

Faith in a Fourth Religion as Intrinsic in the Sustainable Socio-Economic Development of Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper understood faith as one of the elemental characters of religion, whereas religion is both of essence in the African environment and definitive of the African person. It is composed within the background of Nigeria; recognizing three major religious movements – Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion. Created in 1983 by the United Nations, the Brundtland Commission in 1987 defined Sustainable Development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. The West which through the years had confiscated the prerogative of setting the program of global development had since then given this definition an empiricist interpretation. The world and we have been conversant with the dimensions of Economy, Environment and Business, whenever the issues of Sustainable Development is discussed or investigated. A religious dimension had been somewhat silent. Yet the position of John Mbiti and A. G. Leonard on the primacy of religion in African life is a perennial truth. Therefore a religious perspective in the Sustainable Development of Africa in general and Nigeria in particular may not be dispensed with. That religious perspective that is central, according to this paper, is Faith. This faith is at the same time affective, cognitive and volitional; having an object, term and hope. Obviously the models of faith employed in this paper are religious models. In this paper, Nigeria is a super-structure; understood as the singular object of this faith at par with divinity. The Nigerian Constitution and other Laws and Regulations that sustain its corporate existence together make up the terms of this faith while the content of hope is Nigeria-as-designed for progressive development today and tomorrow. Unless Nigeria becomes our God; unless our laws become our creed; unless our anthem and pledge become our covenant, the Nigerian project of Sustainable Development is a farce. The aim of the paper is to construct a solid foundation for the erection of the Nigerian project of Sustainable socio-economic Development through faith which is an element of religion; with veritable raw materials extracted from existential mines of attitude, values and spirit that could be properly called African and Nigerian.

Introduction

The question of Sustainable Development replies to the objections of both the development that could be sustained and how development, whatever that may be, could be sustained. The word development is easily associated with other words like progress, advancement, growth, improvement and so forth. At the same time it contrasts with words like retrogress, decline, retardation, deterioration, regress and so forth. *Development* and *Faith* are the controlling ideas in this paper, while *Sustainability* is the quality control concept. The simple idea elaborated upon here is that faith is the one ingredient needed in the project of Sustainable Development in Nigeria and in Africa over. Whenever the issue of development is being discussed, no doubt, the concepts that come to mind are resources, infrastructure, amenities, facilities and so forth. The developed west is rife with these as evidence of its status - Developed. But beyond them there is a spirit upon which the foundation of that development was built.

Western development began with the development of the western spirit which in the modern era of its history radicalized its autonomy and consciousness. This western spirit had faith in a certainty which mathematics afforded and Rene Descartes (1596 – 1650) was at the definitive emergence of this new consciousness and radicalism in the mathematics of certainty. Descartes discerned the western spirit with unerring accuracy and offered it a veritable tool for development. The tremendous progress made by the West after this era in science, technology and the cyber speaks for itself. The West trusted that nature had an internal logic which drives it. According to Brown (2007):

So Descartes set out to determine what he “knew” with absolute certainty, so that he could use this as the axiom set from which to proceed in his reasoning process. The axioms he sought and adopted were very much of the “self-evident truth” variety, because he wanted his conclusions to be as well founded logically as those of Euclid...

Once this logic has been laid bare by Descartes, Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) did not hesitate to replace God with that same nature which the logic drives. Thus began the intellectual re-birth for which the west developed and sustained its development. It could be clearly seen why the West, in that period and after, diminished the quest for God and plunged into Nature to explore and exploit it. When that logic was discovered, it interpreted, sustained and furthered the course of nature. It must be reiterated, nevertheless, that this Cartesian mathematical certainty derives from Euclidean geometry which by its very nature is both isolating and disconnecting. The entities in Euclidean geometry are mere conceptualizations and idealizations that are immobile; lacking every possibility of interaction. Yet it is the mental coordination imposed on them by the conscious individual that causes them to interact and generate. Whatever be the by-product of this chimerical and phantasmal construct takes its toll on man who is its maker. It is these mental constructs that beget the certainty upon which western development is founded. This is why the human being is not at its center, in as much as it is the sole beneficiary of its scheme. Such a development can at the same time translate into a monster to threaten humankind, likes of which has been experienced.

It is the opinion of these writers that a Nigerian-African Sustainable Development or a Sustainable Development scheme workable in Nigeria and Africa must first of all seek the Nigerian-African spirit. Such a statement will tend to isolate the Nigerian-African person from the universal human spirit. Interestingly, whether or not that isolation makes sense, the so-called universality immediately at the back of our minds is set upon a criterion test-ran in and propagated by the West. At the same time it does not belong to this paper to prove the essential difference there are between the Western and Nigerian-African human spirit. Nevertheless, the present writers take it for granted that such essential difference exists. There are two pillars upon which being African is built – *Religion* (Mbiti, 1975:262) and *Community* (Okolo, 1983:10). The Nigerian-African world is both a community and a religious environment. As a community, it is the collective entity that musters the force of development; as a religious environment faith is enough to drive its development. A community of people who believe in the sacredness and sanctity of its environment is the fundamentals of sustainable development in Nigeria.

Having given analysis of the conceptual framework of western development, one could be correct to think that the models of development in the west are disconnected concepts bearing upon human society which give it mobility. Such a framework will not work in the Nigerian-African environment of our conjecture. In this paper, we are going to spell the terms of faith represented in veritable models found in Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion; recapitulate the inception error of the Nigerian entity conceptualized within the framework of western scheme by our ex-colonialists and expose the Nigerian-African religious community that necessarily elicits the faith of its inhabitants; suggesting a possible recovery of the Nigerian entity.

Faith as the Foundation of Sustainable Development

The Christian Experience and the Decline of Faith: Faith is one of the tools of religion and at the same time a disposition without which life cannot be maintained and advancement of human life sustained. Faith is, first and foremost, a descending and this descending necessarily generates an ascending. In faith, it is the action of the superior which elicits the response of subordinates. In the Christian Scripture (Heb. 11:1), faith is defined thus: “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” This assurance comes from above. Going further, that passage understood faith as a necessary disposition that sustains life. Obviously, this disposition and conviction of the believer is motivated and sustained by a prior knowledge about the object of his faith; a knowledge for which the former trusts the latter. Sherbondy (2006) avers:

Faith is trusting in God. It is living in a relationship with God that is motivated and sustained by one's conviction that God does keep his word. Faith is living in this relationship of trust moment by moment in accord with God's will. Both God's grace and faith are his gifts to those who believe.

In this definition, he was clearly looking at faith from the perspective of a Christian. However the components of this definition that suites our analysis are (1) A relationship of trust in God. (2) Conviction that God keeps his word. In a faith relationship, there are two parties; the believer and the object of his faith. The former *trusts* because the latter *keeps his words*. Faith is not entirely about the grace of God given to man in spite of himself, it is also the active response of man in acknowledgement and appreciation of the grace of God. The Christian Scripture not only extolled the faith of Abraham, it presented Abraham himself as a model of faith. For instance, even when he was intellectually aware that his wife has passed the age of menopause, he still believed the promises of God that she will bear him a son. The name Isaac (the son that was eventually given him) meant laughter. This laughter was not ridicule; not a response to a funny entertainment, but an affirmation of Abraham's and Sarah's inner disposition to the promises of God. Obviously, this faith of Abraham is an attitude of surrender and inner openness to God. Armstrong (1993) had decried our erroneous understanding of faith as the intellectual assent to a body of correct doctrine (pp. 17-18). In Christianity, this is part of the reasons why the issue of wrong or right denomination is sustained through unnecessary antagonisms. Faith is far more than correct belief. When Thomas Aquinas made faith a metaphysical discourse by introducing the possibility of demonstrating the existence of God (the ultimate object of Christian faith), he made the first attempt to shatter this inner surrender and trust very glaring in the faith of Abraham. In this, he incurred that belligerent wrath of Martin Luther who sought to rescue faith from the clutches of Thomist intellectual spirituality. Unfortunately, the doctrine of 'Justification by faith' which defined Luther's case against Aquinas and the emergent Christianity of the reformation era, prepared Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) and Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) adequately for an extreme and dangerous position about faith. In the rendition of Armstrong (1993), they averred that "faith was a leap in the dark toward a reality that had to be taken on trust. It was a sort of knowledge and darkness that can see nothing." (p. 278). This mystical dimension of Pascal and Kierkegaard did not penetrate the official teachings of Christianity but was imbibed by individuals who found it useful for living. On the contrary, the faith of Christianity kept interacting with reason which gives it comprehension and strategy for practice.

The Islamic Experience and Extreme Positions: It was the philosophical systems of the Muslim *Faylasufs* like Abu Ali al-Husayn ibn Abd Allah ibn Sina (980-1037) and ibn Rushd, Abu al-Walid ibn Adhmad (1126-1198) which Aquinas launched in the west and Christianity. However Muslim mystics who instituted the method of *Kalam* had rejected the enterprise of the *Faylasufs* who ceaselessly employed Aristotle in the area of religion. The *Ismailis*, *Sufiis* and *Sunis* had begun to build an interior conformity to the demands of Islam. The word 'Islam' means surrender. A total surrender is an unquestioning allegiance to the *Ulema*. There was no doubt that Pascal and Kierkegaard had listened intently to Muslim mystics like Al-Hallaj, Al-Bistami, Al-Haqq and a host of others who saw to it that the Muslim faith would be a demand to which the votary had no options to choose from. When the Muslim says: "*la ilaha ill Allah wa-Muhammad rasul Allah*", he is simply stating with avowed emphasis the basis of his faith that there is no god but Allah and Mohammed is his messenger. That statement need only to be accepted and imbibed. Yet Godlas (2011) explains this simple profession of faith (*Shahaddah*) in terms of immanence and transcendence. This elaboration is not the concern of the average Muslim who is enveloped in an experience of blind grope in the dark and relishes on the promises it holds. In fact there is no need for it because that truth with neither doubt nor proof is worth betting one's life for. It is not difficult to understand why in recent times terrorist groups like Boko-Haram, Al-Qaeda, Isis, Hezbollah, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Jemaah Islamiya, Lashkar-e-Toiba, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam, to mention a few, arise in Islamic territories and adopting the method of mindless killings. They are simply blindly driven by an interior conviction for which they are ready to bet their lives. Two reasons can be suggested as to the rise and proliferation of Islamic terrorist groups:

1. The area of faith does not admit of any light of reason; the journey of faith is a blind wallow in the dark driven by the inner attitude of surrender.
2. Jihad is at the same time a struggle for domination, a propagandist campaign, a revolution and a crusade for territorial integrity.

The individual has absolutely no opinion of his own because he surrenders to Allah within the *Ulema*. Ultimately, what does the Muslim surrender? The Islamic devotee surrenders his will, reason and freedom to be really regarded as a man of faith.

According to Armstrong (1993), one of the greatest achievements of Mohammed is making Islam a political reality (p. 155). Struggle for territorial integrity in Islam is important for the Muslim and in the struggle is sometimes insensitive as the blind faith. Perhaps the hostility experienced by Mohammed at the hands of the Jews of Medina compelled him to adopt Jihad as a counter measure and as means to domination. Jewish hostility made it inevitable for Mohammed to undertake arms-struggle; campaigning for occupation and domination of Arabia and giving this new religious wave a political relevance. Armstrong went further in her assertion that Islam is interiorly politics-driven:

Politics is not extrinsic to a Muslim's personal religious life, as in Christianity, which mistrusts mundane success ... its political health holds much the same place in a Muslim's spirituality as a particular theological option (...) in the life of a Christian. (p. 159)

Islamic politics however is not about democratic options but about imperative demands of religion about which the faithful has no choices. Muslims now inadvertently adopt Jihad as a silent pillar of their religion where any infidel had but the option to die. Not bothered about the morality of this faith idea, the present writers simply observe the connection between socio-economic wellbeing, peace in the afterlife and the violence that drives them, noting that whatever development or improvement in human life that has been brought about is not the effectiveness of a rocket technology but the efficacy of a firm faith.

The African Faith Experience and Fear Factor: In his work, *African Religions and Philosophy*, Mbiti (1975) had postulated that Africa is a religious environment (p. 262). In this environment, faith is not an issue for discussion or any kind of intellectual gerrymandering; it is an attitude cultivated through life-experiences and a mortal conviction borne in the soul. This is understood since the religion has no Sacred Writs or Scriptures to which references could be made in matters of its faith. Tanyi (2002) went further than Mbiti to assert that African Traditional Religion (ATR) is mysticism, though of a lower class. The present writers are in agreement with Tanyi that ATR is mysticism but do not accept the idea of a lower class. Every votary of ATR is a mystic, yet mysticism in ATR has levels. If Tanyi is writing about the common mysticism of all votaries of ATR, he should also recognize that there abound experts in various dimensions of the religion who attain the highest degree of unity with nature; they enjoy the highest form of ecstasy, esoteric bliss and the generation of vital energy to control their environment. Discussing worship in his work *Introduction to African Religion*, Mbiti (1982) also captured the idea of self-surrender as characterizing the attitude of African worship (p. 60). To start with, the African environment is both sacred and divine. This attitudinal self-surrender in ATR is more of a self-sacrifice done to maintain the sanctity of the environment and to foster a horizontal and vertical harmony; the first among humans and the second between humans and the spirits. The self-sacrifice includes taboos of various categories and mortifications of varied intensities. The self-surrender of ATR must not be understood alongside the Islamic 'Surrender'. While the Islamic 'Surrender' reifies the person of the votary so as to give him/her no worth, ATR self-surrender reinforces the vital energy of the environment through the total conformity of the votary to the demands of the sanctity of the environment itself. It is the sacred environment and objects carried on from immemorial times that give clue to what could be believed and carried on from generation to generation. Moreover, unlike Islam and Christianity, ATR is not propagandist. Every deity or spirit has a mapped territory of its operation beyond which its influence may not be felt. Therefore conformity to the demands of a particular cult of worship is parochial and local. Furthermore, growing in the African environment, the African does not need to go to *Hamidrash*, *Madrasah* or *Sunday School* to learn the right or wrong doctrines of religion. In the environment, the African is enveloped in an aura he can trust, be proud of and bet his life for. He believes that nature, through the instrumentality of his ancestors, has allotted to him everything he needs to make his way through life. The rest of his struggles are not geared towards making out more from nature but harmonizing with nature to be sure of nature's continued benevolence to him with that which naturally belongs to him through the spirits of the environment.

In Nigeria, these three modes of faith exist side-by-side. These are the three major religions practiced in Nigeria. It will not be difficult for one to see immediately the possibility of a harmonious co-existence in this country. We agree with Mbiti (1975) that Africa is a religious environment. We also subscribe to the opinion that faith is an indispensable tool of religion.

In the face of the analysis made above, it is clear that the various faith models adopted by the different sections of Nigeria have opposing orientations and antagonizing ideologies. Only a commonwealth modeled alongside religious faith can adequately lay the foundation of a sustainable Nigeria. Such commonwealth in as much as it will be made in a religious model is a religion of its own. It will be the fourth religion in Which Nigeria is sacred and divine.

In this sense every Nigerian brings the terms of his religious faith to bear on the Nigeria of our fourth religion. With such faith, developmental strategies could be properly planned and adequately implemented. How can the religious Nigerian believe in this land and its cause? To answer this question, there is need to re-examine the facts on ground in the very take off of the country as an entity.

Nigeria as Amalgamated is an Entitative Misnomer

Amalgamation is a word every Nigerian is conversant with but which very few have cared to explore its far-reaching implications and its import for the Nigerian nation. Lord Fredrick Lugard must have deeply thought over the fusion of the Southern and Northern protectorates and wisely gave the exercise its proper appellation – AMALGAMATION. The submission of the present writers is that such exercise is capable of producing only an AMALGAM – an amorphous conglomeration of individual components that does not naturally mix-up. One wonders, why not unification, fusion or merging? It was Ojukwu who captured this essence of the Nigerian entity when he wrote: “Nigeria remains in essence an amorphous mass of individuals busy pretending to be a people” (p. xiv). Therefore, in the first place, Nigeria is an amalgam. It makes every sense to say; given the discussions already done in this essay that *Nigeria as amalgamated is an entitative misnomer*. This statement can only be true when viewed from the back-drop of propositions made above. An *Entity* in accordance with the above Cartesian criterion is an isolated, unconnected concept related to others in a certainty guaranteed by a coherent mathematical logic. In this part of the essay, we understand an entity from an African-Nigerian perspective to mean a distinguishable, tangible data among others with whom it is not only connected but on whose sustained interactive process its endurance depends. It is based on this African-Nigerian understanding that we posit that Nigeria as amalgamated is an entitative misnomer. How may that be?

The notorious Lord Lugard who schemed and effected the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates as Nigeria cared nothing about what it is to be Nigerian, nay African. He merely was face-to-face with a geographical expanse whose plain drawings could be played with. He did not hesitate to play that game with his girl friend and eventual wife - Lady Shaw - who enjoyed the game and in so doing collaborated with this notoriety to give Nigeria the name it bears today. Lugard was a descendant of that Cartesian tradition which understood concepts to be superior to nature; disconnected entities as models of reality.

Stephen-Wakdok (2009) credited Lugard with more than what he should have when he wrote: “...Lord Lugard knew very well from his sojourns across the different lands in the Niger area that the people were each a distinct nationality, with their separate cultures, values and beliefs”. Stephen-Wakdok should have known that while these distinct nationalities made meaning to him, they did not to Lugard who simply understood people as persons and nations as places. Moreover like the brother of Frederick Hegel and Frank Fanon, “their culture, values and beliefs” can at best be primitive and of no consequence; their lives brutish and irredeemable. Comrade Debo Adeniran was more alarmed as was recorded by PM News (Lagos) reporter, Njoku: “The amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates by Lord Lugard in 1914 is a poison which can kill Nigeria if nothing is done about it.” One hundred years after the amalgamation, fifty-four years after independence, sixteen years into a sustained civil rule; the task of uniting the people of Nigeria still ogles its citizens in the face; a task made impossible by the very scheme that inaugurated this phantasmal marriage (Akinjide, 2011)

The present writers are looking beyond insinuations made by Oyeboode (2011) and his likes into the conceptual analysis of that which continually cripples the Nigerian project. For instance, Oyeboode insinuates the scheme of the British to perpetuate the Hausa-Fulani in governing Nigeria as a script written by Lord Lugard in order ultimately to enhance the economic advantage the British garners from the Nigerian territory (Oyeboode, 2011; Akinjide, 2011; Stephen-Wakdok, 2009). There is no doubt this script has been acted out thoroughly by Britain, leaving Nigeria ever disintegrated and vulnerable to British post-colonial exploitations. It was Akinjide who inadvertently painted a graphic, grim and vivid picture of this analysis:

The structures created were as follows: Northern Nigeria was to represent England; Western Nigeria like Wales; Eastern Nigeria was to be like Scotland. In the British structure, England has permanent majority in the House of Commons. There was no way Wales can ever dominate England, neither can Scotland dominate Britain. But they are very shrewd. They would allow a Scottish man to become Prime Minister. They would allow a Welsh man to become Prime Minister in London but the fact remains that the actual power rested in England.

Lord Lugard was at home with the socio-economic-political equation of Nigeria and certain of its consequences even before the implementation of that schema. Before the amalgamation, the area called Nigeria, especially the southern hemisphere was made up of myriads of nation states to which its citizens accordingly belong, in which they believe and from which they drew the vital energy that sustained their continued existence in a world of utmost challenge. The earlier indirect rule of the same Lugard failed to work in the South-Eastern part because it was notably a republic. In this second manipulation he achieved a half-baked republic and a half-baked federation and then a nation without focus; without destiny. The various disparities there were in the traditional religion, politics, culture and language would have suggested a serious need for the construction of a commonwealth; an all-embracing superstructure which will permeate all and encompass all. As it stands ethnic and tribal sentiments and inclinations triumph over national and collective interests and this could be understood. This is because the present arrangement did not provide for adequate integration of the diverse tribes and ethnic groups; there was no machinery put in place to foster such integration over time and the scheme essentially was neither a Nigerian scheme nor was it contrived for the good of Nigeria. Yet because the amalgamation was not conjectured for the mutual co-existence, corporate development and socio-cultural advancement of the various parts involved, the inevitable and indispensable superstructure was not thought of.

The Construction of a Nigeria that we can believe in

The Illusion of the Nigerian Superstructure: We adopt the word Superstructure to paint the picture of a system or organ that is supreme and superior to all its subjects or component parts. A superstructure is such that all varieties of humans and variations of human activities serve to maintain and sustain its overwhelming and overpowering stature. TEDTalks, a daily video podcast of the best talks and performances from the TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) conferences posted a talk by Ngozi Chimamanda Adichie in which she clearly represented the manner in which she imbibed the African consciousness thus:

I must say that before I went to the US, I didn't consciously identify as Africa, but in the US whenever Africa came up people turned to me, never mind I knew nothing about places like Namibia. But I did come to embrace this new identity and in many ways I think of myself now as Africa.

This experience of Adichie is not different from that of many an African in varied ways. In the course of her speech, she represented the perspective of one of the great minds that shaped Africa for the West thus:

Here's a quote from the writings of a London merchant called John Locke who sailed to West Africa in 1561 and kept a fascinating account of his voyage. After referring to the black Africans as beasts who have no houses he writes: "They are also people without heads, having their mouths and eyes in their breasts.

It is precisely this evaluation of Locke and many like that which informed the scramble for Africa and the manner in which Africa was distributed among western nations in Berlin (1885). The Berlin Conference was the beginning of rendering the African people in western conceptual schemata. Now we know that as far as the architects of that schemata were concerned, African is no more than the plane shapes of Euclidean geometry; peopled by elements without souls. Meanwhile, Cartesian rationality derives certainty from the coherence of terms in a logical sequence. As such the reality of Africa was a rationale reasoned in these terms. Conversely, logic from an African perspective is filled by content with corresponding correlations. Its truth is operational in tangibility and palpability. In other words Africa as constituted is not interiorly driven by African logic. Consequent upon this, most Africans so-called are everything but African because they neither feel nor touch Africa. The unintended consequence of this trend is that the average African is not involved in his environment and in his supposed concern. In very many cases they look at Africa from the point of view of loot and loathsomeness (Odumegwu-Ojukwu, p. 6). Even in that gaze, the West and now the East are being looked up to as both alternative and ultimate.

By extension, this same virus plagues countries in Africa and Nigeria is not an exception. Nigeria as designed, coined, conjectured and constructed is merely a concept without content. Every single Nigerian learns that he is Nigerian as a secondary knowledge. The Nigerian primarily is Igbo, Efik, Yoruba, Hausa, Itshekiri, Ijaw, Fulani, Anang or Ibibio and so forth. These are tribes to which the real and actual identities belong. The idea of tribalism permeates the fabrics of our social life because everyone, as it were, is a tribal person. Everyone will remain a tribal person because the fundamentals of the Nigerian nation are not only erroneous, they are also chronically viral. The fact of the existence of Nigeria is a mental consciousness precisely because Nigeria is not more than a mental construct. The tribal man belongs to and is deeply involved in and connected to his tribe because the tribe is a reality he both feels and touches. Such a community can easily compel him to believe in or even die for its cause. How can one be Nigerian when the question of to be or not to be Nigerian is yet at asking stance?

African Model of Community Superstructure: In the traditional African society, to build a community of people is a religious exercise in which all the elements constituting the new community are involved directly or by representation; either way, the soul of the community is founded in consensus and ratified by the blood of the progenitors symbolized in that of animals or human beings. Everyone who by this contract or subsequent birth became part of this consensus and covenant grows naturally into the commonwealth. Oral history reveals that communities in Africa are either a predicamental or deliberate break from aboriginal communities. Each individual community stipulates a common ground for conviviality gets everyone committed to it and uses religion as an agent to enforce its consensus. Most times real history is couched in legendary tales, totems and pithy-sayings. The simple effect of this practice is that stories become both compelling and sacred; making the objects that constitute it divine and venerable; they can be anything, trees, animals, rivers and so forth. The resultant community is such that believe together, live together, and surmount various challenges of life together.

Biblical Model for the Establishment of the Jewish Nation: Moses was keenly aware that the people who left Egypt with him following the uprising he master-minded were not a single tribe; not of common ancestry and do not have a common world-view. The Bible gave account of Moses' remarkable summon of the elders of Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai and the unveiling of the grand norm which became both the terms of conviviality among them and a sign of covenant between them and God (Ex. 19). The whole of the Book of Leviticus is a further development and expansion of the Torah (Grand Norm) into what is known to the Jews as *Halakah*. It includes regulations to ensure and enhance a spirit of live and let live among the Jews. Every Jew is initiated into this commonwealth as *Bar-Mitzvot/Mitzvah* and is ready to bet his/her life to it. After the Maccabean struggles, the young Jew even swears to the oath of *Massadah*; vowing to defend Jewish integrity with everything he/she has got. One can see the root of the reason why the Jews may not concede a foot in their struggle with Palestine; why they may never give up the struggle.

Possible Nigeria: Every well-meaning/right-thinking Nigerian knows that the failure of the country to convoke a Sovereign National Conference is an indication that the Nigerian nation is still in limbo. The just concluded National Conference though a landmark was not sovereign and has come under a lot of criticisms. Moreover it is not the first of its kind so critics are wary if this also will not be sunk into the nebulous sea of the Nigerian arrangement. In spite of all the fears raised by critics as hiccups to a possible Sovereign National Conference, the present writers opine that for the proper construction of a nation from these diverse peoples, that convocation is inevitable. The nation is about a people with a common aspiration, goal and destiny; a people who accept and believe together in their common cause; a people who feel cared for by and who care for the commonwealth. Evidently, Nigeria is not that kind of nation. There is an inherent lie in and about the Nigerian nation and to operate this lie there must be corruption. A Sovereign National Conference will take the form of our traditional community building or of the Council of Nicaea (325) where the tenets of Christianity were defined. Such a conference will reflect the basic beliefs and hopes of the Nigerian people and be able to commit every Nigerian person to the cause of the nation. Whether or not the Nigerian project of sustainable development will be grounded till after then is all a matter of procedure. But it is clear that outside that, development is a chimerical undertaking in Nigeria precisely because the very root upon which sustenance may be founded is not yet established. What is the point erecting any kind of structure when you are sure there is nobody to utilize or maintain it? In Nigeria, any program is viewed with the eye of looting and scavenging and not even one at the long run survives this predatory tendency of the citizenry.

To begin a journey into a development that could be sustained in Nigeria needs a total re-orientation of the Nigerian mind. In this re-orientation, all hands must be on deck; all sectors actively participate and collaborate. This re-orientation must include a redefinition of citizenship; a redefinition in which the Nigerian will cease to be a tribal person. For instance, why will I be born in Kano State and my State of origin will be Anambra State? Why will I spend more than thirty years in Lagos State without being eligible to contest for any political post in that State? In this re-orientation tribes, tongues, parochial cultures should be given special, dignified but second place; only the Nigerian culture will stand supreme. Our National Calendar should include local events and holidays; National historical days to be commemorated. This re-orientation will be basically Nigerian and will need a Sovereign National Conference. Only then will the Nigerian project for sustainable development commence.

Given the religious nature of Africa, the nation that will emerge out of the Sovereign National Conference is an entity that could be believed in like Christians believe in God, Muslims believe in Allah and traditionalist believe in environmental spirits. In that way the Sovereign National Conference will be the definitive beginning of a fourth religion that does not necessarily undermine other religious affiliations; it should respect them, but at the same time demand a solid adherence to its laws and regulations. In such a nation, the law of the land is supreme and respects no individual persons; institutions are way bigger than individuals and structures more solid than infrastructures. If the religion of Islam can conform the minds of individuals to die for reasons that does not square-up with rationality it is possible to breed a new Nigeria where faith is the one tool needed to start-off a nation of people with a common purpose, driven by a singular passion and headed for a unified destiny.

Summary

Africa (and Nigeria) is a religious environment. The fundamental tool of religion is faith. Faith is at the same time affective, cognitive and volitional; having an object and terms. Faith in Nigeria is totally absent in the Nigerian. It is clear to see that without faith in the very object of our faith, we are bereft of our religious character and our whole society is crippled. It is possible to begin a journey of nationhood as is seen in our traditional societies, in the Bible and in the Christian Church; that journey requires a consensus and binding agreement that will define this object of our faith (Nigeria) for the benefit of all Nigerians. For there to be a sustainable development in Nigeria, there must first of all be a Nigeria we believe in.

Conclusion

The characteristics of an independent Nation is much more than a national flag, national anthem and pledge. It is an independent people which constitute an independent nation. A Nation is much more than a defined geographical area; it is the integral environment of a people. Coincidentally it is the Nigerian people that are at large in all of Nigerian project. From inception, the Nigerian project cared nothing about the people but that should not be sustained. Sustainable Development in Nigeria is the business of the Nigerian people and not of any 'Big Brother Sam'. We must begin to admit that ours is a heterogeneous society like United States of America. There is no section or group in Nigeria that exhausts or entirely contains the Nigerianness; nor does any section or group diminish the Nigerian meaning. In all, the question of being must precede the question of existence. Sustainable Development is existence predicated upon being. In this article, we tried to fix being Nigerian before answering the objection of a development that could be sustained. We were conscious of the controlling word 'Sustainable' having before us 'Development'. Being Nigerian elicits our faith in Nigeria and engenders the project of Sustainable Development naturally. Once this faith is elusive as is evident in all of these; faith in the Nigerian entity and Faith in the operations of the Nigerian affair, the question of development is a farce.

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