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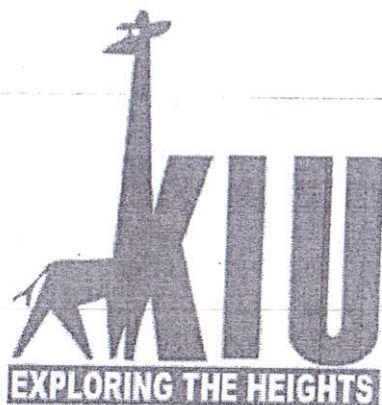
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BIBLICAL AND PROPHETIC GUIDANCE FOR A NATION AT CROSSROAD: THE CASE OF NIGERIA

Shogunle, Nathaniel Oluwaseyi

*Department of Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts
Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye*

Tel: +234-8067648881

seyishoqunle@yahoo.com

seyishoqunle@oouaquoiwoye.edu.ng

Babawale, Solomon Taiwo

*Department of Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts
University of Lagos*

Tel: +234-7039394265

taiwobabawale@yahoo.com

bstaiwo@unilag.edu.ng

Abstract

Whereas the Bible contains important perspectives and practical guidelines for dealing with real problems that faces society today, modern planners often do not look into the Bible for answers to the complex issues. This paper contextually examined and explored biblical and prophetic guidance as related to the Old Testament in general and 1 Kings 12: 1-20 in particular. While it was not our intention in the paper to exegetically analyze the pericope, an attempt was however made at textual exposition geared towards domesticating the text within the Nigerian context of national redemption in nation building. The paper employed the historical-critical method. Findings revealed that content and setting of the passage applies to the Nigerian situation; consequently, if Nigeria is to succeed in nation-building, she must have a leadership that is committed to the rule of law with a demo sense of fair-play and democratic tolerance; a leadership characterised with ability and integrity.

Introduction

Deteriorating nations and cultural declination made nation building a concern in the world today. This is not limited to political arena, because the religious space seems declining in her role as the moral and spiritual compass of the society. The challenge of good leadership and servant-leadership in particular is evident at all levels of our national life. Several attempts have been made to tackle this vice in the political spheres (communists, socialists, monarchists, dictators and democracies), even by religious leaders. Winnail (2014) posits that many nations are seriously struggling with this debacle.

From the 20th century, the witnessing of failed nations in the world is noteworthy; with the excitement of newly independent nations which resourced into disillusionment as greedy leaders rob and exploit national treasury for personal gain, causing poverty, degradation and disintegration of nation's economy. This aftermath increases the immigration rate, whereby citizens are in search of a better life. There are solutions and practical guidelines about nation-building in a source that is little understood and seldom consulted today. This assertion is integrated in the fact that modern planners do not look into the Bible for answers to complex social problems, because the Bible is considered a religious book with myths and wispy ideas; meanwhile the Bible contains beneficial blueprint for nation building recorded several years ago. The Bible is embedded with pragmatic guidelines for engaging problems that face society today. It proffers hope and exhilarating news about the future, in which humanity is expected to play a role (Winnail, 2004).

It is our intention in this paper to contextually examine and explore biblical and prophetic guidance as related to the Old Testament in general and in 1 Kings 12:1-20 in particular. While it is not our intention in this part to do an exegesis of the pericope, an attempt is made at textual exposition geared towards domesticating the text within the Nigerian context of national redemption in nation-building through un-training, training, and retraining of priestly and ministerial leadership.

Conceptual Clarification on Nationhood and Nation-Building

Nationhood is a state of being a nation. So it is imperative to understand the meaning of the term 'nation'. That way we will be able

to locate those basic attributes of nationhood to situate the status of the Nigerian state. A nation may refer to a large group of people who share common language, culture, ethnicity, descent, or history. Nation can refer to a set or group of people, race, or tribe; those having the same descent, language and history.

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (2000) defines a nation as "a community or unification of people composed of one or more nationalities with its own geographical area and government". Further defines it as "a tribe or federation of tribes. Nation portrays various meanings and the undertone of the term has changed over the period. A people is referred to as an "ethnic community" if they share a common myth of foundation and descent, a common history, a common territorial association, elements of distinguishing way of life and a sense of group solidarity. A nation is much more impersonal, abstract and explicitly political than an ethnic group. It is a community that can be described as cultural-political which has grown conscious of its unity, coherence, and specific interests. The word nation came to English from the Old French word *nacion*, which in turn originates from the Latin word *natio*, which literally means "that which has been born".

From the above, we can say that "nation building is always work-in-progress, a unique process which entails nurturing and re-invention. Thus, it can be defined as the development of behaviours, values, language, institutions and physical structures that elucidate history and culture concretize and protect the present and ensure the future identity and independence of the nation (Gambari, 2008). Krieger (1993:615) in his analogy would understand nation building as: "dealing with the societal and political aftermath of conflicts and establishment of a new government and social compacts". It has to do with the production of basic needs of the people, feeding, clothing, housing, and happy life.

Furthermore, nation-building had been described as the attempt towards an intelligent and well-ordered society that is good to the point of perfection. Nation-building is the process of using the power of the state in constructing and structuring a national distinctiveness. This process is focused on uniting the people in the state in order to be politically stable and workable in the long run. The act of nation-building can adopt the usage of propaganda or major

infrastructural development to foster social harmony and economic growth. Nation-building includes the creation of national possessions like, national anthems, national flags, national days, stadia facilities, national airlines, national languages and national myths. More intensely, the national distinctiveness needs to be an intentional act in molding various ethnic groups into a unified entity or body. Since in most colonized States, colonial practices of divide and rule had resulted in ethnically heterogeneous populations.

However, new States were beleaguered by tribalism and religious bigotry; that is, the rivalry between ethnic groups and different religious adherents within the nation. This sometimes resulted in their near disintegration of structures of nationhood as can be seen in the situation of Nigeria today. Nation building as purposed in this paper has to do with a deliberate effort by people living in a geographical area like Nigeria, to identify values that promote commonness and unity. Such values could be normative principles or cross-cultural and religious matters that support and enhance an ordered or organized society where a good life is the objective for the members concerned. In this way, nation-building can be compared with issues of development towards the enhancement of better living condition for the citizenry (Gambari, 2008).

A nation, this paper believes could be made up of people of diverse backgrounds resulting from language, cultural practices but above all in this sense, religions. Thus, the potentiality of such diverse interests being harnessed in Christianity towards purposeful existence of Nigeria as a state or a geographical expression of common cultural, religious or political history is the understanding of nation-building in this paper. It thus means that this paper approaches this clarification from the purview of biblical and prophetic guidance expected from the ministers of God in the pursuit of nation-building that will evolve into an egalitarian society that all Nigerians will readily identify with and be proud. From the preceding, it can be drawn that nation building is a state of developing a nation as well as making the citizens of that nation enjoy sustainable development, in which religion; among other indices is expected to provide a veritable platform.

The Bible and Nationhood: Israel's Experience

In biblical Israel, nation-building commenced immediately the Israelites were brought out of slavery in Egypt. Moses, being the physical guide of the Israelites, explained the intention of God in making the Israelites to be a model and also serve as example for other nations (Deuteronomy 4:6). It is God's intention that the other nations learn how to become great and that they discover how to "Prosper...and be in health" (3 John 2).

Although, it might appear weird to modern 'critical' minds, religion was the phenomenon adopted by God as a basis for Israelites' nation-building. The methodology was to ingrain into them a solid religious footing, with proper religious beliefs. The execution of this method by God is documented in the Bible, in which God started with the leaders of Israel and eventually reached the whole nation. A reorientation of the Israelites, commenced immediately they were delivered from the slavery at Egypt. Mount Sinai was the ground for them to be introduced to God's law. The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) that were to form a foundational value for the Israelites religious and national life was given in the midst of smoke, thunder and lightning.

The civil law given to the Israelites were to make their society enlightened and morally sound (Exodus 21-22). God also gave the Israelites health laws long time before their time (the practice of those activities) as recorded in Leviticus 3:17; 7:23-27 for the purpose of preventing diseases and to maintain sound health within the nation which is to be a model (Exodus 15:26). Deuteronomy 20:19-20 contains conservation laws which had been given a long time before there was an "environmental movement" (Deuteronomy 22:6-7). Serious cautions were stated to the Israelites about the dangers and repercussions of idolatry and wrong religious doctrines. (Deuteronomy 12:29-32; 18:9-14). Thus, God adopted the method of establishing a right religious background for the process of nation-building. History has it that, when the religious foundation of a nation falls into error, the aftermath of the nation will be 'taking a rain check' (Winnall, 2014).

It should be well-known that in God's process of nation-building was the selection and training of leaders to provide good government. No government is better than the character and integrity of its leaders. And this is a major reason God presented the criteria for occupying

leadership positions. In a direct contrast to the contemporary basis for leadership in electing leaders in politics which includes; popularity, voter appeal, good television appearance, excellence in repartee and skill at fundraising but in contrast to these criteria, Abraham was chosen because he was receptive and responsive to the instructions given by God (Genesis 12:1-4). He (Abraham) showed that he would guide his household in following God's righteous law (Psalm 119:172) and justice (Genesis 18:16-18). He was able to set his priorities rightly with God at the peak of his list (Genesis 22). The act of Abraham was impressive to God that He (God) observed that Abraham obeyed His voice and kept His charge, his commandments, his statutes, and his laws (Genesis 26:4-5). As a result of this unique character of Abraham, he was described as a model example and patriarch of the Israelites' nation (Romans 4:16-17). God was looking for a man of integrity (both in public and private life), and he found it in Abraham.

Moses was elite in the society. He was "vast in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was mighty in words and deeds" (Acts 7:20-22). Moses was a General in Pharaoh's army (see Joseph's antiquities of the Jews, Book II, chapter 10), but the Bible did not present that Moses was chosen as a result of his academic strength or leadership in the force but because he was humble and corrigible (Numbers 12:3). Joshua was also admonished by the Lord to be courageous and strong as he substitutes Moses in the leadership position and to do according to the law without compromising God's instruction in his dealings (Joshua 1:6-9). David was chosen as the king of Israel by God due to his desire to follow the instruction given to the Israelites by God (Psalm 119:18, 27, 97, 105, 127). These very important traits and characters are what God sought for in the leaders used to build His model nation, as He told Moses to staff his government with "able men" such as those that; fear God, men of truth (and integrity), men with hatred for covetousness" (Exodus 18:21).

God expressed his willingness to appoint the leaders of his people, and the leader to be appointed is not to extort the people for self enrichment (Deuteronomy 17:14-20). Leaders in the land of Israel are to duplicate the law and study it very well for the nation to prosper. The New Testament (Acts 6:3; Galatians 5:22-23) explains that leaders are to be individuals of good reputations and be known for their wisdom and possess the Holy Spirit. In the process of nation-building,

ability, character and willingness of the individuals to follow God's laws were basis of appointment and not popularly elected by the people (Exodus 18:21; Deuteronomy 1:15; Acts 6:3; Titus 1:5). In the process of nation-building, God was pertinent about establishing a right foundation and focus for education, since, the educational sphere of a nation is responsible for molding and shaping the citizenry. If the educational system is faulty, the nation would definitely have major setbacks or even crumble. Traceable to history is the dangerous consequences of erroneous assumptions and deceitful values of communism and fascism. Our society today have grown amoral and materialistic to the extent of attempting to remove Christian religious knowledge from the educational curriculum of the country while giving atheism, agnosticism, humanism and paganism as much classroom time- which spells the same end result as the historical antecedents if the moving on the path persists. This is a foundational purpose for cultural decline in the contemporary society.

The biblical model of education is directly contrasting the modern approach to education. Moses is on the emphasis that parents are to train and educate their children (Deuteronomy 4:9; 11:18-21). The biblical model sees the law of God as the most important knowledge to convey to the future generations and not nursery rhymes. Despite the fact that schools existed in the ancient times as it exists today, Solomon still taught the "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10). Every field of study has its correct approach traceable to the Bible and not to Greek or Roman philosophers. Wisdom (Proverbs 4:7), service to others (Matthew 20:26-28) and developing the mind and character of God (Philippians 2:5-11) are therefore pointed in the Bible as the right goals for education. In the modern times, the motive of individuals in getting education is to enrich themselves and to live a luxurious lifestyle which is not in line with the biblical purpose of education. God's system of education is based on the revealed truth (John 17:17). As such, a truth and integrity based educational system will result in a society devoid of false and misleading ideologies which can result in dangerous consequences (John 8:32).

The failure of modern societies to build on the biblical basis for education as resulted in the production of dysfunctional societies

characterized with vices such as crimes, violence, divorce, dishonesty, greed, sexually transmitted diseases, drug abuse, mental disorders, and suicide have skyrocketed to alarming levels (Winnail, 2014).

1 Kings 12:1-16 and the Dilemma of Secession

In exploring this text, this paper employs the synchronic approach without foreclosing diachronic approach/inputs where necessary.

When it comes to the literary type or genre, 1 Kings 12:1-20 is a narrative. As opined by Rendtorff (1985), the historical narrative in 1 Kings 12:1-19 presents detailed events after the death of Solomon. It explains how the United Kingdom as established by David (although Knoopers (1993) opined that it was imposed) came to an end. This pericope is very important in the history of monarchy in the nation of Israel, which was from Saul to the reign of Zedekiah the last king of Judah. This is very vital to the theological understanding of the book of Kings since, the deuteronomistic history presents the narration of Israel's emergence, success and ultimate failure as an independent political entity in the ancient land of Canaan, (Knoopers, 1988).

The story opened in 1 Kings 12, with Rehoboam the son of Solomon travelling to the northern kingdom for his installation as king of the whole nation of Israel since he was only recognized as king by the southerners at Jerusalem. The conditions for him to be crowned king over the whole nation were presented to him he requested for a period of three days to make his decision on the condition attached. His reaction to the condition was as a result of heeding to one of the advices he got within the three days and as a result of his conclusion and response, the northern kingdom declared themselves independent of the southern part. The structure of the event is; Rehoboam meeting with the Israelites at Shechem, where the people advised him to lift the burden from them (1-5). Rehoboam met with the advisers (6-11). Rehoboam responded in negation to their request (12-15). The people revolt and declared their intention to stand independently which results in division (16-20). The arrangement of this passage presents that the author was very meticulous and coherent in the arrangement and structuring. The text is coloured with inherent unity of the contents and the presentation which will easily attract the attention of the reader.

Accordingly, it refers to his social standing because he was appointed or promoted as an officer over one of the working groups. This promotion was a "rank which facilitated his treachery, for he took advantage of this and fortified Zeredah, his home town. The reason for doing so is for him to have a place to retreat. In other words, he sympathized with the northern tribes being part of them, who were included in forced labour and heavily taxed. The attempt is at accumulating the horses and chariots as well as the building which took place at Zeredah from the background to the final condemnation, due to the rationale behind it which is to remove the king from power. Thus, when Solomon discovered the plot, he was ready to kill Jeroboam for the act of rebellion but Jeroboam sought refuge in Egypt with Shishak the King. Bruce (1963) expressed that at the latter period of Solomon's reign, there was power transition in Egypt which caused the weak dynasty to which his (Solomon) father-in-law belong to end. Shishak, who was interested in weakening Solomon's power, was ready to take any chance and this could be seen as a reason for hosting Jeroboam with a national asylum. It appears that the Egyptians were interested in the territory ruled by Solomon and this enhanced their plot after the death of Solomon. With this interest in mind, Shishak released Jeroboam to lead the seditionist after the death of Solomon and they (Egyptians) made plans to invade Palestine (Ceresko 1992:237).

It is stated in the Bible that the return of Jeroboam was caused as a result of the news, but the news was not directly stated, either the news of Solomon's death or the news about the meeting between Rehoboam and the elders of the land. In either case, the aftermath of incidence that unfolds shows that both reasons are responsible for his return to the nation. It should be taken note of that, sending Jeroboam into exile was not a real solution just as proscribing IPOB, or labeling them a terrorist organization will not solve the present agitation because "the original cause of dissatisfaction had not been removed (Bright 1960:208).

The third verse portrays the idea that the northern tribes elders had met with Jeroboam before eventually calling a meeting with Rehoboam in Shechem. This implies that the elders must have heard of the anointing of Ahijah and Solomon's revenge, in which Jeroboam was made to champion the historic negotiations (Wood, 1970). The gathering of intertribal leaders or representative council was very vital

since it confirms the power of traditional leaders. The nature of their discussion shows that the northern leaders were not happy with the rule of Solomon and they gave the specific reasons for their dissatisfaction; forced labour and heavy taxation.

During the reign of David, there was in practice, an egalitarian ideal in making decisions for the national interest. The period of Solomon's reign was seen to have used power to get extravagant and privileged lifestyle for themselves (southerners) while others suffered under the burden of taxes and compulsory labour as enforced by Solomon (Ceresko, 1992). The suffering part happened to be the northern tribes in which they were extorted by the ruling of Solomon and they became weaker from the oppression they are going through (Knoppers 1993).

The decision of the northern leaders to meet and dialogue with Rehoboam at Shechem was not portrayed as a revolt activity rather than accepting Rehoboam as their king. But, the condition on which their loyalty to Rehoboam indicates that they had other intentions. So, are they wrong in making a demand that concerns their wellbeing and survival? No. Are the different parts of Nigeria's constituents agitating for restructuring wrong? No too. If indeed the leaders of Israel had no ulterior motives, they would have just accepted the kingship of Solomon's son since they were unable to protest it during Solomon's rule, the child should not have been bothered with it. But they presented their argument based on the fact that, the work load and labour should be alleviated but not obliterated. This in itself could mean that they supported the development strides of the administration, but just wanted it to have a human face. Although, assumption could be made as to the presence of Jeroboam, as an indication of danger which probably had led to Rehoboam's decision of responding in three days after seeking advice.

The two groups which Rehoboam had consulted had given him different answers to the Israelites' demands. The older counselors sensibly proposed a mild reply to the Israelite's demands, but the younger ones urged a policy of arrogant severity. The advice given by the old folks in verse 7 appears to be in favour of the demands of the Israelites, a position that corroborated the political correctness and veracity of the northerners' demands. But this advice did not please Rehoboam. This recommendation, to Rehoboam, means restructuring

and resource control, and he will never do that. Verse 8, indicates that Rehoboam rejected the advice of the elders immediately after consulting them, even before approaching the young advisers. The young advised him to give a harsh response and the use of whip in ruling them, which is described by Jones (1983:252) were "used to drive slaves and to punish them" and "were now to be replaced by scorpions" which serves as instruments of punishment. At this stage, the silence of the southern leaders and elders to the political impasse is no longer golden. More could have been done to avoid the impending doom.

Undoubtedly, the old men whose advice was rejected are men who worked with Solomon in the palace. They were the scribes, teachers, priests, prophets, and advisers. The old men were referred to as old in what sense? They were referred to as "old men" in the usage as at that time. "Old men" is being used to designate "wisdom that comes with age and experience", and in this text, it probably referred to the two meaningful since the old men were actually workers with Solomon before his death. They belong to his board of royal advisors and also they are old age wise (Walsh:1996:162). The young men could thus be seen as the youths without experience who had resumed service with Rehoboam.

According to Walsh (1996), Rehoboam is portrayed as imitating Solomon's desires, explicitly outdoing his father in tyrannical traits such as taxation, forced labour, nepotism, corruption, injustice, inequality, and coercion the very traits that are muted in the narrative about Solomon's reign. The response of Rehoboam which was in line with the younger advisors, led to a vigorous reaction by the northern elders. On hindsight, it should be borne in mind that Rehoboam acted on his conviction and not because of the advice given by the young men. He could have decided otherwise, but he consciously took that infamous path. He violated an important aspect of statecraft-dialogue. In verse 15, the author established that the response of Rehoboam to the northern leaders was part of the plans of God in that, the prophecy of Ahijah, the Shilonite to Jeroboam would be fulfilled. And it further confirms the legitimacy of Jeroboam's ascension to power as a plan of God for him.

Nation-Building or Nation-Breaking: Nigeria at Crossroad

There are five main challenges before the Nigerian nation-building project: they are as follows;

(1) The challenge from our history. (2) The challenge of socio-economic inequalities (3) The challenge of an appropriate constitutional settlement. (4) The challenge of building institutions for democracy. (5) The challenge of leadership. Three of these are discussed below.

The Challenge of History

The historical legacies of colonial rule created some challenges for nation-building in Nigeria. The activities of the colonists caused a division in Nigeria, the north and south have different land tenure systems, administrative operations in the local level, different educational and judicial system. Though other large colonies, like India and Sudan had single administrative system, Nigeria had two. This presented Nigeria like two countries brought together by same currency and transportation system. Unlike Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana or Nelson Mandela in South Africa, Nigeria never had a central heroic figure. Instead, each region celebrates its own champions.

Deducible from the above is that, regionalism is a basic challenge to nation-building and economic management in Nigeria. The inability of Nigerians to consolidate federalism around a commonly discovered value and position means that the attempt at nation-building would continue to be undermined. A current display of the historical act is the dichotomy between 'indigenes' and 'settlers', Christians and Muslims, slaves and freeborn. An appalling case in reference is the Kaduna declaration on the eviction notice of Igbo people from the north from October 1st (which had been withdrawn) and the purported removal of Christian Religious Studies from the curriculum of secondary education while Islamic/Arabic Studies (IAS) is made compulsory. Or how better should we describe a situation where the words of Christ, church, Christianity or Christian are not mentioned once in the constitution, and the word Sharia is mentioned 73 times, Grand Khadi 54 times, Islam 29 times and Muslims 10 times or that 'the life of a Fulani cow is much more important to that of a farmer. This dichotomy is a factor for domestic anxiety and it undermines the efforts at creating a common nationhood.

The Challenge of Socio-Economic Inequalities

An important aspect of nation building and economic management is the ability to build a common citizenship. But it is very important to consider the fact that, what is the possibility of having a common citizenship when the residents of Ilorin have a radically different quality of life from the residents of Yenagoa? Or when child birth success is high in Ibadan than in Gusau? The developments of social-economic rights are for the good of all citizens. Failure to enjoy these rights is tantamount to marginalization from national life. It was this problem of inequality and injustice that led to the secession of northern Israel from biblical Israel. Gambari (2008) reiterated that this is why in many western European countries; contemporary nation-building is about having equal access to socio-economic assets of the nation without marginalization of the masses.

The case in Nigeria shows that, many are denied the access to basic rights like education and proper health and some others are having very limited access to this assets which is lavishly enjoyed by some individuals under the same designation as 'Nigerians'. This results in the refusal of these individuals to support the country. Secondly, these inequalities propel fear and lack of trust among citizens. These inequalities cause two basic challenges to nation-building. First of which is that, some habitants of some parts of the same country lie differently from another part of the country. The chances of giving birth, growing from infancy, quality of education and skills are different from place to place in the same nation. With this, a common nationhood is impossible. Secondly, is that, places regarded to be better than others still have levels of social provision. Instead of the discrimination in accessing the socio-resources based on indigenes and settlers, a generalized commitment to social citizenship will build a proper structure that will bring people around shared rights and goals (Gambari, 2008).

Poverty and nation-building are not in any way combinable. Either the population of the poor are below average or above average, poverty is not supportive of nation-building. A nation where poverty is dominant of the citizen cannot grow. This is because, healthy citizens are responsible for nation-building and a nation where a number of people are suffering from poverty is not liable to grow as the people suffering from poverty will not contribute their quota to the exercise.

The Leadership Challenge

Leadership is pertinent to nation-building and it should be understood in two important and related ways; firstly, leadership entails personal qualities such as integrity, commitment, honesty, and competence of an individual. Secondly, there are collective qualities such as common vision, focus and desire for the development of the elites wholly. All of these and their absences played their roles eminently in the Rehoboam-Jeroboam story.

The leadership in Nigeria has left more desire by the citizenry in which, we need leaders who will see themselves as a national figure and not as a champion of a particular tribe, religion or region. Not leaders who do not understand the economic and political problem of the country with no requisite knowledge for national economic management, not to mention providing sustainable solutions. They should be leader who will uphold justice instead of silencing their opponents, living in accordance with what they teach and preach, leaders who see and understand that leaders and followers are responsible to the constitution of the nation. Not leaders who are self centered and focused on enriching their purse. This is even so in the current national discourse as to how much a Nigerian Senator earns per month. Professor Its Sagay (Sept, 2017) said that "From the information I have gathered, a Nigerian senator earns about N29 million a month and over N3 Billion a year. Basic Salary N2,484,245.50; hardship allowance N1,242,122.70; constituency allowance N4, 968, 509.00; furniture allowance N7,452,736.5; newspaper allowance N1,242,122.70. In addition, Sagay reportedly said: wardrobe allowance N621,061.37; recess allowance N248, 424.55; accommodation N4,968,509.00; utilities N828,081.83; domestic staff N1,863,184.12; entertainment N828,081.83; personal assistant N621,061.37; vehicular maintenance allowance N1, 863,184.12; leave allowance N248,424.55; severance gratuity N7,425,736.50; and motor vehicle allowance N9,936,982.00."

Honestly, this is mind-boggling as much as it is appalling. If it is true, this amount could pay the salaries of sixty-four (64) university professors in a month. If a contemporary definition for formal and institutionalized corruption is needed, this is one. Late Adelabu is not wrong therefore in declaring that 'Nigeria State' is a peculiar mess (*Penkelemesi*). Because, in spite of this pungent and pervasive 'smell

and stench' of deception and corruption, we have devised ways of spraying 'expensive air fresheners' to temporarily hide the stench of our mess while spinning, creating and weaving multiple layers of webs of deception and misdirection to divert us from our scarily grim but hopeful reality as a nation.

Therefore if Nigeria is to succeed in nation building, she must have a leadership that is committed to the rule of law with a demonstrable sense of fair-play and tolerate one another democratically with a fore-sight beyond office but rather the development of Nigeria. Nigerian needs a leadership that will lead by deeds and not words. Leadership that will be remembered for not by the time they used in power but rather by hard work done within the time in office, fair-play, dedication and commitment, will live forever in the hearts of Nigerians (Shogunle, 2017).

Biblical and Prophetic Guidance: The Case of Nigeria

Speaking on the importance of prophet to a nation, Kenneth Kaunda concluded that;

Christians believe that God is very active in the history of the world as his word is heard in the events of the world as they unfold. The church is situated in the world to declare the mind of God and just as Amos of old has debunked the unjust treatment of the poor in Israel the church should not be silent in the deteriorating state of the nation. Jeremiah proclaimed the punishment of God for the Israelites who were faithless in the fall of the temple. We cannot but understand that in the disorder state of the world today, industrial unrest, political vagueness uncertainties of developing countries, God still has a message of hope for our contemporaries. The nation therefore, more than anything does not need a Christian leader but a Christian prophet in audible range (Kenneth Kaunda, Former President of Zambia).

It was evidently manifested in the Old Testament that the words of the prophet is the government of God. Consequently, among the worst things that can happen to a nation is to have no prophet just as Psalm 74 presents people under tyranny.

We are given no signs from God; no prophets are left, and none of us knows how long this will be; how long will the enemy mock you, God? Will the foe revile your name forever? why do you hold back your hand, your right hand? Take it from the folds of your garments and destroy them. (Psalm 74:9-11).

Here, the Psalmist feels his nation is helpless and hopeless and under the reign of tyrants and it appears that God is withholding his hand of judgment against the injustice act. The Psalmist knows so well that God has power to deal with the wicked ruler, but where there are prophets, this is unlikely to happen. The lack of national prophet, not limited to the confines of a particular denomination is therefore, a serious problem in the contemporary society.

Prophets are to emerge from the church but the church is not helping matters as the gift of prophecy has almost been totally stifled in the church. The absence of the prophets has promoted the rule of tyrants in the world and God's hand of judgment is kept in His garment, the church. Thus, the church needs to function very well in order for God to raise prophets for the nation who can courageously speak His mind and declare the counsel of God whenever the leaders take power that does not belong to them. In the Old Testament, the prophets of God will challenge any political ruler who takes powers that are not backed by the law. If such a ruler fails to heed these warnings, the prophet will announce God's judgment against them. And these rulers guilty will experience the judgment of God.

Christian leaders and teachers must act like the Old Testament prophets in staying humble even as they correct the social vices among leaders of the nation. They are not to be corrupt as God was against corruption on the path of the court prophets who condone all the ruler does including good and bad. The prophets to the nations should also learn to maintain their jurisdiction and not usurp the role of the king but rather, they should carry out their assignment of speaking against the decadence in the nation.

The prophets are not to mingle state activities with the church activities as the two are different entities. There should be no redefinition of the church's purpose as a clear line should be kept. The prophets are to recognize that for the people to hear, they (prophets) need to continue hearing from God. And in the quest to turn the hearts

of the leaders, a compromise should not be the end result but rather, the prophet should play his role of announcing and declaring the mind of God and allow the Holy Spirit to complete the work in the heart of the leader(s). Wise prophets stay clear from the entanglement of the state in order to continue hearing clearly from God and to speak with integrity (Yocum, 1993).

The role of a state prophet is very sensitive. They are to be loyal to God and to his law. In this sense, they would have no commitment to any political parties or personalities in order to maintain the sanctity and neutrality of the office. If the role of the state prophet is understood properly, little will people run after being a national prophet, because, the national prophet would almost have no denominational affiliation. We must also add that, a Christian prophet (Pastor, Evangelist, Deacon, Deaconess Lay Leader, Elder, and Reverend) is a watchman. Just like the Old Testament prophets, his task upon the wall of the city of God claims him entirely. The place of watchmen was on the wall looking out into the direction that God was pointing. This can be very lonely and discouraging but these watchmen remain faithful to their calling. Today many watchmen are tired of their task and they are busy chatting with their friends leaving the city open to danger from the enemy and devoid of the message of God. To this effect, Isaiah lamented;

Israel's watchmen are blind, they all lack knowledge, they are all mute dogs, they cannot bark; they lie around and dream, they love to sleep; they are dogs with mighty appetites; they never have enough. They are shepherds who lack understanding; they all turn to their own way, they seek their own gain.

It should also be known that the Old Testament watchmen were not the elders of the land, leaders or warriors that would mobilize the people to war but instead, they are only to communicate what they saw for the appropriate quarters to take note and act on their report (Hill, 1995). Pastors should not play all the roles always as there are those in the church that are called to be watchmen. We must begin to recognize, train and position those who have this calling and establish effective line of communications with them. Consequent upon this, today's watchman should not be in the city indulging in frivolities and

satisfying ungodly appetites. The church in Nigeria urgently needs her watchmen to get back up on the watch tower where God appointed them.

Conclusion

The story of the fall of ancient Israel into northern and southern kingdoms is apt to describe the political situation of Nigeria. The elders that Rehoboam sought advice from gave him the right direction to the problem: LISTEN TO THE PEOPLE, GIVE THEM WHAT THEY WANT. As religious leaders and teachers, who, contextually, are the leaders referred to in this text, it is their responsibility to tell the ruling class to dialogue and to embrace restructuring so that nation can together put out the simmering fire that is threatening to engulf the nation.

So unlike the elders of Rehoboam's period, Nigerian leaders must go beyond just offering suggestions and advises, they must see to the execution of these prayerfully and tactfully for the sake of Nigeria's continuous existence and posterity. In Nigeria's pursuit of national redemption, her leaders must understand that nation-building is a faith project and that all leaders have a God-given responsibility to raise tested and faithful men who will rule the affairs of the nation towards peace and prosperity, unity and progress. But these leaders cannot do all these successfully without the understanding and appreciation of their calling, their place and their influence.

This paper concludes with a quote from the late sage, Chief Obafemi Awolowo on what should be Nigerians attitude in and outside of leadership, private and public life as well as in their religious and non-religious endeavours;

We must, during our brief tenure in office, be faithful to the highest ideals we have known with no pandering to the second best, no leniency with our lower selves, no looking backward, no cowardice ... indeed, we must individually set an example of public (and private) probity, devotion and impartiality which will command the acclaim of the civilized world, and evoke both the admiration and emulation of all our peoples, especially our public men. If we succeed in these things, we shall deserve well of our peoples and of the entire wide world. We must bear in mind constantly that we cannot afford to fail. May God grant us the illumination to see the limelight of

Nigeria's salvation, and endow us with the undaunted courage, indomitable will and the unshakable faith to follow it, without flinching (Awolowo, 1982: 113).

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