender, they put him to death. On his part, Jesus accepted his death; surrendering himself to his Father in total, trusting love. On the one hand, his death was the classical example of the subversion of justice in the condemnation of an innocent human being; on the other, it is the voluntary, self-emptying, self-donation or offering, self-sacrifice of a man in love with God and human beings - the culmination of a life-for-others. Simply put, Jesus freely gave his life for the cause of human salvation or liberation.¹⁰⁹

It is through this voluntary, loving self-sacrifice of Jesus, that God's liberating act strikes at the root of human sinfulness which expresses itself in the enthronement of self, and the use of everything: God, others, the environment, for selfish aggrandizement. Thus, Africans should see in the cross, not only the language of God's love; but also the symbol of the depth, breadth and height of human sinfulness, evil or abuse of freedom; as well as God's most eloquent abhorance, critique and condemnation of all acts and structures of social injustice (corruption, for instance) that dehumanize people. It also reveals the extent to which God can go, has gone, and still goes-what it took and takes God-to emancipate humankind from the shackles of individual and collective sin to which they freely enslave themselves.

¹⁰⁹ John Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator* (New York: Orbis Books, 1986), 272.

3.3.3 THE CHALLENGE OF THE CROSS: SELF-TRANSCENDENCE, REAWAKENING CALL TO BECOME LIBERATORS

Liberation is not a sterile, static, empty experience that leaves one cold or totally powerless. It is a dynamic, empowering experience. It is not only a *freeing from* sin or selfishness; but also a *freeing for* God and others. God wills to share His saving, liberating acts in the world through human beings. Hence, human mediation is part of divine pedagogy. In other words, the revelation and experience of the liberating power of God through Christ crucified, is God's invitation to Africans to become available, willing and committed protagonists and agents of liberation in word and deed. Only in this way would the institutionalized structures of oppression and injustice that enslave and dehumanize African peoples (especially, bureaucratic corruption) be eventually pulled down, and social transformation facilitated.

However, the process of liberating the marginalized from oppressors or the latter from their self-centeredness, is a very laborious task, to which is attached an exorbitant price of suffering, even suffering unto death. The experiences of such champions of social justice as Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr., Ken Saro Wiwa, tell it all. Often, commitment to the cause of liberation confronts one with the existential experience of human finitude: pain, suffering and death. It is here that Africans can find in the cross the symbol of the dear price of liberation as well as the motivating, energizing force to freely offer their resources and lives for the cause of liberation, as Jesus did. Thus, the African collective and individual experience of (and attitude towards) human finitude (merited or unmerited, necessary or unnecessary pain,

rejection, suffering and death) in the pursuit of liberation, finds a unifying symbolism in the cross. To Africans, the cross offers an ambivalent attitude towards pain, suffering and death: the courageous and creative acceptance of inevitable pain, suffering and death; the righteous indignation, resilient resistance and confrontation of the people and systems that promote and impose pain, suffering, death on others. The agony and anguish of Jesus on the cross cries out strongly against passive resignation or acceptance and canonization of suffering, pain or death for its own sake. It is also an outcry against those individuals and institutions that unashamedly find, in human misery, a means of livelihood. "The cross", says Boff, far from being a "masochistic symbol", is a clarion call for "struggle *against* pain and *against* the causes".¹¹⁰ Jesus' voluntary self-offering or sacrifice for humankind's liberation should remind Africans of, and challenge them to emulate their ancestral heritage which exalts suffering, pain or death freely embraced for the good of the community or its member (vicarious or substitutionary sacrifice). Thus, the traditional African conception of the transitory nature of earthly life and death; and the nobility and value in relinquishing the joys of life for the remote or proximate good of others; find a radical symbolism in the cross.

Through his death, Jesus not only reconciled human beings to the Father, he also reconciled human beings with one another. Thus he literally pulled down the barriers which, thanks to sin or selfishness, human beings erect between one another; and has united us with one another in an intimate bond of friendship and brother-sisterhood. Herein lies the unifying symbol of the cross: the cross symbolizes not only the Fatherhood of God who sent His Son to bring us into reunion with the Godhead, but also the unity, solidarity and universal brother-sisterhood we share in and are called to. If this

¹¹⁰ Boff, 3.

reality of the cross has dawned on humankind, the massive scales of social injustice that plague the world today, would have been non-existent. African peoples can and should find in the cross an undying symbol of our life together as one family of God, irrespective of tribal/ethnic backgrounds or personal idiosyncrasies. This life together can only be sustained through mutual upbuilding, love, acceptance, forgiveness, after the example of Jesus crucified. Jesus died on the cross in total, loving self-donation to the Father and humankind. He concretized this love by freely offering forgiveness to his executioners: "Father, forgive them"(Lk.24:32). Thus, he teaches Africans the value in relinquishing their right to vengeance. Voluntary and full forgiveness of those who are responsible for the unjust, oppressive structures that *crucify* us, according to Jesus' example, is the most practical expression of self-transcending love. And, as love, it is liberating to the giver and recipient alike. Often, the "struggle for liberation" could become a subtle means of venting our long suppressed bitterness and anger on the oppressors through violence. In the cross, Africans can find an evocative symbol of *forgiveness-unto-death*, inviting, challenging and encouraging them to live and struggle nonviolently and without bitterness in our pursuit of liberation. The seed of true liberation, the cross proclaims, is sown, not by sword, but by love-the love that forgives even as it confronts-in pursuit of social justice.

The Roman government used crucifixion as "the great and effective instrument of repression".¹¹¹ Africans can see in the cross, the symbol of all forms of repressive and oppressive systems or forces, for instance our corrupt bureaucrats, who subject their people to untold suffering by engaging in massive corrupt practices. Thus, daily, they lay

¹¹¹ Nolan, 59.

heavy “crosses” on their people and “crucify” them. It is because of this that African peoples are a “crucified people”. However, the self-manifestation of God in Jesus crucified as the “crucified God”, is a consoling and empowering sign of God’s presence among suffering, oppressed Africans. Africans should, therefore, see in the cross, the assuring symbol of God’s full solidarity with them in their struggles for liberation; a solidarity that invites them to unite their efforts in the pursuit of social justice. Thus, the symbol of the cross invites Africans to unite their sufferings and struggles with the crucified Christ, and so find in him their Liberator; the one who can transform their crosses into “sacred symbols of our hope for salvation and liberation”.¹¹²

3.4 THE CROSS AND BUREAUCRATIC CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

Since Nigeria is an African country, the above theological and historical implications of an African theology of the cross applies to her too. To her, the paradoxical nature of the cross also applies: on the one hand, the cross reveals God’s unconditional love for all Nigerians, the suffering citizenry, as well as the affluent bureaucrats; on the other, the cross is a critique of all social ills in Nigeria, especially, bureaucratic corruption with all the persons and structures that promote it. On the one hand, it exposes the horrible sinfulness or selfishness (abuse of freedom and official position, insensitivity, greed) of many Nigerian bureaucrats who amass wealth by robbing and impoverishing, and thus “crucifying” their people; on the other, it condemns the crass selfishness underlying such acts of social injustice; and calls their perpetrators

¹¹² Nolan, 59.

to a total conversion from selfishness to self-less-ness, as exemplified by Jesus crucified. On the one hand, it symbolizes the suffering, pain and even death of the *crucified people of Nigeria*, and God's consoling, empowering presence with them as the *Crucified God*; on the other, it challenges them to eschew any form of passive resignation to the corrupt structures that oppress and "crucify" them, and to become protagonists of the transformation of the Nigerian political and socio-economic scene by humane and godly efforts in solidarity with others. However, the symbolic realism of the cross shows that those who want to struggle for the eradication of bureaucratic corruption in Nigeria, must be ready and willing to pay the price: suffering, pain, isolation, false accusations, blackmailing, death unleashed by the bureaucrats and those who enrich themselves through the obnoxious status quo. The message of the cross is: just as Jesus wrought human salvation or liberation by offering his life in the process, so Nigerians who are willing to commit themselves to the liberation of their people from the bondage of systemic corruption, must realize that it may cause them their lives. Liberation is never won in a platter of gold; but with the sweat of the brow. But, the cross also challenges and stirs them to commit themselves fully to this noble and worthy cause, by portraying vividly, in Jesus crucified, that the true value of life lies not so much in hoarding or preserving it as in investing, offering or losing it that others may live. This way of dying ennobles death, giving it a liberating, life-giving character.

Thus, Nigerians can truly find in the cross the living symbol of authentic service, self-transcendence, self-sacrifice, reconciliation, solidarity for progress, active-nonviolent commitment to social change and resistance to bureaucratic corruption; and above all, the symbol of love for God and one another, without which all dreams, efforts and struggles

for a new, transformed Nigeria remains perpetually aborted. Nigerian bureaucrats will change for good if they see in Jesus crucified, *the true bureaucrat*, who came not to be served, but to serve; and freely offer his very life for those he chose to serve (Cf. Mk.10:45). As the *bureaucrat per excellence*, Jesus did not cling to power for the satisfaction of his personal whims at the disadvantage of others; he even *emptied himself*, impoverished himself that his people may be enriched! Thus, the cross proclaims that true leadership lies, not in lording it over the people, or in the acquisition of wealth by subjecting the people to misery; it lies in giving oneself for the good of those one is called to serve. Thus the cross sends out a reawakening call to both the citizenry and the bureaucrats.

CHAPTER FOUR: PASTORAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

What implications have an African theology of the cross for the Nigerian and African church, especially with reference to bureaucratic corruption? How or in what ways can she facilitate a better and new appreciation of the reawakening, liberating dimension of the cross? This final chapter addresses these questions.

4.2 PASTORAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

An African theology of the cross, as discussed above, has far-reaching implications for the Nigerian church in relation to her self-understanding as well as her mission within the context of a Nigeria distressed by bureaucratic corruption.

First, an African theology of the cross confronts the church constantly with the truth of her origins, and the need to return to it so as to draw inspiration and unearth salient data for her self-understanding. The church was born with the Christ-event which attained its climax in the Paschal Mystery. The cross was crucial as a decisive moment in this saving mystery. Thus John the Evangelist presents the cross as the birthplace of the church and her sacramental life (19:30). The African Synod articulated the self-understanding of the African church as the "God's family".¹¹³ This conception of the church is intimately linked to the cross. It was thanks to the event of the cross, as

¹¹³ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation), no. 63.

scripture attests, that the constitution into one family of God, of peoples hitherto unknown to each other, was effected. "Jesus" died on the cross, says John, in order "to gather together into one the scattered children of God" (11:52; Cf. 12:32; Col.1:19-20; Eph.2:11-22). Hence, the church has a *cruciform* identity. She is, therefore, and should always strive, to remain *a people or church-at-the-foot-of-the-cross*.

This way of seeing the church imposes demanding responsibilities upon the Nigerian church-responsibilities that goad her out of the four walls of the church into the harsh, concrete realities of life in the Nigerian society. Taking her rightful place *at the foot of the cross*, the Nigerian church is called to "look upon him whom they have pierced"(Jn.19:37). This constant vision or contemplation of Jesus crucified will confront the Nigerian church, as never before, not just with "the horrible injustice imposed on Jesus by oppressive structures of New Testament times", but-more importantly-how such like dehumanizing injustice and oppression is, today, meted out to the vast majority of Nigerians, through the oppressive, corrupt acts of their bureaucrats. Hence, the Nigerian church will find in the theology of the cross, something of a *reality therapy*: for it reawakens and confronts her with her origins and with her present situation and context.

Second, the theology of the cross, in taking the church back to her essentials, also challenges her to rediscover, appropriate, and put into action her prophetic nature and vocation. The church's primary mission, her inalienable duty and *raison d'être*, is evangelization—a mission entrusted to her by Jesus, *the evangelizer per excellence* (Mt.28:18-20; Jn.20:21). The "kernel and center" of the Good News proclaimed by Jesus, teaches Paul VI, is "liberation from everything that oppresses man".¹¹⁴ Therefore, the

¹¹⁴ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 9.

church's evangelizing mission is the continuation of Jesus' evangelizing mission, which was a liberating reality among his people, especially the marginalized (Lk.4:18-19;7:19-23). The "condemnation of evils and injustices", asserts John Paul II, "is an aspect of the Church's *prophetic role*"¹¹⁵. There is an intimate link between the *prophetic role* of the church and the cross. It is on the cross that Jesus-the long awaited *prophet-messiah's* saving, liberating mission, received its permanent universal repercussions; on the cross, this mission of his was fully and finally "accomplished" (Jn.19:30). Thus, it is at *the foot of the cross* that the Nigerian church will rediscover and be enabled to put into action, her prophetic role in the society. Here, she will learn not only to denounce courageously, and reawaken the people to the sinfulness or selfishness underlying bureaucratic corruption and other social ills in Nigeria; but also find the strength to face the sufferings, persecutions, even death, inflicted by the promoters of these sinful and unjust structures, in reaction to her prophetic role.

Third, an African theology of the cross will enhance the impact of the evangelizing mission of the Nigerian Church. In his Encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio*, John Paul II stressed the need for the church to direct part of her evangelizing activities on new cultural "situations" or "frontiers".¹¹⁶ Today, the Nigerian church should discern in the prevalence of bureaucratic corruption in the country, as a clear indication of the 'signs of the times', a socio-cultural *situation or frontier* which the Spirit is inviting her to evangelize. She ought to undertake this task with much seriousness and zeal. She is thus expected to proclaim strongly, the tremendous love of God for all Nigerians, and the reciprocal love of God and one another to which they are all called. Then, in the light of

¹¹⁵ John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 79.

¹¹⁶ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, nos. 37-38.

this love, she must condemn this obnoxious culture as an *abomination* in God's sight; call its perpetrators to conversion; and motivate and mobilize well-meaning Nigerians to unite in solidarity in resistance and active, but nonviolent opposition to it. For a successful evangelization of the *culture* of bureaucratic corruption, the Nigerian church needs good models or symbols that will enable her to reawaken the consciences of the Nigerian people to the sinful, despicable and destructive nature of bureaucratic corruption; and the need to eschew and rise up together against it. The cross, thanks to its critical and mobilizing and motivating power, offers the Nigerian church a viable-if not the most viable-symbol for this task. Hence, the church's agents of evangelization in Nigeria can find in the cross a rich symbol of the evangelizing-liberating mission to which the church is called.

Fourth, the theology of the cross also confronts the Nigerian church with her own shadows, the skeletons in her cupboard. It questions her regarding her personal commitment to justice within the "family of God". It is not enough to denounce injustice by word of mouth; there is need for a corresponding *witness of life*.¹¹⁷ The theology of the cross not only critiques and condemns the *crucifixion* of innocent Nigerians by the bureaucrats (through corruption); it also cries out, even louder and stronger, against the church's open or secret alliances with or dependence on the corrupt bureaucrats for financial support. It cries "foul" when the church dismisses her poorly paid workers with a "blessing" when they stand in dire need of *daily bread*. The Nigerian church has been described by foreign observers as being *more Roman than Rome*. This describes her lack of openness to change, opposition to collaborative ministry, over-clericalization, and

¹¹⁷ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 55.

insistence on the pyramidal church structure, which are features that characterize the pre-Vatican II ecclesiology. By clinging tenaciously to these outdated features, the Nigerian church runs the dangerous risk of turning herself into *the family of clerics* rather than *the family of God*; thereby excluding nonclerics from active participation in the life and mission of the church. The theology of the cross, as a true *revealer* and *reawakener*, exposes and condemns such unjust practices in the church for what they are, by stripping them of their religious coatings. It challenges her to be real and true to herself and to the society. Thus a church ridden with injustice, by denying people-children of God-their rights, cannot muster enough courage to *stand at the foot of the cross* and “look upon him whom they have pierced”.

Fifth, an African theology of the cross, if embraced, will exert a transforming influence on the liturgical and sacramental life of the Nigerian church. The liturgy, the wellspring of the church’s life and apostolic endeavours, maintains an unbreakable bond with the cross. Underlying every liturgical act of the church, is worship: the worship of the Father through the son in the Spirit. But the church’s worship can only be modeled after Jesus’ perfect act of worship of the Father, which occurred on the cross. Jesus’ act of loving, total self-surrender to the Father on the cross (in dark trusting, faith), remains the unsurpassable act of supreme worship, a worship rendered for humankind’s salvation/liberation. Thus, the Nigerian church’s liturgical and sacramental celebrations—the Eucharist, especially, from the stance of an African theology of the cross, should become liberating events for the participants. Empowered by these celebrations, they in turn become protagonists and agents of liberation in the society. More than a mere

dancing church, the cross challenges Africa and Nigeria to give birth to a *liberated and liberating church*.

Fifth, the cross stands as a living symbol of the Kingdom-values, liberating values which Jesus proclaimed and died for; as well as a permanent condemnation of the worldly-values that oppress and enslave people. The Kingdom-values: humility (*self-emptying*), and *voluntary, sacrificial love*, manifested in the *loving service* of others, are all summed up in the *self-less-ness* or *self-transcendence* of Jesus Christ crucified. The worldly-values: lust-filled greed for wealth, power and fame, insensitivity to other's needs, manifested in all manner of *corrupt practices*, are summed up in the *selfishness* or *self-centered-ness* of many Nigerians, especially, the corrupt bureaucrats. The Nigerian church should allow herself to be challenged by (and should strive to embrace) this distinctive feature of the consciousness and lifestyle of Jesus. She should lead by example; and thus portray the cross as a revealing paradigm of the transforming/liberating power of self-sacrifice concretized in the loving service of others. She should proclaim to Nigerians, especially, the bureaucrats, that *the true, liberating service, the service that leads to true progress, is only the service with no strings attached to it*. The way of the cross is the way of progress through voluntary, selfless and self-sacrificing service.

It is through catechesis, sermons, conferences, workshops, organized at station, parish, deanery, diocesan, archdiocesan, and national levels, and with the good use of the mass media, that the Nigerian church can re-educate the people and facilitate their new experience of the cross as a paradigm for renewed, resilient commitment to liberation from all social ills, especially, corruption in the bureaucracy and elsewhere. The church

should also teach and exhort the people to meditate on the passion and death of Jesus in its historical-theological context, not for false, misleading ascetic practices, but to rediscover its liberating potentials. They should allow it to speak to them about contemporary realities. To this end, good use should be made of the perennial Lenten - Paschal Season of the church, with special reference to the weekly Stations of the Cross. Also, she should find more and better ways of interpreting the theology of the cross from the stance of the different world-views of the Nigerian peoples. Particular efforts should be made to integrate the African theology of the cross with other African contextualized theologies, for mutual enrichment.

Finally, this theology of the cross challenges the Nigerian church to identify and acknowledge her weakness, her inability to exorcise the demon of bureaucratic corruption and other social ills in the country alone. This honesty will lead her constantly back *to the foot of the cross* in prayer. The *church-at-the-foot-of-the-cross*, cannot but be a *praying-church*. It is in and through prayer offered to the Father, with and through the crucified-risen Christ, in the Holy Spirit, that she will facilitate the transformation of these weaknesses, together with all the daily *crasses* of *crucified Nigerians*, into symbols of hope, the firm basis for salvation and liberation.

CONCLUSION

This essay has attempted to show that, far from being a symbol of oppression and marginalization of people or a mystical object of solitary contemplation and asceticism that is devoid of social action; or merely a decorative ornament; the cross of Christ is a rich and enriching symbol of reawakening and liberation for the world, for Africa, for Nigeria. The symbolic power of the cross lies in its paradoxical and all-encompassing nature: it reveals the heart of God as well as the heart of humankind. It addresses the consciences of the oppressor as well as the oppressed. It exposes the values of the Kingdom of God as well as the values of the kingdom of this world or the Evil One; reawakening, exhorting and challenging all people of good will to opt for the former and eschew the latter, for authentic progress, development and transformation of society for the better. While, Nigeria has been chosen as a point of reference, the situations exposed herein and the implications drawn from this reflection are quite applicable to other countries of the world, especially, African countries. Corruption is a global virus. No country of the world-even the so-called first world nations-can pretend not to be infected by the corruption virus. But over and above the destructive power of corruption, is the liberating, life-giving power of the cross of Christ. For, where corruption abounds, liberating grace abounds all the more abundantly, thanks to the cross of Christ, *the immortal tree of life*.

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APPENDIX

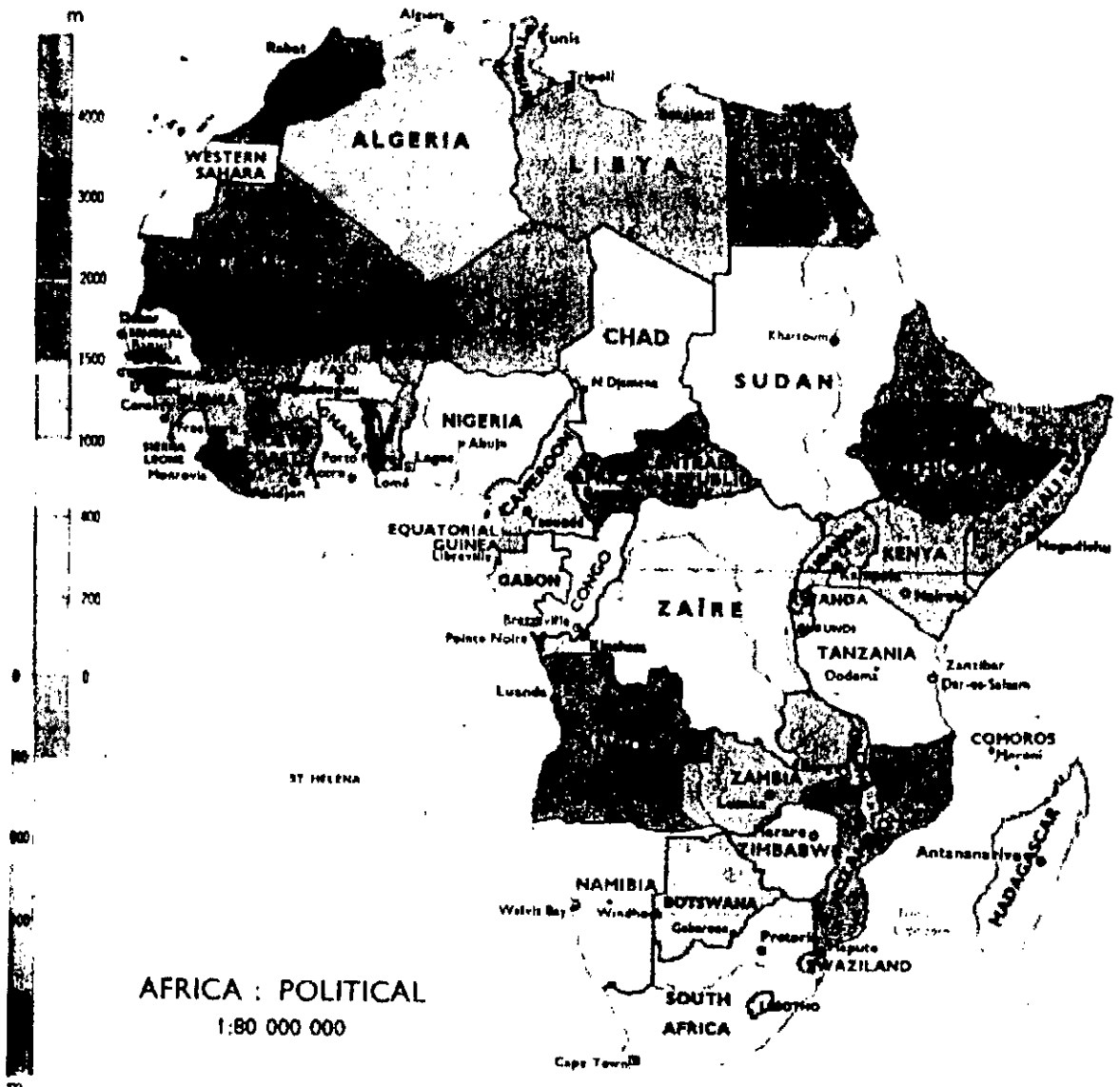


Fig.1 Map of Africa

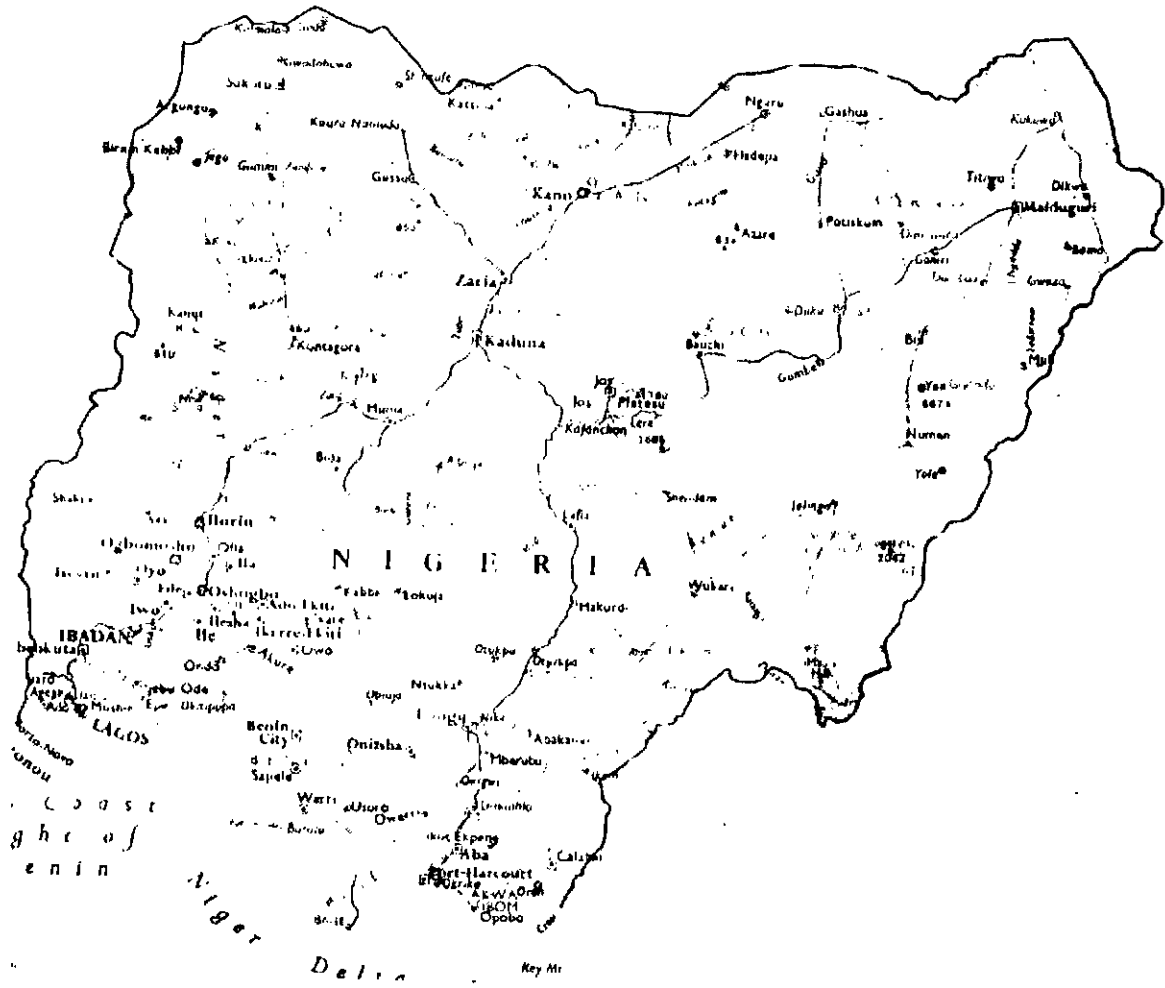


Fig. 2: Map of Nigeria

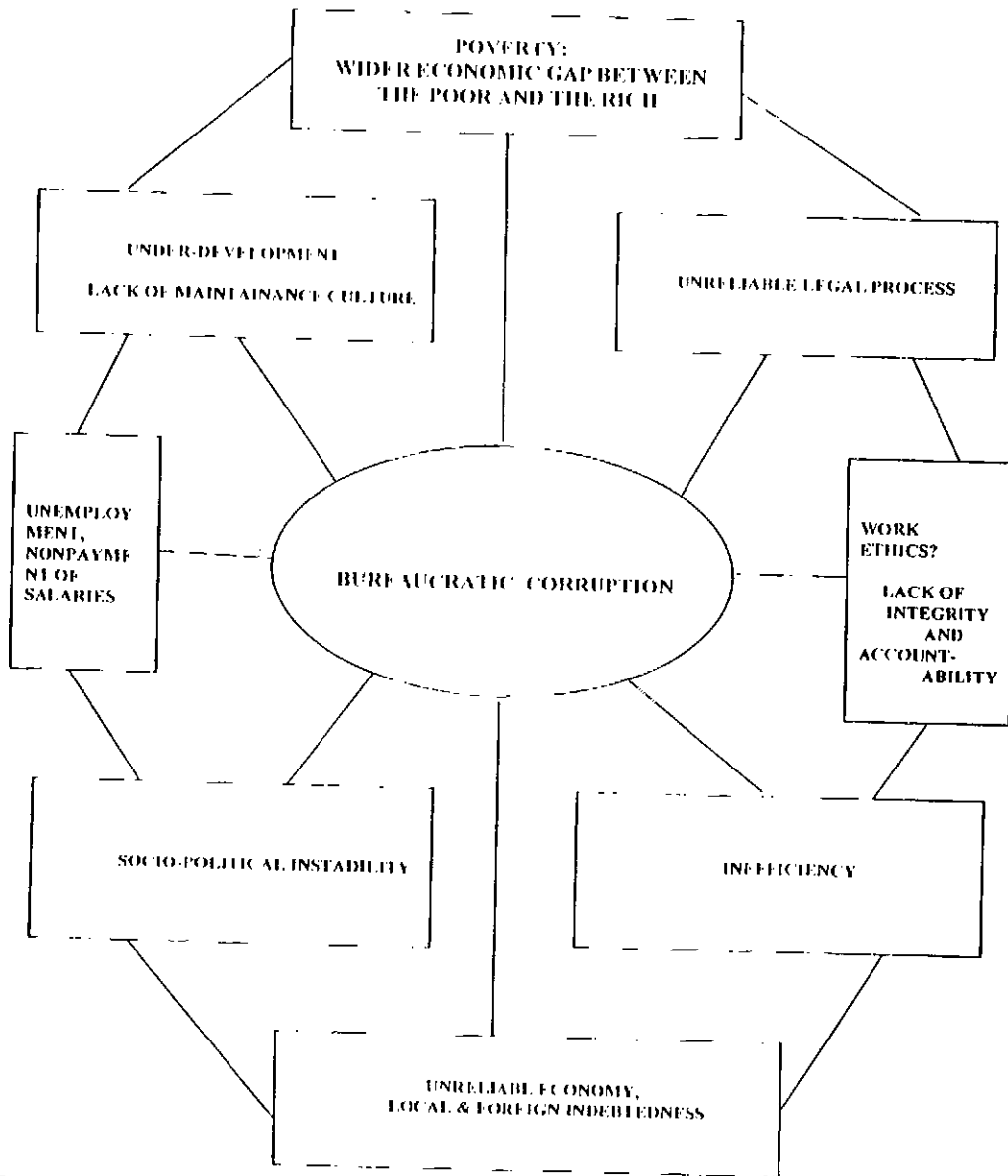


Fig. 3: Structural Analysis depicting the link between corruption and national problems.

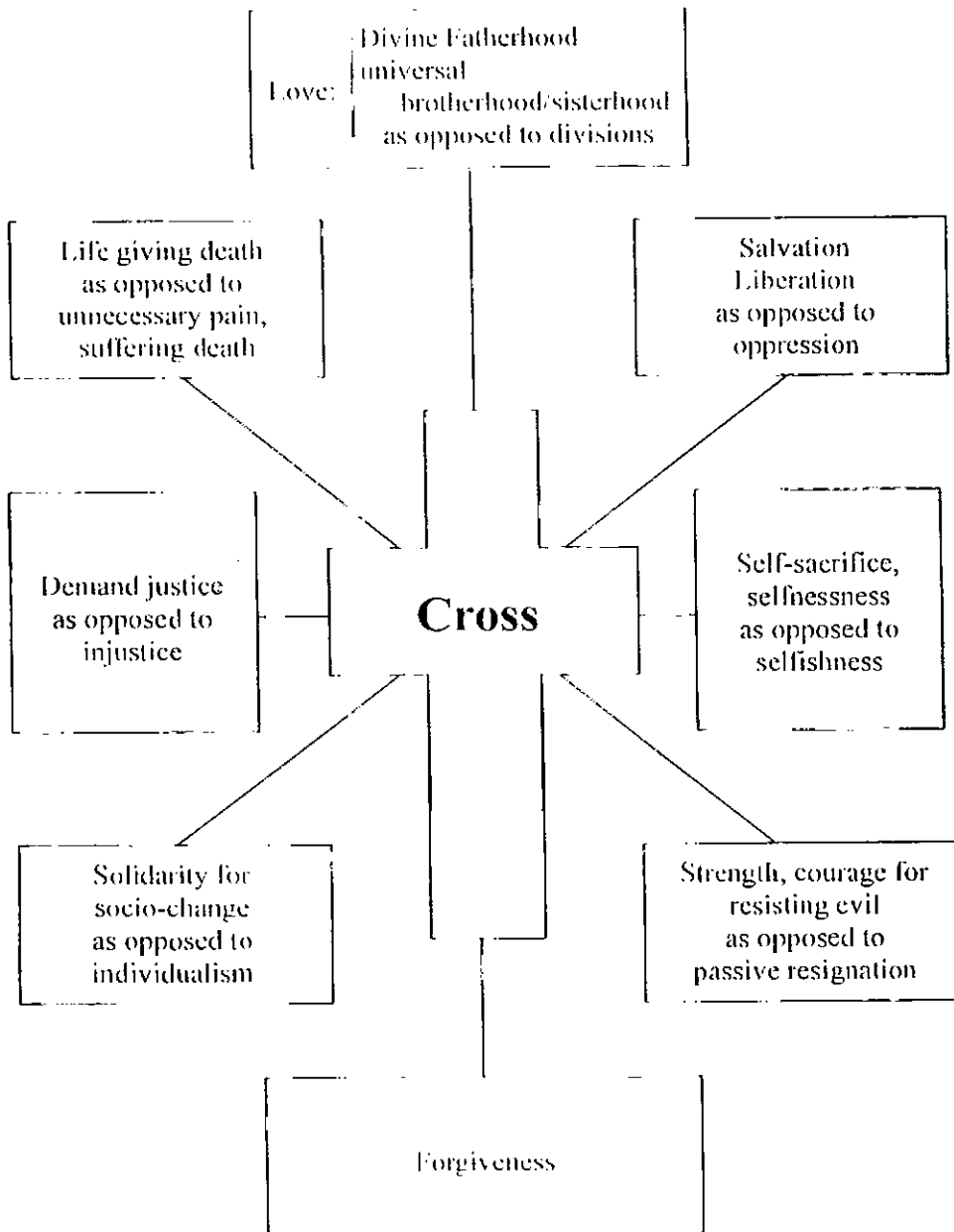


Fig. 4: Structural Analysis depicting the link between the cross and the Kingdom-values that constitute the antidote to corruption.

Fig. 5 :

Corruption Perception Index (1996/1997)

1996			1997		
Rank	Country	Score	Rank	Country	Score
1	New Zealand	9.43	1	Denmark	9.94
2	Denmark	9.33	2	Finland	9.48
3	Sweden	9.08	3	Sweden	9.38
4	Finland	9.05	4	New Zealand	9.23
5	Canada	9.86	5	Canada	9.1
6	Norway	8.87	6	Netherlands	9.03
7	Singapore	8.8	7	Norway	8.92
8	Switzerland	8.76	8	Australia	8.86
9	Netherlands	8.71	9	Singapore	8.66
10	Australia	8.6	10	Luxembourg	8.61
11	Ireland	8.45	11	Switzerland	8.61
12	United Kingdom	8.44	12	Ireland	8.28
13	Germany	8.27	13	Germany	8.23
14	Israel	7.71	14	United Kingdom	8.22
15	USA	7.66	15	Israel	7.97
16	Austria	7.59	16	USA	7.61
17	Japan	7.05	17	Austria	7.61
18	Hong Kong	7.01	18	Hong Kong	7.28
19	France	6.96	19	Portugal	6.97
20	Belgium	6.84	20	France	6.66
21	Chile	6.8	21	Japan	6.57
22	Portugal	6.53	22	Costa Rica	6.45
23	South Africa	5.68	23	Chile	6.05
24	Poland	5.57	24	Spain	5.9
25	Czech Republic	5.37	25	Greece	5.35
26	Malaysia	5.37	26	Belgium	5.25
27	South Korea	5.02	27	Czech Republic	5.2
28	Greece	5.01	28	Hungary	5.18
29	Taiwan	4.98	29	Poland	5.08
30	Jordan	4.89	30	Italy	5.03
31	Hungary	4.86	31	Taiwan	5.02
32	Spain	4.31	32	Malaysia	5.01
33	Turkey	3.54	33	South Africa	4.95
34	Italy	3.42	34	South Korea	4.29
35	Argentina	3.41	35	Uruguay	4.14
36	Bolivia	3.4	36	Brazil	3.56
37	Thailand	3.33	37	Romania	3.41
38	Mexico	3.3	38	Turkey	3.21
39	Ecuador	3.19	39	Thailand	3.95
40	Brazil	2.96	40	Philippines	3.05
41	Egypt	2.84	41	China	2.88
42	Colombia	2.73	42	Argentina	2.81
43	Uganda	2.71	43	Vietnam	2.79
44	Philippines	2.69	44	Venezuela	2.77
45	Indonesia	2.65	45	India	2.75
46	India	2.63	46	Indonesia	2.72
47	Russia	2.58	47	Mexico	2.66
48	Venezuela	2.5	48	Pakistan	2.53
49	Cameroon	2.46	49	Russia	2.77
50	China	2.43	50	Colombia	2.73
51	Bangladesh	2.29	51	Bolivia	2.05
52	Kenya	2.21	52	Nigeria	1.76
53	Pakistan	1			
54	Nigeria	0.69			

Source: Transparency International, Internet Corruption Perception Index, 1996, 1997. Note: The range is from 10 (least corrupt) to 0 (most corrupt).