



A Review of Umeanwe's Nigeria in Distress: Sinking of the African Titanic

Linus Oluchukwu Akudolu, PhD*

*Department of Philosophy Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

Corresponding Email: *oluchukwu1900@gmail.com

Received: 30 August 2022 **Accepted:** 25 November 2022 **Published:** 26 December 2022

Abstract: *This is a book review of Nigeria in Distress: Sinking of the African Titanic written by Dr. Christian Maduabuchi Umeanwe. The reviewer indulged in a hermeneutic summary of the book with his personal observations and recommendations at the end.*

Key words: *Nigeria, Africa, Titanic, Distress, Umeanwe.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The book is a 150 page scholarly researched work with fourteen chapters, written by Dr. Christian M. Umeanwe. Dr. Umeanwe is a scholar with PhD in Religion and Society from Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, where he currently lectures. He has other academic qualifications and publications to his honors, and has attended many academic conferences. He is also a priest in (Church of Nigeria) Anglican Communion, married with Children.

In the preface of the book, the author deals decisively with the main topic under contention. According to him, Nigeria is like the proverbial Titanic ship, the largest sea vessel that ever sailed on the face of the global water. The designer boasted that not even God Himself would be able to sink the ship. The author quoted the words of the designer as. "I cannot conceive of any vital disaster happening to this vessel. God himself cannot sink this ship". Similarly, the British who colonized Nigeria could as well boast and pinch their chest that Nigeria is indestructible. That could have resulted from the theory of political overconfidence. The author, in this fourteen-chaptered book discloses how Nigeria as an African Titanic, the giant, has hopelessly broken and fallen asunder.

Book Synopsis

Part I of Chapter one traces the historical development of the nation from 1914 amalgamation, when the British colonial masters joined the three major incompatible ethnic



groups (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba) and other minor ones into unsolicited and unconsented matrimony to 1960 when she had her independent. The author reveals how the colonial masters repackaged the system to favor northern regions (Hausas) against Igbos. Northerners dominating the political affairs of the country kept operating against others especially Igbos. Igbos on whose land the country's major natural resources are located and which are the economic providers and sustainers of the nations were alienated. This glaring nepotism led to the secession attempt by the Igbo part of the country to become a Sovereign Republic State of Biafra in 1966. This was greeted by serious military powers with British support and many lives were lost. The crisis was of course known as the Biafran-Nigerian civil war. After the war with Gowons "no victor no vanquished" policy, reintegration of Igbo race in Nigeria kick-started a new political phase marred by tribalism and ethnicity, which led to political mediocrity, corruption, economic retrogression and ceaseless inflation, steady foreign borrowing and indebtedness, insecurity and militancy, general decadency in morality, education, and social development, sinking the Titanic Nigeria into the unfathomable ocean of confusion, suffering and backwardness, in contradiction to the purpose and intention of the poli-structural designer. In all these, the administrators of the collapsed nation who feed fat from the wealth of her natural resources firmly assert that Nigeria is still intact!

The author, in the second part of the chapter calls for national rebirth, believing that in midst all these socio-political and economic quagmires, there is still hope for a better Nigeria. According to him, there is still prospect and hope for the demised Titanic, though not solely through a mere political structural adjustment but must involve a vigorous Copernicus return to God, quoting 2 Chronicles 7:14 which reads "if my people which are called by my name shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways; then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

In chapter two, the author proceeds to discuss exemplary leadership as a leadership pattern that will help to bring about social re-engineering for a better Nigeria. According to him, leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it. Various definitions and viewpoints of sustainable democracy are outlined. The view of Abraham Lincoln, the 15th President of the USA was also highlighted that democracy is, "the government of the people by the people and for the people". The author adopts the opinions of Santa Clara University and Tom Peters Group on qualities of great leaders as honesty, forward-looking, inspiring, intelligence, fair mindedness, broad mindedness, courage and straightforwardness. Leaders who possess these traits succeed. He sums up exemplary leadership as "a process in which an individual influences the behaviors and attitudes of other people". So to him effective leadership must involve strong command of good followership, and passionate drive for common good. Bad leadership, according to him in chapter three breeds increase in corruption, poverty rate, brain drain, military coup, increase in mortality rate, election fraud, speedy Extinction of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and poor road construction and maintenance, kidnapping, high rate of unemployment. The author holds that these are indexes of a failed nation. He laments that the drivers of the nation shamelessly boast of their expertise while all these symptoms threaten national tranquility and progress.



In chapter four, the author deals with leadership violation in Nigeria. According to him, the issue of leadership violation is strong and multifaceted in every sector of the country. He identifies egoism as selfishness, self-centeredness and personal interest, as metaphysical problems of Nigerian leadership, leading the nation to an abysmal state of cataclysmic failure (Achebe, 1983). He gives many instances proving egotism as the major problem of Nigerian leadership. Then, in chapter five, outlines and discusses various leadership models, emphasizing that what makes any of them relevant is the capacity to process set goals and achieve maximum utility, while emphasizing the importance of servant leadership in chapter six. He insists on servant-leadership as a veritable model for survival of Nigeria, the great titanic. He further sees this model as a driver of both economic and political stability. To him servant leadership does two things.” First it accomplishes worthwhile goals. Secondly, servant leadership develops and transforms those who are being led (p.31). The person who leads must be able to present a strong desire to have others follow his positive people oriented policies and programs. The author sees servant leadership as that model “that ought to model the way, encourage others, to follow by setting an example.

In chapter seven to fourteen, the author turns his eyes to the religious crisis in Nigeria as another serious problem to the peace and development of the nation. According to him, religious crisis and conflicts in Nigeria are mostly between Muslims and Christians taking forms of religious riots, farms/ herders clash, Boko-haram killings, unknown gunmen shoot out and so forth. Several governments have made serious attempts to stem the tide of religious crisis in Nigeria to no avail. Some of the factors militating against the success are religious sentimentalism and poor knowledge of crisis management by Nigerian leaders. He traces the history of Christianity and Islam to the activities of Usman Dam Fodio in the 15th cent, outlining ten causes of the crisis. These include but not limited to theological factors, religious intolerance, fanaticism, unbridled action of the press, aggressive or militant preaching/ evangelism, poverty, wrong religious orientation, literal level of adherents, selfishness on the part of religious personalities and external influence in religion. Major two types of crisis amidst others were identified: inter and intra personal crisis, and inter and intra group crises which birthed religious conflict (see Adetoro, R. & Omiyefa, 2012) . The author expresses hope that with proper understanding between religious leaders and adherents; inter religious crises and attendant problems will be solved amicably. He identifies ethnic hatred and jealousy against Igbos due to their successes in the North, and eventually are predominantly Christians as major agents of the religious crisis in Nigeria.

Proposing solutions to the religious crisis, the author recommends in chapter ten Thomas-kilmans theory of conflict management, which assesses an individual’s behaviors in conflict situations. For general peace of the nation, the author in chapter twelve proposes Johan Galtung mini peace theory as one of his suggestions to peace building in Nigeria. He said that peace is a relationship between two or more parties or civilization. It must be an agreement to live in harmony between two factions or entities at war or in conflict. He proposed two concepts of peace: Negative and Positive peace. To him negative peace connotes “absence of violence or ceasefire” (p.56) and positive peace as “presence of harmony intended. It is the



integration of human society” (p.56). The author in line with Ezeibe (2020) and Idowu & Olaniyan (2017) finds no other alternative to issues of religious conflict in Nigeria than the government promoting peace as the only prerequisite to harmony between key religious sects in Nigeria.

In chapter thirteen, the author laments the incessant execution of Christians by the Boko Haram sects, citing many instances of such unlawful killings. The author condemns the actions as ungodly, while prophesying in chapter fourteen that impending dangers await Nigeria for these wanton killings of Christians. While alleging that Nigeria is no longer safe for Christians, he urges Christians to continue advocating for peace in place of the provocations, giving many examples of such persecutions in the Bible. He adds that self-defense is also not out of place, using both theological and philosophical arguments to support his view. He criticized the government offer of overseas scholarship to “repentant Boko Haram Members” without any reprieve for the families of those they killed their children, father and mothers leaving them with bitter pills and tastes. He bemoans that the ‘carrot and stick policy’ of the government to Boko Haram worsen insecurity challenges in the country.

Observations and Conclusion

The author is somehow sentimental in not identifying the weakness and failures of Christianity in Nigeria. Christian leaders in Nigeria, it is observed turn their attention to preaching of materialism rather than gospel which is powerful enough to convert these sects (Akudolu, 2020). Secondly, Nigeria is a country with 36 states, each receiving her monthly allocation, but it is observed that even the governors in Igbo states are seriously corrupt too, diverting their allocations to personal purses while the states remain underdeveloped (Achebe, 1983; Akudolu, 2020). This is not a problem caused by the northerners, Hausas or Muslims but by Igbos who are mostly Christians to themselves. Apart from these and few others, I can boast that the author approached the issue holistically from political, philosophical, theological, historical, social and economic perspectives, with plausible application of analysis, analogies, hermeneutics, logicity, systematics, and above all comprehensible English grammar. He has, by this book, proven his versatility in all these aforementioned areas vis-as-vis Nigeria as an African Titanic. I therefore recommend this book to all and sundry as it equips one with the socio-political history of Nigeria, her problems and their causes, prospects and ways forward, as well as the relationship between church and polity.

2. REFERENCE

1. Achebe, Chinua (1983). *The Trouble with Nigeria*. Oxford: Heineman Educational Publishers.
2. Adetoro, R. & Omiyefa, M. O. (2012). Unity in diversity in Nigeria’s nationhood – Which way forward. *International Journal of Scientific Research*, 482-484. <https://doi.org/10.15373/22778179/AUG2013/158>



3. Akudolu, L. O. (2020). “A Philosophical Inquiry into the Nature and Problems of Religious Experience”, *Journal of Science, Humanities and Arts*, ISSN:2364-0626 (Online), Vol.7, Issue 2, pp.1-10, <https://doi.org/10.17160/josha.7.2.663>, <https://josha-journal.org/an-inquiry>
4. Akudolu, L.O. (2020). Understanding philosophical analysis using Nigerian democracy as a case study. *International Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Studies (IJHAS)* 5(2), 1-9. <https://airccse.com/ijhas/papers/5220ijhas01.pdf>
5. Ezeibe, Christian Chukwuebuka (2020). Federal character principle and nationality question in Nigeria. *International Journal of Research in Arts and Social Sciences* (2): 78-87.
6. Johnson, Idowu and Olaniyan, Azeez (2017). The politics of renewed quest for Biafra in Nigeria. *Defense and Security Analysis*, pp.1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14751798.2017.1382029>
7. Umeanwe, Christian Maduabuchi (2020). *Nigeria in Distress: Sinking of the African Titanic*. Nigeria, Onitsha: Fortune Printing Ind. Ltd. ISBN: 978-856-763-2