

Theories of development: Revisiting the millennium development goals, structural adjustment programs and the Ogoni crisis in Nigeria in the light of Pope Francis's call to pastoral conversion

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Title: “Theories of Development: Revisiting the Millennium Development Goals, Structural Adjustment Programs and the Ogoni Crisis in Nigeria in the Light of Pope Francis’s Call to Pastoral Conversion.”

A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the S.T.L Degree from the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry.

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Thesis Statement: In this thesis, I argue that the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP)/Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), undergirded by the neoliberalism model of development (free market liberalism) that propelled the oil exploration in Ogoni, failed in Nigeria largely because it gave more centrality to “the ideology” of free market liberalism instead of the person, embedded in culture and in relation with neighbour and with God—which Pope Francis’s Pastoral Conversion advocates.

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1a) Introduction: Rationale for the Thesis

“Development” has become a catchword in our thinking and talking about our hopes for the world. In the early 80s, it was with a view to bring about development that the Nigerian government embraced the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) proposed by the World Bank. The SAP, unfortunately failed to deliver the proposed goods. Moreover, in the early 2000s, the UN launched the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This came years after the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In the past twenty years, the fruits of the MDGs are seen in some parts of the world, especially in China, where more and more people have been lifted out of extreme poverty. These indicators of past progress undergird the hopes for the SDGs.

However, the very fact of the SDGs are an indication that the MDGs, despite their success, have weak-points and that, in a way, the MDGs have also failed to deliver the

kind of development Nigeria and Africa need. It is this failure that is hoped the SDGs can help correct. Nowhere is this failure as glaring as in Sub-Sahara Africa, where countries have experienced a gradual slide into poverty. The question that we should ask, especially from the context of Africa and specifically Nigeria, is: Are we sure that the SDGs, like SAP and MDGs—which share the same development theory that undergirded the exploration of oil in Ogoni land, Nigeria—will not also fail; and which theory of development will solve the problem of development in Nigeria and Africa in general?

Why is this question an important one? What is the rationale for this thesis? I go along with the observation of the document of the 34th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus that, “The marginalization of Africa in the “new world order” renders an entire continent paradigmatic of all the marginalized world...Slavery, colonial and neo-colonial subjugation, internal problems of ethnic rivalry and corruption have all created an ocean of misfortunes there.”¹ Nigeria, a West African country, has its share of these socio-economic woes. Its economy is totally oil based. Oil accounts for 96% of Nigeria’s export revenue (the United States buys 40% of this oil) and 80% of government revenue. 85% of the oil revenues are amassed by 1% of the people. This reality explains the huge economic gap between the rich and the poor in Nigeria. The same is true of the case between the developed and developing countries of the world.

Thus, ours is an age characterized by some people who are faced with a glaring socio-economic misery, while others have attained so much socio-economic affluence that material hypertrophy or *superdevelopment* (an excessive availability of every kind of

¹ Society of Jesus, *Documents of the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus* (Saint Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1995), 43-44.

material goods for the benefit of certain social group)² to use Pope John II words, with its emergent loss of meaning, looms large. Some Western cultures seem to have gone crazy with profitability, materialism and power. Ours has become a rat-race world, and the battlefield is the earth—the race is between and within nations: poor and rich, powerful and marginalized. In the course of this race many poor men and women, especially in Africa, not least Nigeria, continue to plunge into despair, believing that life is not worth the strife. The rationale for this thesis is captured in the words of Jon Sobrino:

We are concerned about the anxieties of all those who make up the people, whatever their social condition may be. We are concerned about their loneliness, their family problems, and the lack of meaning in the lives of many of them. Today we wish in particular to share the anxieties that stem from poverty. Viewing it in the light of faith, we see the growing gap between the rich and the poor as a scandal and contradiction to Christian existence. The luxury of a few becomes an insult to the wretched poverty of the vast masses. This is contrary to the plan of the Creator...³

From the above quote, sharing in the anxieties that stem from poverty in practical terms implicates the need for deciphering a road map from poverty to socio-economic development for Nigeria, Africa and other developing countries. I am convinced that this needed economic development model for Africa must be one that takes into account the identity, individuality, culture, and tradition of the people. It must recognize the socio-political and economic structures that have over the years truncated the lives of the people and reduced them to the miracles that God created to taste the bitter fruit of time. Furthermore, this model of African development is theocentric and sees God as the origin and destiny of all things. Consequently, it introduces a moral and spiritual vision to

² Charles E. Curran *et al*, “Commentary on *Sollicitudo rei Socialis* (On Social Concern)” in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, ed. Himes Kenneth R., second edition. (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2018), 436.

³ Jon Sobrino, *Toward a Liberation Spirituality* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1991), 17-18.

development—a development that can be approximated to Pope Francis’s Pastoral Conversion.

Moreover, the absence of this theocentric dimension to development occasions a myopic economic dynamic that tends to propagate human greed and selfishness. The resultant effects are all too common in our contemporary world: “economic downturns, poverty, injustice, wars, violence, protectionism, terrorism and other allied evils.”⁴ My contention here is that development is not just about brass and bricks. Hence, putting the unseen God in the picture of development is not an add-on. Rather, as Stan Chu Ilo puts it, “it is the very condition of possibility to find the authentic direction of human history and the ethical impulses and spiritual forces that will direct our steps.”⁵

However, while aware of the danger of prescribing an economic developmental model for Africa in such broad strokes— especially given that Africa is made up of people of diverse cultural, traditional, religious and ethnic distinctions—this danger is of no serious consequence given that the people of Africa, particularly Sub-Sahara Africa, are by and large marked by a very strong thread of cultural, religious, traditional and linguistic homogeneity. The idea that this homogeneity makes possible the quest for a development theory and action plan for Sub- Sahara Africa is analogous to the argument by some that Sub-Sahara Africa has missed the train of development because of the way Africans understand community and the individual. While there is a strong connection among the individuals, lineages, communities and tradition in Africa, such connectedness

⁴ Stan Chu Ilo, *The Church and Development in Africa: aid and development from the perspective of Catholic Social Ethics* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2014), xxxi.

⁵ Ilo, *Development in Africa*, xxxi.

are seemingly lacking in the Western world—which is founded on an individualistic understanding of the human person.⁶

On the strength of this individualistic understanding of the human person, which is a driving force for Western markets, the Western world has made many advances technologically, economically, and otherwise. As a result, many in the Western world now see the self-understanding of the individual in African society as a draw back to its much-desired socio-economic and infrastructural development. Not surprisingly, many Africans, too, increasingly continue to jettison their way of understanding the person and to embrace the Western way instead.⁷ This embrace of the Western way, apart from having implication on the choice of the developmental model needed for Africa, has implication as to how that model is implemented. Thus, as the Western world in its individualistic understanding of the person has largely shaped free-market liberalism, African converts to the Western way of understanding of the individual would also have to embrace the free-market liberalism too.

Contrary to the notion that socio-economic development has eluded Africa because of the way it understands the individual, this thesis is influenced by the notion that the problem of poverty or lack of socio-economic development in Africa is not a function of the way Africans understand the individual and the individual's connection to lineage and other aspects of traditions. Rather, the thesis finds its contextualization in the notion that historical, political and social processes created and shaped poverty in Africa and continue to do so in our world today. Anyone who knows the history of Kibera, a

⁶ Paul Appiah Himin Asante, "The African Concept of Community and Individual in the Context of the Market," in *Distant Markets, Distant Harms*, ed. Daniel Finn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 211.

⁷ Asante, "The African Concept of Community," 212.

slum in Nairobi, Kenya, Eastern Africa, where I lived for three years or of any slum in Africa for that matter (for instance, Ajegunle in Lagos, Nigeria), would be aware of the complex colonial and post-colonial dynamics that led to the creation of these conditions of poverty.

As such, Gustavo Gutierrez reminds us, “poverty is not a fate; poverty is not according to the will of God. Poverty is a result of human fault, and we can take action against poverty...Poverty is a consequence of social injustice.”⁸ Poverty is socially constructed. This view comes closer to both the Jewish and the Christian theology of the world as reflected in the story of the Fall in Genesis 3 and the idea of original sin, in the sense of the “sin of the world.” Poverty, therefore, is a reversal of the intention of God in the creation of the world. Consequently, the project of creation and redemption can be construed as projects, as it were, against poverty. Poverty is related to the question of creation and the Fall, and how this represents a reversing of the order of the world as God created and intended it.

Still, in the context of the Kibera slum, which borders a wealthy neighborhood in Nairobi, we notice that wealth and poverty are not only about *possession*, but are also about *relation*—a power relationship. There are structures of power that permit, create, structure and sustain situations of wealth and poverty. Since, wealth and poverty are more about power *relations* than about *possessions*, the objective charitable *transfer of wealth* from the rich to the poor, cannot and will not make a difference until and unless the underlying structures of inequalities of power are also addressed. This becomes clear especially in the context of Kibera. Statistics and my own experience working and living

⁸ Gustavo Gutierrez, “Sermon on the Healing of the Man Born Blind.” *New BlackFriars*, vol. 70, no 826 (April, 1989), 158-160, 159.

close to Kibera show that Kibera today is home to many of the charity and development programs in and across Africa.

Unfortunately, these programs have not been able to change the situation of the people. In fact, rather than create meaningful transformation, the poverty of the people in Kibera has been, as it were, *fetishized*, co-opted, and appropriated into the capitalist machinery and the structures that both create and sustain their poverty. Rather than catapult the people out of the dark and desolate valley of poverty and perpetual want, the capitalist machinery in its extractive bent has plunged the people deeper into economic misery and dependency. Today, we speak of a “poverty of industrial complex” touting around as non-governmental and governmental organizations—with their aid workers driving around in Jeeps, dressed in suits, spending nights in lavish hotels around the globe: all sustained by the poverty of Kibera!

Hence, Paul Farmer, the global health practitioner makes the case that “the world’s poor are the chief victims of structures of violence.”⁹ Here the “structure of violence” includes poverty arising from human fault, from social injustice and unjust social structures. In search of a developmental model for Nigeria and Africa in general, this thesis joins Gutierrez and Farmer in their call to dismantle the socio-economic and political structures that create poverty instead of merely adopting the Western understanding of the individual. Strikingly, just as the programs of the NGOs and non-profit organizations in Kibera failed to lift people out of poverty because they did not heed Gutierrez’s and Farmer’s call explained above, so too the Structural Adjustment Program and Millennium Development Goals, though well-intentioned, failed to respond

⁹ Paul Farmer, “On Suffering and Structural Violence: A View From Below.” *Race/Ethnicity: Multi disciplinary Global Contexts* vol. 3, no 1 (Autumn 2009), 11-28.

to the needs of Nigeria and Africa in general as I will now explain in chapter two which follows. First, I will examine the Structural Adjustment Program of the 80s in Nigeria and Africa in general.

Consequently, in this thesis, I argue that the SAP/MDGs, undergirded by the neoliberalism model of development (free market liberalism) that propelled oil exploration in Ogoni land, failed in Nigeria largely because it gave more centrality to “the ideology” of free market liberalism instead of the person, embedded in culture and in relation with neighbour and with God—which Pope Francis’s Pastoral Conversion advocates. Thus my conclusion that Pope Francis’s Pastoral Conversion as captured in his Theology of People will contribute significantly in bringing about development in Nigeria and Africa at large. My research will be based on Critical Realism, a social theory largely advanced by Porpora and Archer. This theory is largely in sync with the theological commitment of Catholic thinkers.¹⁰

This thesis will be divided into four chapters. In the first chapter, I establish what is meant by development as a prelude to a skeletal presentation of some theories of development, especially neo-liberalism. Next, I will present the Millennium Development Goal (MDGs), Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), and the Ogoni Oil Crisis in Nigeria. While the MDGs and the SAP represent the initiatives of the World Bank and the United Nations targeted at bringing about development in Nigeria and Africa in general, the Ogoni Oil crisis represents an initiative by Nigeria, which like the MDGs and SAP, failed to bring about development given the neo-liberal ideology that undergirded the execution of all the initiatives. Nigeria and other African countries, often viewed as

¹⁰ Daniel K. Finn, “What is a Sinful Social Structure?” in *Theological Studies*, 2016, Vol. 77 (II), 147.

lame ducks, merely waiting for the international community's initiatives to rescue them from the strangulating hold of poverty, the Ogoni Oil crisis asserts the fact that Africa, especially Nigeria in this case, do bring something to the table in its quest for development.

The Ogoni oil crisis account in this thesis serves to show that the initiatives of Africans in its use of its natural resources, like the initiatives of international bodies, still fail to the extent that such initiatives are subjected to the ideology of neo-liberalism. In the second part of this thesis, I will explain the problem of underdevelopment in Nigeria, Africa and other developing countries structurally. To this end, I will rely on the theory of Critical Realism, positing it as the social theory lens through which I approach my research. Particularly, I will explain the concepts of Enablement, Constraints and Incentives. Furthermore, I will show how neo-liberalism enables or constrains the action of Africans vis-à-vis the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the exploration of oil in Ogoni land, Nigeria.

In the third part of my paper, I will assess the neo-liberal structures of MDGs, SAP and the Ogoni Oil crisis. That background provides the rationale for an alternative approach to development, namely Pope Francis's Pastoral Conversion in the Theology of People. Here I will explore the Theology of People, paying particular attention to its historical development. In addition to explaining Pastoral Conversion, I will explore the theory of development behind it, especially given its appeal to a bottom-up and human centred approach to development. Lastly, I will show how Pastoral Conversion, within the larger polity of Catholic Social Teaching, calls for the principles of the Common Good, Solidarity and the Preferential Option of the Poor. In the fourth chapter of this

thesis, I will show how pastoral conversion, especially in its distinctive understanding of the person, the community and God, mirrors the self-understanding of the average African, and the African sense of development. This will be the basis for this position that Pope Francis's Pastoral Conversion will better serve Nigeria and Africa in general in the realization of its dream development, especially as neo-liberalism is contrary to the values of both African and Catholic Social Teaching of Common Good, Solidarity and Preferential Option for the Poor. This will be followed by my conclusion. I begin by first explaining what I mean by development in this thesis.

1b) Understanding Development

In Nigeria as well as many parts of the world, socio-economic development is a major concern. This development includes: housing, human rights, gender, culture, liberty, water and technology, etc. The Human Development Report of Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (Alkire 2010) provides a broad definition of development that encompasses all the above elements. Relying on the economist, philosopher and Noble Laureate Amartya Sen, it defines development as, “a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy.”¹¹

Between 1994 and 2010 the idea of development prioritized the following areas: human security, gender, economic growth, poverty, consumption, globalization, human rights, technology, democracy, millennium development goals, cultural liberty, international cooperation, water, climate change and migration. Subsequently, these elements have metamorphosed into an all-embracing statement on human development,

¹¹ John Klaasen, “The Interplay between theology and development: How theology can be related to development in post-modern society,” *Missionalia* 41:2, (Aug. 2013), 184.

as, “Human development aims to expand people’s freedom—the worthwhile capabilities people value—and to empower people to engage actively in development processes, on a shared planet. And it seeks to do so in ways that appropriately advance equity, efficiency, sustainability and other key principles.”¹²

While this definition uses Sen’s definition as a starting point, it broadens it beyond economic choices and self-centred, individualistic and dissociated interests. Though much emphasis is placed on the participation of the underdeveloped individuals, it is devoid of a strong sense of mutually beneficial interplay between the underdeveloped and oppressive structures and forces of human agency. Development is not only abstract or deontological, it has in its core “personhood” as integral to the development processes. “Personhood” is three dimensional, namely the personal, individual, and communitarian. Another definition emerging from the Post-Apartheid South Africa is worthy of note, one that presents different ways in which the church can participate in the development of and collaboration with the underdeveloped people. This definition, popularized by Korten’s four generations strategic NGO intervention approach, broadens development as social development. It defines social development as, “a process of planned social change designed to promote the wellbeing of the population as a whole in conjunction with a dynamic process of economic development.”¹³

The fundamental threads of commonalities that run through these latter definitions of development are clear. First, development is centred on people. Secondly, both definitions conceive development as constituted by a dynamic process with different stages, size and resources as opposed to a closed system. Lastly, they conceive

¹² Klaasen, “The Interplay between theology and development,” 184.

¹³ Klaasen, “The Interplay between theology and development,” 185.

development broadly and holistically, rejecting its reduction to one dimension. Thus instead of reducing development to only a single dimension, there is a clear attempt to situate personhood, with all of its characteristic traits, at the heart of development.¹⁴ This paper draws on this understanding of development and preferences a theory of development that takes its constitutive elements into consideration as we will see later.

The purpose of this paper is not to give a comprehensive account of the various theories of development. Rather it is to juxtapose the theories of development behind the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) and the MDGs with Pope Francis's Pastoral Conversion. This juxtaposition or comparison provides the basis for a greater appreciation of the theory of development behind Pope Francis's Pastoral Conversion, which I believe is most suitable for the development of Nigeria and Africa in general. Here is a synopsis of some contemporary theories of development.

1c) Skeletal Examination of the Theories of Development

Modernization theory of development sees progress as a function of Westernization. Proponents of this theory argue that society progresses from simple to more sophisticated way of life, which involves progress from a pre-scientific way of living to a scientific one. Without this progression from pre-scientific to scientific, they insist, people cannot be free from poverty and human suffering. Anti-modernization theory of development, on the contrary, upholds the prioritization of the indigenous way of life as the road map to development, and thus rejects development as progress. Dependency theory of development holds that the suffering of poor people is a function of the system and structures. Changing of the structure will inevitably empower people to

¹⁴ Klaasen, "The Interplay between theology and development," 185.

engage in their own development. Those who support this theory insist that in order to end aid from the West to Africa, we must create wealth and an institutional framework in Africa, as development is dependent on such internal structure. Post-development theory insists that history is not linear and that development is more than just eradicating poverty or industrialization.¹⁵

Furthermore, the theory of Integral development holds that development is integral and is constituted by many aspects of life and is more complicated than progress, wealth-creation, etc.¹⁶ The Capability theory of development prioritizes empowerment and development of human and cultural endowments of societies, people and civilization. It holds that development occurs when people are free and empowered as agents to be involved in determining their destiny and their own development. Proponents of world systems theory of development, in addition to theories that highlight an understanding of and an engagement with the dynamics of globalization, are concerned with how the dynamics of globalization work. In particular, they identify how the forces of globalization propel social change globally and how nations, corporations and individuals can take advantage of these forces in eventuating better living conditions for people by eradicating poverty.¹⁷ While these theories of development have their strengths and weaknesses, a broad exposition of them is beyond the scope of this paper.

Moreover, *Charity and Truth*, following the Catholic Social Teaching Tradition that Pope Francis also draws from, understands development at a level higher than all the

¹⁵ Ilo, *The Church and Development in Africa*, 2.

¹⁶ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio: Encyclical Letter On the Development of Peoples*. March 26, 1967. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1967; http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html. Accessed 12/5/19, 15.

¹⁷ Ilo, *The Church and Development in Africa*, 2.

above. Relying on the capability theory of development via a theological anthropology anchored in Christian humanism, it holds that development happens within the broader aim of aligning our actions in order to approximate the divine goal of creation. Without this in view, development initiatives undertaken on the strength of economics, production, profit, technical progress and technological determinism are bound to fail in serving the person and consequently society.¹⁸

Apart from recognizing the sacredness and the dignity of the human person, these initiatives must also factor in the dignity and value of family life. In respecting the harmony in nature, these initiatives must satisfy the requirement of justice both in our relationship with nature and in our industrial activities. In addition, while keeping in mind the good of future generations, it must exhibit the highest ethical principles that advance and conserve the good of humans and the earth today. As a result, “the promotion, preservation, and protection of the common good, therefore, require action and solicitude by all Christians and people of goodwill at interpersonal levels, as well as in political organizations and institutions.”¹⁹ Having seen the above theories of development, I would now turn to the Millennium Development Goals and the SAP, particularly highlighting the ideologies of the neo-liberalism on which they were based.

¹⁸ Ilo, *The Church and Development in Africa*, 2.

¹⁹ Ilo, *The Church and Development in Africa*, 3.

Structural Adjustment Program and Millennium Development Goals

1a) Structural Adjustment Program (SAP)

The African continent in the 80s was going through the throes of socio-political and economic crisis. This was especially the case in sub-Sahara Africa, which continues, to date to wallow in severe economic stagnation and unending debt crisis. The unprecedented level of this crisis was evident in the abysmal fall of the standard of living of Africans, the deteriorating infrastructure and crippling poverty. As a way out of this situation in the 1980s, the World Bank/ International Monetary Fund (IMF), via the Bretton Woods and other financial institutions in developing countries, initiated an economic reform policy called the Structural Adjustment Program. This program, embraced by developing countries especially in Africa, involved receiving conditional loans from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).²⁰

Recipient countries had to restructure their economies, essentially by eradicating protectionist structures, which included “tariffs, controls, and subsidies for local capitalism.”²¹ This economic initiative was premised on the assumption that the health, efficiency and productivity of an economy will improve if the market forces are allowed free reign—especially free of the consequences of government control policies of “protection, subsidization and regulation.”²² Also characteristic of this program is its unilateral emphasis on adjustment policies such as “currency devaluation, price deregulation, export-led growth strategies, privatization, commercialization, and removal

²⁰ Bharati Sadasivam, “The Impact of Structural Adjustment on Women: A Governance and Human Right Agenda,” *Human Right Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Aug., 1997), 630.

²¹ Sadasivam, “The Impact of Structural Adjustment on Women,” 630.

²² Sadasivam, “The Impact of Structural Adjustment on Women,” 630.

of subsidies on food and health services.”²³ The Millennium Development Goals for eradicating poverty were not very different in their approach.

1b) The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

We see this same top-down style in the administration of the MDGs, which were introduced by the United Nations to rid the world of extreme poverty. The World Bank’s definition of poverty is the one mostly used today, and it defines extreme poverty as earning under the poverty line of \$1.25 (USD) daily in 2005 international prices. With this as the poverty line, an estimated 1.2 billion people fell below extreme poverty line in 2010. But many people consider the World Bank’s definition too narrow. They prefer to define extreme poverty in terms of the ability of individuals to meet their primary material needs such as “food, clean water, sanitation, shelter, clothing, access to health care, access to basic education, and access to essential services such as transport, energy and connectivity.”²⁴ These essential needs constitute the minimum required for human sustenance and human dignity. Those who live in extreme poverty are those who, given the lack of household income or public services, fall short of meeting their essential needs. In view of this definition, the world’s poor is estimated to be between 1.2 billion. The headcount poverty rate “measures the share of the population under a given poverty line.”²⁵ Poverty rate estimated at 52 percent in 1981 dropped to 43 percent in 1990, 34 percent in 1999 and 21 percent in 2010 according to a World Bank report.

²³ Sadasivam, “The Impact of Structural Adjustment on Women,” 637.

²⁴ Jeffrey D. Sachs, *The Age of Sustainable Development* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2015). ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bostoncollege-ebook/details.action?docID=1922296>, 139-140. Accessed from bostoncollege-ebooks on 12/5/2019, 139-140.

²⁵ Sachs, *The Age of Sustainable Development*, 140.

While, according to this report, China recorded the highest poverty reduction in history (poverty falling from 84 percent in 1981 to just 12 percent in 2010), sub-Saharan Africa recorded a rise in poverty rate from 51 percent to 58 percent between 1981 and 1991.²⁶ However, the rate of extreme poverty began to drop with the introduction of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000. South Asia falls in-between China and Africa in terms of the drop in extreme poverty. In India, for example, there was a drop in extreme poverty from 60 percent in 1981 to 33 percent in 2010, while the rest of South Asia witnessed a decline in extreme poverty from 66 percent to 26 percent in the same period. These statistics lend credibility to the idea that humanity could rid the world of the ancient plague of extreme poverty,²⁷ thanks to the MDGs, as its mission statement portrayed:

We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected. We are committed to making the right to development a reality for everyone and to freeing the entire human race from want. We resolve therefore to create an environment—at the national and global levels alike—which is conducive to development and to the elimination of poverty.²⁸

Today, the Millennium Development Goals have metamorphosed into Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with the ambition to end poverty by 2030. An integrated set of six elements that captures the vision of MDGs and ensures that Sustainable Development Goals are actualized in various countries include:

(a) Dignity: to end poverty and fight inequality; (b) people: to ensure healthy lives, knowledge and the inclusion of women and children; (c) prosperity: to grow a strong, inclusive and transformative economy; (d) planet: to protect our ecosystems for all societies and children; (e) justice:

²⁶ Sachs, *The Age of Sustainable Development*, 140.

²⁷ Sachs, *The Age of Sustainable Development*, 142.

²⁸ Sachs, *The Age of Sustainable Development*, 144.

to promote safe and peaceful societies and strong institutions; and (f) partnership: to catalyze global solidarity for sustainable development.²⁹

Unfortunately in Nigeria and other parts of sub-Sahara Africa, the reliance on free market liberalism alone to provide among the poor an increased income essential for the materialization of basic need has proven abortive. Moreover, in Nigeria and other poor African economies, this notion of economic growth, along with its purported trickle-down effect of wealth, which served as the basis of SAP and MDGs had been presented as a precondition for realizing the basic needs among the poor. The prevailing conviction was that no sufficient redistribution of resources could help the poor to realize the minimum basic needs of consumption. In view of this conclusion, there was no attempt to eradicate egalitarian policies—policies that govern the economic activities of the market among the West, Africa and other parts of the world—favouring economic growth.³⁰

This is in obliviousness to the fact that Africa was crawling on its knees of the yesteryears of unjust socio-economic and political disempowerment and strangulation. Africa could not suddenly develop the feet to compete favourably with the West and other developed countries. This failure of understanding immediately reduced the attainment of the basic needs of most Africans below the critical minimum consumption range. From the perspective of a critical realist, the structure of free market liberalism, instead of enabling the people, restricted them from realizing socio-economic wellbeing. It is in this restrictiveness, according to Finn that free-market liberalism was considered sinful in an analogous sense. Hence the conclusion became, “the slowness or absence of

²⁹ United Nations General Assembly, Sixty-ninth session, Agenda items 13 (a) and 115. “The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming all Lives and Protecting the Planet. Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda,” 3 & 16.
URL: <https://Sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/povertyeradication>. Accessed 12/5/2019.

³⁰ Sadasivam, “The Impact of Structural Adjustment on Women,” 654.

the so-called trickle-down makes growth an unreliable means of general advance of a community.”³¹

Worse still, the UNDP, Human Development Report 2-4 of 1996 “characterizes the current model of market-driven growth (free market liberalism) as “jobless, ruthless, voiceless, rootless and futureless and one that does not favour equity or redistribution, both between and within countries.”³² The report further observed:

The globalized market economy has, over the last fifteen years, deepened the economic polarization between developed and developing nations...Only fifteen countries registered improved growth and income during this period, while nearly 100 have shown negative rates of economic growth and per capita income... In seventy of these countries, average income was lower than it had been in 1980 and in forty-three countries, lower than in 1970. The difference in income between the developing and industrialized world tripled from \$5,700 in 1970 to \$15,400 in 1993.³³

The World Bank, corroborated by the Commonwealth observation and reports in 2008, conceded that a development prescription anchored in neoliberalism and the remnants of neo-colonialism did not have the solution to Africa’s underdevelopment crisis. Obviously from all of the above, the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) failed in Nigeria and other parts of Africa largely because it gave more centrality to “the ideology” of free market liberalism instead of the person(s) embedded in a culture, in relationship with neighbour and with God. In fact, in its exclusive focus on “the ideology” of free market liberalism, characteristic of a top-down approach to economic recovery, smacked of an extractive economy. In doing so it restricted the already poor Africans in the deeper abyss

³¹ Sadasivam, “The Impact of Structural Adjustment on Women,” 654.

³² Sadasivam, “The Impact of Structural Adjustment on Women,” 632.

³³ Sadasivam, “The Impact of Structural Adjustment on Women,” 632.

of socio-economic misery, while the already rich West luxuriated in upward opulence. Unfortunately, the Millennium Development Goals have also fallen prey to the same fate, as we will see below.

Senator Udoma Udoma, the minister of Budget and National Planning of Nigeria, explained why the MDGs failed in Nigeria and other parts of Africa at the High-level Policy Dialogue on Development Planning in Africa, organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. One of the reasons he attributed to its failure is Nigeria's and Africa's over dependence on foreign aid. In addition he noted that Africa lacked the political will to implement the policies of the MDGs. Furthermore, he identified the failure of many African countries to make the MDGs a central part of their national economic plans, policies and budget as a contributing factor to its failure. The lack of relevant data and a mechanism to monitor progress also did not help matters.³⁴ In capsule form, I have presented the Millennium Development Goals and the Structural Adjustment Program, adducing some of the reasons why they failed to attain their projected goals of bringing about development in Nigeria and Africa at large. While the SAP and MDGs represent the effort of world bodies and international organizations to rid Africa of Poverty, the Ogoni Oil crisis is an example of a failed local initiative by Nigeria by way of its use of its resources for the attainment of the same goal. For reasons already explained in my introduction, I will now present the Ogoni, Nigeria Oil exploration crisis.

³⁴ Godwin Comrade Ameh, "Udoma Explains Why Nigeria did not Achieve Millennium Development Goals," *Daily Post*, June 23, 2017, 12.

1c) Contextualizing the Socio-economic Marginalization of the Ogoni People Within the Nigerian Polity

Africa in general is rife with competitive ethnicity. Nigeria is even more so. The origin of the situation can be traced back to the British amalgamation in 1914 of people of unrelated ethnic groups into one entity called Nigeria. The British historian Lord Malcolm Hailey characterized the newly created Nigeria as “the most artificial of the many administrative units created in the course of European occupation of Africa.”³⁵ This West Africa African country is the most populous one on the African continent. To the north it is bordered by Niger. To the south and east, it is bordered by Benin Republic and Cameroon respectively. English is the official language in Nigeria, while the other neighbouring countries are Francophone. The land measures about 924,000sq kilometres, and of this, 60 percent constitutes fertile agricultural farmland. Its climate, rivers, lakes, and long coastline are enormous for fishing, forestry, irrigation agriculture and generation of hydroelectric energy. Sunshine, crude oil and gas abound. Nigeria is unique in that Moslem and Christian populations are approximately equal.³⁶ There are approximately three hundred ethnic groups clustered into one nation-state when it gained independence from Britain in 1960. The three largest ethnic groups in Nigeria are the Yoruba, the Igbo and the Hausa-Fulani, who have completely dominated national politics in Nigeria.³⁷

Nigeria’s economy is oil based. Oil accounts for 96% of Nigeria’s export revenue (the United States buy 40% of this oil) and 80% of government revenue. Given the government’s heavy reliance on oil, it is understandable why Nigerian oil constitutes a

³⁵ Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 105.

³⁶ Iyorwuese Hagher, *After the Nightmare: Nigeria* (Lanham Maryland: University Press of America, INC. 2011), 17.

³⁷ Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 105.

precondition of and another word for militarization. Sadly, 85% of the oil revenues are amassed by 1% of the people, none of whom are from the micro-minorities who live, inhale and absorb the ecological devastation resulting from oil drilling. Shell, the largest foreign investor in the Nigerian oil economy, owns 47% of the oil industry, leaving Chevron and other companies to smaller shares. The rich deposit of oil is in the Niger River Delta, the largest in Africa. It is 240 kilometres long north to south, and it extends along a 320-kilometre stretch of the south coast of Nigeria. Apart from being one of the most densely populated parts of the world, it is one the world's great ecosystems and is referred to as the heart and lungs of Nigeria. Spread across 1,046 square kilometres of the north-eastern fringes of the Delta are about 128 villages of the Ogonis.³⁸

In approximation, the Ogoni are 0.4 percent of the population of Nigeria. They are one of the smallest ethnic groups in the Niger Delta, totalling about 500,000. Prior to the discovery of oil in 1958, the Ogoni people had farmed and fished.³⁹ In fact, Ogoni had several environmental treasures, including the third-largest mangrove forest in the world. It also had one of the largest surviving rainforests in Nigeria. When the discovery of oil occurred, the Ogoni did not have the political wherewithal and constitutional muscle to demand the wealth gushing out of their land. At Nigeria's independence the government, as an economic justice measure, promised to return 50 percent of the revenue accrued from any mining to the area of extraction. However, instead of 50 percent constitutionally due them, the Ogoni ended up with a paltry 1.5 percent of the wealth generated from the drilling for oil.⁴⁰

³⁸ Ken Wiwa, *In the Shadow of a Saint* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 61-62.

³⁹ Wiwa, *In the Shadow of a Saint*, 62.

⁴⁰ Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 106.

Worse still, six thousand kilometres of old pipelines were laid through Ogoni without the consultation with the community; unfortunately, since many of the pipes were old, they soon burst. Consequently, oil leaked into farmlands and into water tables. Shell has confirmed that the problem of oil spillage in Ogoni is one of the greatest in its international operations. Given the pollution of creeks and streams, Ogoni fishermen had to go farther into the sea to eke out a living. As a result of frequent blowouts and twenty-four-hour gas flaring, the land was wrecked and the air was polluted. Oil spills, gas flaring and deforestation had robbed the land of its environmental resources, and destroyed a once vibrant agro-fishing based economy. A witness described the aftermath of the oilfield explosions in these words, “we can no longer breath natural oxygen; rather we inhale lethal and ghastly gases. Our water can no longer be drunk unless one wants to test the effect of crude oil on the body.”⁴¹ Another eye-witness described the aftermath of oil spillage near the Ogoni village of Dere as,

An ocean of crude oil moving swiftly like a great river in flood, successfully swallowing up anything that comes its way: Cassava farms, yams, palms, streams, and animals for miles on end. There is no pipe borne water and yet the streams, the only source of drinking water, are coated with oil. You cannot collect bucket of rainwater for the roofs, trees and grass are all covered with oil.... Men and women forced by hunger have to dive deep in oil to uproot already rotten yams and cassava.⁴²

According to a recent World Bank release, environmental degradation in the Niger Delta has contributed significantly to global warming and the spike in respiratory ailments among the people.⁴³ The Ogoni, like most minority groups in Nigeria, had to contend with discrimination and chauvinism of the larger ethnic groups. While a few

⁴¹ Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 108.

⁴² Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 108.

⁴³ Wiwa, *In the Shadow of a Saint*, 62-63.

Ogoni occupied key government positions and a few others enjoyed management positions in some of the oil companies, 70% of Ogoni university graduate youths remained unemployed. In fact, many of them had to leave the country in search of greener pastures.⁴⁴ Since the discovery and exploration of oil in Ogoni, Shell, Chevron and successive Nigerian administrative governments have siphoned \$30 billion from the oil rich Ogoni. The Ogoni were pushed to the periphery and with nominal ownership of most of their densely populated oil-wealth land, are bereft of hospital, electricity, piped water, basic roads, housing, and schools.

Obviously, the wealth that coursed through Ogoni land was just nominal wealth, as historically it ushered in poverty, socio-economic injustice, and death. The economic activities of the Nigerian government, in conjunction with Shell and other oil companies in Ogoni land, smacked of a classical case of an extractive economy. Much like Israel in the 8th century, the Ogoni people needed an Amos, a prophet, a daring and courageous person who would rise to remind the Nigerian government, Shell and other multinational oil companies of the Ogoni's right to the common good and to justice. They needed someone who would help them in the demand for the riches due them from the deep oil wells that coursed through their land. They needed someone who would help them stem the tide of the alienating and dehumanizing forces that characterized the exploration of oil in their land. That person was Ken Saro-Wiwa!

⁴⁴ Wiwa, *In the Shadow of a Saint*, 63.

1d) Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP)

Ken Saro-Wiwa was born on 10 October 1941 in Bori, Ogoni, Rivers State, Nigeria. His father, Chief J. B. Wiwa, was a trained forest ranger, and a businessman. His mother, Widu, was a trader and a farmer. Upon the completion of his elementary and secondary education, Ken Saro-Wiwa was admitted to study English in the University of Ibadan, western Nigeria, in 1962. There he graduated with a B.A (Honours) in English in 1966. Ken Saro-Wiwa was fearless and courageous.⁴⁵ As a newspaper columnist he was revered by many whose voices he represented, and he was also a thorn in the flesh of the powers that be, especially the then Nigerian military dictators who were the target of his trenchant criticisms. Being a prolific writer, he had twenty-five books to his name. More still, he was the writer, producer and director of Nigeria's most popular sitcom. His successful business empire boasted of an extensive property portfolio and a retail business, which he started from nothing. Confirming his dynamism, he was variously described as a poet, a writer, an environmentalist, a businessman and a Nobel Prize nominee.⁴⁶

Saro-Wiwa founded the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) in 1990 in order to “mobilize the Ogoni people, empower them to protest against the devastation of their environment by Shell, and their denigration and dehumanization by Nigeria's military dictators.” Though he had moderate expectations for MOSOP, which he conceived as a non-violent movement and grass-root organization,

⁴⁵ Craig W. Mcluckie and Aubrey McPhail, eds., *Ken Saro-Wiwa, Writer and Political Activist* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2000), 234.

⁴⁶ Wiwa, *In the Shadow of a Saint*, 6.

three out of every four Ogoni people rose to support the objective of the movement in a protest march on 4th January, 1993. During that peaceful demonstration and protest, Ogoni declared Shell a persona non grata until it cleared its arrears of rent and cleaned up the environment. The Ogoni people, once thought to be docile and lazy, had found its voice under the leadership of Ken Saro-Wiwa.⁴⁷

Despite being a minority intellectual from a poor African country, Saro-Wiwa protested one of the signal developments of the 1980s and 1990s, namely “the consolidation and increasingly unregulated mobilization of transnational corporations. Five hundred corporations—Shell among them—now control 70 percent of global trade.”⁴⁸ Saro-Wiwa equated deregulation with corporate unruliness, which he believed had destroyed Ogoni land. A credit to his savvy sense of strategy, his political activism went beyond the bounds of Nigeria to a global status. In fact, he proclaimed loud and clear to the world that Ogoni, like other ethnic groups of third world countries that were burdened by structural adjustment programs, was still being vandalized by unregulated transnational firms and national soldiery.⁴⁹

While it was true that the European Community had increasing interest in attending to global environmental issues and ensuring that minority rights are respected, especially in the successor states to the Soviet Union and in Yugoslavia, to Saro-Wiwa’s regret such attention was not given to Nigeria.⁵⁰ Saro-Wiwa’s writing, *A Month and a Day* was an abortive effort to bring the attention of the international community to the plight of the Ogoni people. Greenpeace gave the excuse that their purview did not include

⁴⁷ Wiwa, *In the Shadow of a Saint*, 6.

⁴⁸ Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 109.

⁴⁹ Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 110.

⁵⁰ Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 110.

Africa. Amnesty International noted they could take up the Ogoni cause only on the condition that the then military government of Nigeria was killing or imprisoning people without a hearing. Saro Wiwa responded with discontentment,

The Ogoni country has been completely destroyed by the search for oil....Oil blow-outs, spillages, oil slick and general pollution accompany the search for oil....Oil companies have flared gas in Nigeria for the past thirty-three years causing acid rain.... What used to be the bread basket of the delta has now become totally infertile. All one sees and feels around is death. Environmental degradation has been a lethal weapon in the war against the indigenous Ogoni people.⁵¹

Saro-Wiwa's subsequent visit to Colorado afforded him an opportunity to interface with a group that had triumphed in saving a wilderness from corporate and governmental incursion. Here he learned that his cause would make better progress if he linked minority rights to environmental rights. Through the influence of Michael van Walt van der Praag, a young Dutch lawyer, long committed to the cause of the Tibetan people, Saro-Wiwa established relations with a group called the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organizations. This linked him with the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations, which he addressed in Geneva in 1992. Given this exposure, Saro-Wiwa learned that "in virtually every nation-state there are several 'Ogonis—despairing and disappearing people suffering the yoke of political marginalization, economic strangulation or environmental degradation, or a combination of these.'"⁵² But it was not Saro-Wiwa alone who learned this lesson: human rights and ecological groups that had hitherto found the Ogoni cause obscure became its most dogged international supporters. Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, Amnesty International, Human Rights

⁵¹ Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 111.

⁵² Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 111.

Watch/Africa, International Pen, Abroad, and the Body Shop all threw their weight behind the Ogoni cause. Saro-Wiwa later observed:

Understood that environmentalism needs to be reimagined through the experiences of the minorities who are barely visible on the global economic periphery, where transnationals in the extraction business—be it oil, mining, or timber—operate with maximum impunity. Environmental justice became for him an invaluable concept through which to focus the battle between subnational micro-ethnicities and transnational macroeconomic powers. As an Ogoni, suffering what he called Nigeria’s “monstrous domestic colonialism,” Saro-Wiwa was in no position to trust the nation-state as the unit of collective economic good.⁵³

Saro-Wiwa was in no position to trust Shell either. This was because Shell was in collusion with the Abacha led military dictatorship of Nigeria in its ruthlessness in silencing any dissenting voices against its operations for smooth economic activities and commerce. Moreover, this eradication of opposition in Ogoni land was done in a spirit of racism and ethnic hatred. For instance, Shell’s operations in Africa disregard offshore drilling standards that it upheld elsewhere. Notably 40 percent of all Shell’s oil spills worldwide have occurred in Nigeria. Lucrative rents that Shell statutorily paid when operating in Northern hemisphere, in the Shetlands for instance, are comparatively low to what it paid in the Niger Delta. The World Bank in 1995 noted that 76 percent of the natural gas that emanated from petroleum production in Nigeria was flared at temperatures of 14,000 degrees Celsius.

In Britain and in the United States, on the other hand, only 4.3 percent and 0.6 percent respectively was flared. The toxic practice in Nigeria foreshortened the life expectancy for the Niger Delta people. Children who had no access to electricity for study also had the additional trauma of not experiencing night, as their world was

⁵³ Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 112.

characterized by the blaze of uninterrupted flares. In the mid-90s when the flaring from Nigeria's oil fields witnessed an all time high pumping of 12 million tons of methane and 35 million tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere yearly, some people contended that this was single largest contributor worldwide to climate change. In spite of this, Shell bagged many accolades in Europe for environmentally sensitive action—"north-south greenwashing, par excellence."⁵⁴

Shell's prize as "a north-south green-washing par excellence" was a charade of a the greatest order, and if the international community was fooled by it, the people Ogoni, not least Ken Saro-Wiwa, could not. As a minority intellectual and leader committed to exposing how Shell and the Nigerian military government had reduced the Ogoni people to abject poverty through socio-economic injustice, Saro-Wiwa protested one of the signal developments of the 1980s and 1990s, namely "the consolidation and increasingly unregulated mobilization of transnational corporations. Five hundred corporations—Shell, among them—now control 70 percent of global trade."⁵⁵ Saro-Wiwa equated deregulation with corporate unruliness, which he believed had destroyed the Ogoni land. Saro-Wiwa's political activism went beyond the bounds of Nigeria to a global status. In fact he proclaimed to the world that the Ogoni people, like other ethnic groups in third world countries that are burdened by structural adjustment programs, were still vandalized by unregulated transnational firms and national soldiery.⁵⁶ He asserted his sense of responsibility to take action against this injustice and its consequent poverty when he noted:

⁵⁴ Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 113.

⁵⁵ Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 109.

⁵⁶ Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 110.

Keepers of the conscience of the people of the nation and custodians of its culture, we owe ourselves and the nation the responsibility not only to protect the rot and shame but also to immerse ourselves actively in stopping it and restoring sanity to the land.⁵⁷

As a keeper of the conscience of the people of the nation, Ken Saro-Wiwa was committed to ensuring that the ordinary citizen enjoyed the enablements and incentives that the Nigerian society owed the Ogonis and other minority groups. To this end, he fought against corruption when he gave up a political office for private business during the Nigerian Civil War on the grounds that he could no longer condone an increasingly corrupt and patronage-based system that privileged Nigeria's major ethnic groups. Moreover, he used his hard earned private wealth to bankroll the cause of creating a Nigerian consciousness devoid of fragmentation into tribal Ogoni, Eastern Christian, or Southern Nigerian cultural cleavages. In both life and death, he challenged what he considered as the injustice of a Nigerian system that rejected merit and minority right in favour of corruption, nepotism, and regionalism.⁵⁸

Furthermore, against the secession of the eastern part of Nigeria, he publicly and expeditiously stood with the Federal government during the Nigerian Civil War. During the war, especially in the throes of scarcity of food and its consequent starvation, Ken Saro-Wiwa controlled the food distribution program. He was credited with ensuring that the paltry supply of food into Bonny was equitably distributed and not hoarded and resold at inflated prices by the established business families in the city.⁵⁹ During his tireless

⁵⁷ Solomon Odiri Ejeke, "The Socio-Political Dimensions of Ken Saro-Wiwa's Activism" in *Before I am Hanged. Ken Saro Wiwa: Literature, Politics and Dissent*, ed. Onookome Okome (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc., 2000), 18.

⁵⁸ Roy Doron and Toyin Falola, *Ohio Short Histories of Africa: Ken Saro-Wiwa* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2016), 15.

⁵⁹ Doron and Falola, *Ohio Short Histories of Africa: Ken Saro-Wiwa*, 55.

stride in steering the cause of Ogoni, he was careful not to accept any government appointment of prominence. Maintaining a high level of integrity, he exuded the countenance of a man of quality whose life was guided by principles.⁶⁰ For those who love him, “Ken Saro Wiwa is still something of a phenomenon, a symbol of justice and fair-play. He was revered for his courageous words against socio-economic injustice, which he himself captured in the following words,”⁶¹

A year has gone by since I was rudely roused from my bed and clamped into detention. Sixty-five days in chains, weeks of starvation, months of mental torture and recently, the rides in a steaming, airless Black Maria to appear before a Kangaroo court, dubbed a special military tribunal, where the proceedings leave no doubt the judgment has been written in advance... The men who ordain and supervise this show of shame, this tragic charade, are frightened by the word, the power of ideas, the power of the pen; by the demands of social justice and the rights of man. Nor do they have a sense of history. They are so scared of the power of the word that they do not read. And that is their funeral.⁶²

Even beyond Ogoni, Saro Wiwa extended his solidarity to the international stage in his discovery that “in virtually every nation-state there are several ‘Ogonis’—despairing and disappearing peoples suffering the yoke of political marginalization, economic strangulation or environmental degradation, or a combination of these.”⁶³ Beyond his expectation, this solidarity extended to “the remarkable coalition of international interests that he had begun to forge while alive, an alliance that brought

⁶⁰ Ojo-Ade, *Ken Saro-Wiwa: a bio-critical study* (Brooklyn, NY: African Legacy Press, Inc., 1999), 270-271.

⁶¹ Onookome Okome, ed., *Before I am Hanged, Ken Saro-Wiwa: Literature, Politics and Dissent*. (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc.: 2000), xii.

⁶² Wiwa, *In the Shadow of a Saint*, 111.

⁶³ Bob Nixon, “Pipe Dreams: Ken Saro-Wiwa, environmental justice, and micro-minority rights, *Black Renaissance*,” New York Vol. 1, Iss. 1, (Oct. 31, 1996), 39.

together environmentalists, minority rights advocates, anti-racists, opponents of corporate deregulation, and defenders of freedom of speech.”⁶⁴

This international alliance extended to West New Guinea and the Orient. It adds to the increasing inequity between subnational minorities and transnationals that have experienced improved mobility and decreasing controls since neoliberalism rose to prominence in the 1980s. Third-world governments have been culprits in the regional pillaging. They have been ineffectual in controlling the transnationals that are more powerful than the states themselves. Consequently, we have a situation of a “reversion to concessionary economics in which forested or mineral-rich areas are sold for a song.”⁶⁵ It therefore makes sense that Ken Saro-Wiwa, given his sensitivity to injustice, would describe this as neocolonialism. It was in this context that Saro-Wiwa’s fight against the wrecking of micro-minorities through the pillaging of their environment became a precursor to a much larger dissatisfaction. In fact for many people in the Ogoni, Nigeria and beyond,

the rumblings and travails of the Ogoni people is a practical manifestation of the socio-political dimensions of Ken Saro-Wiwa’s socio-political activism. Through his effort Ogoni people became the best organized and articulated minority group pressing for their environmental, social, economic and political rights, thus becoming the foremost crusaders in the politics of the rights of minority groups in Nigeria and perhaps in all of Africa.⁶⁶

The ravaging of the Ogoni and other lands across Africa is more akin to a late 19th century colonial unscrupulous business adventure than 21st century international economics, especially when they can siphon \$30 billion worth of oil, and what the locals

⁶⁴ Nixon, “Pipe Dreams: Ken Saro-Wiwa, environmental justice, and micro-minority rights,” 39.

⁶⁵ Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 119.

⁶⁶ Ejeke, *Before I am Hanged*, 22.

get in return is “disease, dispossession, military occupation, massacres, and an end to self-sustaining fishing and agriculture.”⁶⁷ Bereft of any enablements or incentives and restricted by a crippling extractive economy, the masses of the people are reduced to abject poverty in the midst of plenty. Hence, Gutierrez’s words ring true—and I am sure Saro-Wiwa could not have agreed with him more, “...poverty is not a fate; poverty is not according to the will of God. Poverty is a result of human fault... poverty is a consequence of social injustice”⁶⁸ It is even more painful that the local chiefs of the oil rich areas, for a little as a cut of a “thousand sterling, twelve bottles of cognac, and twelve bottles of gin”⁶⁹ would conspire in this socially constructed poverty, this social injustice by allowing this unlimited pillaging of the Niger Delta village of Sangama among others. Other African countries, apart from Nigeria, have witnessed this pillaging, these restrictions on the lives of many Africans.

For instance, it is over a century since Conrad penned his fictional novel *Heart of Darkness* that captured the unlimited plundering he witnessed in Congo. He titled the worse of this pillaging by foreign explorers the Eldorado Expedition. According to him, they were, “sordid buccaneers: reckless without hardihood...To tear treasures out of the bowels of the land was their desire, with no more moral purpose at the back of it than there is in burglars breaking into a safe.”⁷⁰ This is the sad standard of exploring that is in vogue in contemporary Africa and much of the global South today. This has contributed to the impoverishment of the African continent. The last two decades have witnessed this social injustice, typified in the extractive economy in Ogoni land, in the increased

⁶⁷ Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 119.

⁶⁸ Gutierrez, “Sermon on the Healing of the Man Born Blind,” 158-160, 159.

⁶⁹ Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 120.

⁷⁰ Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 120.

extraction of oil and timber from some of the least stable African counties such as Liberia, Gabon, Congo, Central African Republic, Mali, Niger, Chad, Sierra Leone, Mauritania, and Angola.⁷¹ Some people have called this a repartitioning of Africa into what the French colonialists used to call “*l’Afrique utile and l’Afrique inutile*: this time “capital ‘hops’ over ‘unusable Africa,’ alighting only in mineral-rich enclaves that are starkly disconnected from their national societies.”⁷² It is to situations such as this, a clear case of extractive economy and a brutal and sinful social structure, especially in relation to Nigeria, that Ken Saro-Wiwa protested:

I am a man of peace, of ideas. Appalled by the denigrating poverty of my people who live on a richly-endowed land, distressed by their political marginalization and economic strangulation, angered by the devastation of their land, their ultimate heritage, anxious to preserve their right to life and to decent living, and determined to usher to this country as a whole a fair and just democratic system which protects everyone and every ethnic group and gives us all a valid claim to human civilization; I have devoted all my intellectual and material resource, my very life, to a cause in which I have total belief and from which I can not be blackmailed or intimidated. I have no doubt at all about the ultimate success of my cause, no matter the trials and tribulations which I and those who believe with me may encounter on our journey. Neither imprisonment nor death can stop our ultimate victory.⁷³

Unfortunately, Ken Saro-Wiwa’s activism for the people of Ogoni, for Nigeria and the marginalized of the world was cut short by General Abacha’s dreadful Mobile Police force, popularly called the “Kill and Go mob,” without which Shell’s racial double standard would not have been possible in the Niger Delta. General Abacha’s “Kill and Go mob” crushed a peaceful protest by the Ogoni and their delta sympathizers. In

⁷¹ Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 120.

⁷² Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 121.

⁷³ Amen Ahunuwangho, “The Gift of Voice: Ken Saro Wiwa’s Prisoners of Jebs as A Political Discourse” in *Before I am Hanged. Ken Saro-Wiwa: Literature, Politics and Dissent*, ed. Onookome Okome (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc.: 2000), 73.

reaction to the January 1993 anti-Shell rally that commandeered 300,000 Ogonis, the police burned twenty-seven villages, killed two thousand Ogonis and displaced 80,000 people. This debacle over oil territory left the Ogoni in the words of Rob Nixon flattened “like grass in the fight of the elephants.”⁷⁴

On May 21, 1994, four chiefs and one of the founding members of MOSOP were brutally killed in the course of a riot in Ogoni. That night Saro-Wiwa was taken in police custody from his home in Port Harcourt, and the military administrator of the state blamed the killings on MOSOP. MOSOP’s activists in their hundreds were hounded and locked up. Many others fled into exile. Ken Saro-Wiwa was incarcerated without charge for nine months. He was chained, regularly tortured and was prevented from seeing his family, his doctor and his lawyer. Finally he was arraigned before a military tribunal and was accused of fermenting the youth wing of MOSOP to kill four chiefs, including his brother-in-law. On October 31, 1995 Chief Justice Ibrahim Auta sentenced Saro-Wiwa and eight other men to death. Ten days later they were hanged.⁷⁵

Before his death, as Saro-Wiwa looked back on his activism, he seemed, like his tribunal, to have divined, “I will tell you this, I may be dead, but my ideas will surely not die.”⁷⁶ The Gospel modulations to Saro-Wiwa’s prophecy are congruent with the Passion play General Sani Abacha, the then military president of Nigeria, unwittingly created. Saro-Wiwa, far from being a messiah, was a man of courage who positioned himself outside the throes of corruption. However, he could also be “testy, inflexible, self-

⁷⁴ Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 113.

⁷⁵ Wiwa, *In the Shadow of a Saint*, 6-7.

⁷⁶ Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 121.

aggrandizing, and subject to overweening ambition.”⁷⁷ In hanging him, the junta turned this once nationally unknown activist into a martyr. This gave his cause international recognition, and as is the case with martyrs, made his cause simpler in his favour. The Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti was right in his observation, “Living people grow old but martyrs grow younger.”⁷⁸ Saro-Wiwa instantly metamorphosed into someone larger and longer than life—immortalized in the lives and struggle of those who took over the Ogoni cause after his death, especially his son Saro-Wiwa Jr., through whose effort the struggle assumed a more intense international stage.

Committed to the realization of environmental justice, Saro-Wiwa Jr. took this cause to the international human rights circle as a writer and a speaker, but more importantly, as a plaintiff in a fourteen-year-long litigation against Shell for aiding and abetting his father’s execution and for employing soldiers who had committed human rights abuses in Ogoni land. On June 9, 2009, some days before trial was to commence in New York, Shell settled out of court, committing to pay \$15.5 million into a trust fund for the Ogoni people. The plaintiffs had filed under the Alien Tort Claims Act of 1789, and the Supreme Court had ruled in 2004 that it could be used to try in American courts foreigners charged of crimes against humanity abroad.

This out of court settlement by Shell, was victory at last for Saro-Wiwa Jr., and how he would have been even more pleased were his father alive to see that day. Ken Saro-Wiwa’s message, however, lives on. From the above, it clear that a single thread runs through SAP, MDGs and the Ogoni oil crisis, namely the failing of a free market economy with its purported “trickle down effect” of wealth. It is within the purview of

⁷⁷ Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 121.

⁷⁸ Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 121.

this thesis to evaluate all three of them in the light of Critical Realist theory in the quest for a theory of development that would better serve Nigeria, Africa and other developing nations. Critical Realism provides this thesis the structural framework with which to evaluate all of the three developmental initiatives seen thus far.

2) Understanding Critical Realism and Development

2a) Critical Realism

Critical Realism sees social structures as “systems of human relation among social positions.”⁷⁹ Derived from a more general critical realist understanding of science, critical realism covers both the natural and the social sciences. The late Roy Bhaskar, the main proponent of Critical Realism, is known to have attempted to dismantle the 250 years history of empiricism since David Hume. Contrary to many empiricist philosophers who argue that we can only rely on the data that we can perceive with our five senses, Bhaskar holds that there are realities that are ontologically real, and yet cannot be perceived by our five senses. Mills, differing from Bhaskar and towing the empiricist position, holds that the cause of an occurrence is, “the antecedent, or the concurrence of antecedents, on which it is invariably and unconditionally consequent.”⁸⁰ So if occurrence “B” inevitably and unconditionally follows occurrence “A,” the latter is said to be the cause of the former. This captures the notion of causality in empiricism.

To explain this causality scientifically, the physicist in the laboratory tries to extricate experiences from external influences to be able to determine the scientific “laws” that guide those occurrences. “Laws” testify to those inevitable and unconditional occurrences. Bhaskar captures this notion in these words, “a causal law is analyzed in

⁷⁹ Finn, “What is a Sinful Social Structure?” 147.

⁸⁰ Finn, “What is a Sinful Social Structure?” 148.

empiricist ontology as a constant conjunction of events perceived.”⁸¹ A typical example of this is the “law of gravity.” Consequently, the conception of scientific law is understood as causal “forces’ in action; though a very tiny type of causal force—it yet holds weight as a statement about a succession of phenomena. However, a book that is allowed to drop from one’s hand hits the floor “because of the law of gravity,” as there is no fundamental explanation as to the “how” or “why” empiricists think we are able to have access to this.⁸²

Bhaskar differs with the empiricists on this understanding of causality. He argues instead that scientists in the lab grandly make claims as to how things actually operate “out there” in the existential world, and do not (true to their self-understanding of their role) simply describe an unalterable series of events. Keeping in mind that scientists in the lab strive to extricate outside influences, Bhaskar asks how one could assume that unchanging patterns found in such a closed lab would be effective in the “open” system of the existential world, where unchanging series of events hardly ever occur.⁸³ According to critical realists, what empiricists term “laws” are only human description of the interplay between real objects in the world. For instance, in their view the book does not hit the ground because of the law of gravity.

Rather it does so given the relation of the book and the earth and the force of gravity occasioned by the relation. For the realists, the law of gravity “is simply the scientist’s summary of the ontologically real causal relationship between the earth and the book.”⁸⁴ According to Bhaskar, empiricists commit “the epistemic fallacy,”⁸⁵ which

⁸¹ Finn, “What is a Sinful Social Structure?” 148.

⁸² Finn, “What is a Sinful Social Structure?” 148.

⁸³ Finn, “What is a Sinful Social Structure?” 148.

⁸⁴ Finn, “What is a Sinful Social Structure?” 148.

entails reducing ontologically real relations in the physical world to just issues of human knowledge. The ontologically real relation between earth and book is interpreted by empiricist as simply a function of our knowledge of its consequences—an event following another. Although this relation between the book and earth is beyond the reach of our senses, it is nonetheless real—a “transfactual,” which is a not-sense perceptible thing subject to scientific study and conclusions.⁸⁶ Furthermore, while “transfactual” refers to things that we cannot observe, it has nothing to do with mysticism. For critical realists the main task of all science starts with our empirical understanding of the existential realities we perceive in the world—especially those experiments carefully performed by scientists in the lab.

Another contribution of critical realist is the notion of “emergence.” According to them, “emergence” occurs when two or more lower level elements combine with two or more higher levels that have different characteristics. For example, water is made up of hydrogen and oxygen. When they combine, they constitute water. While water has the capacity to extinguish fire, hydrogen and oxygen have the capacity to fuel it. The capacity of water to extinguish fire is called an “emergent property.” Water has a property that is not possessed by any of the parts that constitute it individually. Moreover, it would not be possessed by the full set of parts devoid of the structuring set of relations between them, and the sets of parts that constitute water cannot possess water without the individual parts. This notion of emergence occurs in all facets of human existence—expressed in sensible, perceptible and transfactual realities.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Finn, “What is a Sinful Social Structure?” 148.

⁸⁶ Finn, “What is a Sinful Social Structure?” 149.

⁸⁷ Finn, “What is a Sinful Social Structure?” 150.

Given this notion of emergent realities that exist at a new “higher” level than the elements that come together to constitute them, critical realists reject reductionism. Reductionism, largely held by empiricists, holds that, “all realities can be explained, at least in principle, by the functioning of their constituent parts, and that the causal power of the higher-level entity itself becomes redundant to the explanation.”⁸⁸ Similarly, Methodological individualists in the social sciences, following this kind of elimination by reductionism, see only persons and groups of persons; thus, eliminating social structures as causes in the social world. Bhaskar insists that social structures arise from the actions of individuals and need the action of individuals for their sustained existence. However, just as structures are independent of individuals so are their causal effects in the lives of those individuals—often in contention with the aims of those who intentionally created the structures in the first instance. The experience of those who initiated a committee that subsequently developed foreign traits that they had to reject serves as an example here.⁸⁹

Social structures have ontological reality and they exist at a level “higher” than that of an individual person or group of persons. This, however, precludes any claim to greater explanatory importance or moral significance. What is a social structure? Porpora, representing the views of critical realists, defines social structure as, “systems of human relations among social positions.”⁹⁰ A social structure issues from the interplay between persons—often outliving human lifetime and some exemplifying greater social intricacy than others. But the relations between social positions are the basic building blocks of each structure. These relations are “preexisting” in that they predate the individuals who take those positions, and they are neither created nor chosen by those contemporary

⁸⁸ Finn, “What is a Sinful Social Structure?” 150.

⁸⁹ Finn, “What is a Sinful Social Structure?” 150.

⁹⁰ Finn, “What is a Sinful Social Structure?” 151.

persons who inherit them. A fairly uncontroversial scenario is the case of infants who are born to parents, born into family rules, traditions, and even schools with the legal obligations associated with them, and not least, a relationship of subordination between students and teachers. Similarly, a teacher who enters the profession enters the teaching world at a particular time when his office as a teacher calls for, a specific way of dealing with “school administrators, a school board or local authority, officially imposed definitions of the curriculum and accreditation, and so on.”⁹¹ The new teacher neither made nor chose the learning and teaching situation and might even view the situation with anything from approval to downright rejection. Whatever the case may be, the new teacher ought not blame older colleagues for the current existential situation, as those colleagues or members of the organization, might themselves had wanted things to be different but for the constraints of their time—ranging from possibly not being part of the decision making body to the chance that they might have been ideologically misguided concerning the nature and effect of changes introduced. Whatever the case might have been, they too performed their own agency within an earlier situation in a different way. However one regresses historically, there can never be a return to a time of total unstructured context of action—there was never a time that individuals constituted the sole cause of or were solely accountable for their own social situation.⁹²

Social structures, through the restrictions, enablement and incentives that they present to individuals who work within them, have causal effect on the lives of those persons. They actualize this by molding the situations that people find themselves in as

⁹¹ Margaret S. Archer, “Structural Conditioning and Personal Reflexivity: Source of Market Complexity, Critique, and Change” in *Distant Markets, Distant Harms*, ed. Daniel Finn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 29.

⁹² Archer, “Structural Conditioning and Personal Reflexivity,” 29.

exemplified above in the case of a new teacher. Such a situation poses restraints, for instance, barring the teacher from teaching whatever one chooses—but the situation could be one of motivation that accords some people the vested interest of keeping things as they are, or it could involve the removal of the compulsory teaching of religion or “creationism” introduced into the curriculum. The maintenance or change of any organizational traits is a function of what people do—the manner in which they ally or conflict and their ability to mobilize people in advocating or denouncing change. Andrew Sayer is on point with his observation:

One the most pervasive illusions of everyday thinking derives from the attribution of the properties of the position, be they good or bad, to the individual or institution occupying it. Whatever effects result, it is assumed that particular people must be responsible; there is little appreciation that the structure of social relations, together with their associated resources, constraints, or rules, may determine what happens, even though these structures only exist where people reproduce them.⁹³

The effect of this mistake is glaring when people look for guilty parties by way of the “personalization” of banking fraud or corporate misdemeanor (someone’s head must roll) irrespective of the fact that this only serves to maintain “business as usual.”⁹⁴ There is the mistake of assuming that the greed of capitalism is simply a function of the greediness of capitalists.

Hence, many believe that if business executives become more virtuous persons, the market would automatically be reformed. What we need to understand is that the market as a social structure pre-determines the actions of those marketers, restricting them to proximate considerations; thereby, mitigating their potential concern for distant others. All structural influences are channeled to people via the way the structures

⁹³ Archer, “Structural Conditioning and Personal Reflexivity,” 29-30.

⁹⁴ Archer, “Structural Conditioning and Personal Reflexivity,” 30.

condition the existential situation of the people and are mediated by how they deal with the situation. At any given moment, structures are the function of past social interaction, in addition to past results of such interactions—and the emergent structures may be unwitting, undesired or even unacknowledged.

They are conditioned on past action, and cannot be reduced solely to current activity. As it already exists when new participants go into the market, global capitalism in a crucial way conditions the socio-economic milieu inhabited. Apart from restricting, enabling, and providing incentives, social structure conditions what is produced and the way it is distributed. It shapes the character of the available employments, the gains, harms and business practices connected with them.⁹⁵ Structures have causal effects in the lives of people by “endowing them with vested interests, by attaching opportunity costs to following or rejecting those interests, and by associating a situational logic of action to what agents do in the context. This clarifies why harm done to distant others tends to be of little concern in global capitalism.”⁹⁶ What does it mean to endow one with vested interest and what is vested interest?

To characterize an interest as “vested” is to imply that it is constitutive element to occupying a particular position vis-à-vis others. As social structures have to do with relations among preexisting social positions or offices, those who hold positions within the various social structures are said to have vested interest. Such position within an economic system, for instance, could be occupational or that of one termed “stakeholder.”⁹⁷ Given that vested interests result from scarcity—situation of unequal distribution—the occupation of the position in the current market is not equally available

⁹⁵ Archer, “Structural Conditioning and Personal Reflexivity,” 30.

⁹⁶ Archer, “Structural Conditioning and Personal Reflexivity,” 30.

⁹⁷ Archer, “Structural Conditioning and Personal Reflexivity,” 31.

to all. It is characteristic of structure to divide people into two categories, namely those with vested interests, who maintain the status-quo and those who try to change it. Such interests are objective and distinguishable from an agent's subjectivity or personal view. A vested interest that ensures that an institution is competitive is not the same as a subjective feeling of competitiveness. One's vested interest may or may not contradict one's real interests—an example is the condition necessary for demanding and developing his or her capacities.⁹⁸

Agents' vested interests are interests of the institution they represent. They are objective features that precondition to general directions of action, aimed at either maintaining the incentives tied to their positions or eradicating related disadvantages. Porpora articulated this very well,

Among the causal powers that are deposited in social positions are interests. Interests are built into a social position by the relationship of that position to other positions in the system.... [Thus], capitalists have an interest in maximizing profit because they are in a competitive, zero-sum relationship with all others occupying the position of capitalist....In other words, actors are motivated to act in their interests, which are a function of their social position. Again, this doesn't mean that actors always with necessity act in their interests, but if they don't they are likely to suffer. A capitalist who shows no concern to maximize profits is liable to cease being a capitalist.⁹⁹

The promotion of vested interests either by maintaining the status-quo or by changing it results in the negation or neglect of responsibility of effect on distant others. This issues simply from the closeness of the vested interest itself—"it is, after all, the structurally rooted interest of the self—and it works in the same way whether that interest

⁹⁸ Archer, "Structural Conditioning and Personal Reflexivity," 31.

⁹⁹ Archer, "Structural Conditioning and Personal Reflexivity," 31.

is to defend or to transform structures based on their interests.”¹⁰⁰ Certainly, a social structure is not a conscious agent. The causal effect arises given the conscious beings that make decisions in relation to the restrictions, enablements, and incentives. And these decisions might be very different if these persons were acting in an alternative situation of restrictions, enablements, or incentives. Organization, given its particularity as a type of social structure, has a collective agency. This is seen, for example, when Microsoft publicizes its decision to hire three hundred more employees. However, the agency takes place via the persons in charge of the institution.¹⁰¹

Daniel Finn also touches on the magisterial teaching on sinful structures. And relying on critical realist sociology for an analysis of structure, Finn’s holds that structures have causal consequences through the free choice of the persons within them. In addition, he compares social structures to original sin, and explains that social structures—like original sin—can be sinful in an analogous sense. He uses the inclusive and extractive economic institutions to explain how a social structure can be sinful. The next focus of this paper will be the final point of his article. How did Finn describe inclusive and extractive economics? He describes an inclusive economy as one that promotes a healthy participation of all those who operate within the economic system. This economy provides a level playing field for everyone in the system.

Instead of promoting the interests of a few against the interests of others, this economic system promotes the good of all. He adds that inclusive economies, “allow and encourage participation by the great mass of people in economic activities that make best use of their talents and skill and that enable individuals to make choices they wish. To be

¹⁰⁰ Archer, “Structural Conditioning and Personal Reflexivity,” 32.

¹⁰¹ Finn, “What is a Sinful Social Structure?” 151-152.

inclusive, an economic institution must feature secure private property, and an unbiased system of law...”¹⁰² In contrast, an extractive economy works for the good of a few, and it is “designed to extract income and wealth from one subset of society to benefit a different subset.”¹⁰³ In doing so the rights and dignity of those who do not benefit from the system are violated. This process often leaves those mistreated unable to provide education, healthcare or even food for their families. What significance does the notion of Critical Realism hold for this paper?

First, it establishes the point that reality is not just empirical; rather, it also entails things that affect human life and yet are beyond the reach of the five human senses. Here, social structures serve as classic examples. Since social structures affect the lives of individuals who operate within them through their enablements, restrictions, or incentives, they can make or mar the development of the lives of those who operate within them. Finn’s examples of inclusive and extractive economies are on point. Having been able to establish that social structures, though intangible, are yet real and can bring about development in the lives of individuals or mar them, we will now examine how new neo-liberal structures constrained SAP, MDGs and the Ogoni Oil exploration in Nigeria.

¹⁰² Finn, “What is a Sinful Social Structure?” 159.

¹⁰³ Finn, “What is a Sinful Social Structure?” 159.

3) A Critical Realist Reappraisal of SAP and MDGs in Nigeria and Africa at Large

Using the lens of the Critical Realist in analyzing Structural Adjustment Program and Millennium development goals, and the Ogoni oil crisis, it becomes clear that the MDGs, as did SAP, failed because they were based on the structure of Neoliberalism. Neoliberalism, in its avowal of “absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculations”¹⁰⁴ and in its top down approach to development in Nigeria, Africa and other developing nations, gave centrality to the ideology of the free market instead of the person, not least the common good. As an extractive economy, following Finn’s exposition as explained above, it ended up promoting the good of a few people, leaving the majority of Africans to wallow in utter poverty.

Moreover, that policy was rather too Western. It proved detrimental to emerging countries participating in their own development. Chris Brain and others argued that MDGs failed given its numerical targets, top-down bureaucracy and unreliable statistics. Moreover, they problematized its exclusiveness as being overwhelmingly Western, as only 22% of the world’s national parliaments officially deliberated on the MDGs. There was very little engagement of developing countries and civil society constituencies in the developmental process of the MDGs. Some argue that it was destined to fail as its framework was doctrinaire and constituted to suit the interests of corporations and rich states whose development formulae was “Neoliberal globalization + MDGs.”¹⁰⁵

The Adjustment Program, Millennium Development Goals, and the exploration of oil in Ogoni land failed because they were based on the structure of neoliberalism and its

¹⁰⁴ Andrea Tornielli and Giacomo Galeazzi, *This Economy Kills. Pope Francis on Capitalism and Social Justice* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2015), 42.

¹⁰⁵ Fakuda-Parr S. “Reducing inequality—The missing MDGs: A Content Review of PRSPs & Bilateral Donor Policy Statements,” *Ids Bulletin—Institute of Development Studies*. 2014; 41 (1): 26-35. Doi:10.1111/j.1759-5436.2010.00100x[Google Scholar] [Ref list].

reliance on the “trickle down effect” of wealth. The “trickle down effect” economic theory holds that economic growth, stimulated by a free market, will invariably result in greater justice and inclusiveness in the world.¹⁰⁶ This theory was founded on the optimistic views of the economic growth of the 1950s and 1960s and it projected that the poorest members of society would reap the benefits from economic growth due to market forces, included among the anticipated benefits were a greater labor demand and an increase in productivity and wages. It further held that economic growth moves from the zenith of the social pyramid down—devoid of any state mediation or interference—to the benefit of a more equitable income distribution.

Pope Francis insisted that, “We can no longer trust in the unseen forces and the invisible hand of the market. Growth in justice requires more than economic growth, while presupposing such growth: it requires decisions, programs, mechanisms, and processes specifically geared to a better distribution of income, the creation of sources of employment and an integral promotion of the poor which goes beyond a simple welfare mentality.”¹⁰⁷ As an extractive economy, following Finn’s exposition explained previously, it ended up promoting the good of a few people, while leaving the majority of the people in poverty.

Again the Ogoni crisis left no one in doubt that Shell and other oil companies in collaboration with the Nigerian military government were all for personal profiteering to the detriment of the Ogonis. Committed to creating more wealth for their organization, the CEOs of Shell, other multinational oil companies operating in Ogoni land and the leadership of the Abacha led military government, as were the CEOs of the World Bank,

¹⁰⁶ Tornielli and Galeazzi, *This Economy Kills*, 36.

¹⁰⁷ Tornielli and Galeazzi, *This Economy Kills*, 43.

were driven by the thirst for more power, more profit. This “thirst for power and possession,” had no limit, as it ravaged anything that obstructed increased profit. The people and the environment were endangered by the interests of a deified market—neoliberalism, in its promotion of “absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculations, which became the only rule. Here, profit, instead of serving the person, becomes a ruler of life. Obviously, the CEOs cannot take all the blame for the constraints on the lives of the Ogonis, as they themselves are part of a social structure. Even if their vested interest is anti-establishment, they still have to contend with the vested interest of the neoliberalism machine, which propels to act in favor of the establishment or loose its power within the social structure.

While the social structure of free-market liberalism remains invisible, as captured by the critical realist theory above, its sinful effects in the lives of the people remained glaring in their apparent socio-economic strangulation and dehumanization. The exclusion of the Ogonis from the economic activities of their own land—a blatant extractive economy—left them bereft of possibilities, lacking any means of hope and denied of the experience of taking responsibility for their own future and development. To borrow Pope Francis’s words, this smacked not only of the experience of being “exploited,” but also of being “outcasts,” the “leftovers.”¹⁰⁸

It is the search for a better model of development for Nigeria, Africa in general and other developing countries, especially given the failures of the above initiatives, which has led to the prioritization of a model of development that has a structure that is

¹⁰⁸ Tornielli and Galeazzi, *This Economy Kills*, 35.

incentivized, enabling and inclusive. This is captured in the comment of Casmir Ani and colleagues, who advocate for developing countries, not least Nigeria, a model of development that is:

a home-grown, bottom up and people oriented cultural development framework that will become an authentic reflection of African people's past needs, problems and aspiration...It is only when development whether spiritual, moral, economic or political is beautifully integrated in the cultural values of a given people that it makes sense, is appropriated and considered lasting because it has become part and parcel of a given society. It is obvious why excluding culture leads to ignoring people in development in Africa. Culture is a way of life of the people—the way they engage themselves with the simplicity and complexity of their socio-economic spiritual and technological existence. Ignoring people or marginalizing people from participating in development has been one of the barriers of the banes of underdevelopment in Africa.¹⁰⁹

This alternative model of development is also located in Pope Francis' Pastoral Conversion. In the search for a model of development for underdeveloped countries, Pastoral Conversion, part of the Theology of People, argues that centrality should be given to person(s) embedded in culture, in relationship with neighbour and with God as opposed to the "the ideology" of free market liberalism. Pastoral Conversion employs a bottom-up approach to development and it also promotes an inclusive economy. It argues for a development that integrates the cultural values of a given people, as that is when development is appropriated and considered lasting because it has become part and parcel of a given society. In sum, it supports an economic development model that is bottom-up, enabling, incentive-driven, person, culture and God centred.

In the following pages, I will explain how the pastoral conversion espouses these principles by explaining the Theology of People and Pope Francis's rejection of the

¹⁰⁹ Ani Casimir, Emma Omeh, Chinedu C. Ike, "Poverty and Governance—A Critical Appraisal of a Philosophy and Practice of Development in Africa," *Scientific Research: An Academic Publisher*, OJPS, Vol. 4 N0. 3, July, 2014, 176.

ideology of free market, which places emphasis on the market as opposed to the person. This is a rejection of a top-down approach in preference for a bottom-up approach to development. Secondly, I will touch on how his bottom-up approach warrants prioritizing persons by showing concern for them and their individuality. In conformity with the critical realist theory, people are enabled to partake in their own development.

Thirdly, I will explain how Pastoral Conversion promotes not just the individual person but also those embedded in culture and in relationship with others. This approach negates that of neoliberalism, which restricts individuals from participating in the effort toward their development within their own culture. These incentives provide individuals the opportunity to participate in their own development, within their culture by bringing their time, energy, talents, and treasures to bear on the process. Finally, I will explain how the people in their individuality within their culture can be involved in their own development as a people of faith, a people who have an ethos. This ethos has a religious soul or heart, which depends on hope even in the face of material deprivation. I will begin with the first point, namely explaining the Theology of People as a springboard to explaining Pastoral Conversion by which Pope Francis presents an alternative model of development by denouncing neoliberalism with its purported “trickle down effect” of wealth.

3b) Understanding Pope Francis’s Theology of People and its Notion of Pastoral Conversion as an Alternative Model of Development

i) Understanding the Evolvement of the Theology of People

1966 witnessed the Argentine Bishops Pastoral Commission, known as COEPAL. Its goal was to interiorize the spirit of Vatican II and to recommend a national pastoral

plan. Constituting the membership of COEPAL were Bishop Enrique Angelelli, Vicente Zazpe, and Manuel Marengo. Lucio Gera and the Jesuit Alberto Sily served as experts for the commission, later co-opted into CELAM II in Medellin. It was in Argentina that the “theology of people” was born, and its goal was to develop a communal dimension of being Church within a collegial structure. The Medellin document captured the bishops’ dream of a Church that would adopt to the council’s spirit, especially with regard to the challenges advanced by *Gaudium et Spes* for contextualizing the Church in the modern world. Rather than promoting a sense of institutional belonging in its action, it was to prioritize human relations in terms of salvation history. According to the bishops at the 1968 meeting in Medellin, this preference for human relations, contrary to the emphasis on the market by neo-liberalism, was inspired by the just “aspiration to liberation and growth in humanity”¹¹⁰ shared by all human beings.

In the spirit of Aggiornamento, the Argentine bishops were determined to reorient the rules controlling Church structures. Their desire for the Church was one that had a: “clearer awareness of itself, reform, dialogue with other Christian brothers and sisters, and openness to the world of today—the four aims of the council. The council had characterized its time and context as a “new age in human history,” one in need of pastoral action and theological reflection that would respond to it. This new age was characterized by “the birth of a new humanism, where people are defined, first of all, by their responsibility to their brothers and sisters and to history.... and to work with everyone in building a more human world.”¹¹¹ Here religion is understood as a catalyst

¹¹⁰ Rafael Luciani, *Pope Francis and the Theology of People* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2017), 2.

¹¹¹ Luciani, *Pope Francis*, 3.

for social commitment. This was to be done in the context where salvation and activism for historical transformation are interlaced. The Argentine bishops in 1966 were unequivocal on the understanding of their commitment:

We regret the pernicious influence of those who accuse religion of being opposed to human liberation, and we reject the charge that hope in another life lessens interest in temporal tasks. On the contrary, we claim that recognizing God increases in us Christians a sense of human dignity.¹¹²

To realize this social commitment, there was a need to adopt and effectuate the ecclesiology of the people of God advanced by *Lumen Gentium* (LG). The people of God transcend any people; yet, it is called to exist in all peoples of the earth. *Lumen Gentium* makes it clear that our Christian life calls us to daily interpersonal relationships. Just as one people of God is present in all people of the earth, so is the life of an individual Christian a part of the whole Christian body. Gera captures this reception of Vatican II in Argentina in the following words,

The Church takes place as intercommunion between human beings—not only as relationship of humans with God, but as interrelationship of human beings among themselves. The relationship with the other is not simply something added to a Church already constituted by a relationship with God. The relationship with the other is also constitutive of the Church, that is, it is set within the very essence of being Church.¹¹³

Pope Francis, in continuity with *Lumen Gentium*, expressed this ecclesiological insight as an inclusive, relational soteriology. He holds that “being Church is being people of God,” and that we are saved in relationship as opposed to being saved alone.¹¹⁴ Lucio Gera, in the course of reflection and discussion, accorded this way of doing Latin American

¹¹² Luciani, *Pope Francis*, 3.

¹¹³ Luciani, *Pope Francis*, 4.

¹¹⁴ Luciani, *Pope Francis*, 4-5.

theology—the Theology of People—its distinctive profile. What was Gera’s contribution to the distinctiveness of this theology?

ii) Theology of the People as Struggle for Social Justice in the context of the Spirit of the People and the Sign of the Times

As an alternative to Liberation theology, an Argentina priest Father Lucio Gera developed the Theology of the People. Instead of relying on social class or the market in line with neo-liberalism, the Theology of People engages in the struggle for social justice by depending more on the actual history and prevailing culture of the people. This theology has its roots in the Argentine bishops’ formation of the *Comision Episcopal para la Pastoral* (COEPAL) in 1968, and the objective of COEPAL was to provide a road map into the future for the Argentine Church following the spirit of the Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops at Medellin. From 1968 to 1973 COEPAL was the main source of this novel theology, popularly referred to as *teologia del pueblo*—or “the theology of the people.”¹¹⁵ The declaration of Medellin categorically distinguishes this new theology from liberation theology. Medellin declared that Marxism “is alien not only to Christianity but also to the spirit of our people.”¹¹⁶

It is this spirit of the people that distinguishes the theology of the people from Liberation theology. Gera reminds theologians and prelates of the unique insight that the shepherds and people pulling carts (not the intellectuals and professionals) were the first to immediately understand the mystery of the Gospel. He notes in the same vein that the simple faithful of Latin America, in spite of the negative effect of colonization, were able to incarnate the Gospel in their culture throughout their history. This reverential attitude

¹¹⁵ Thomas R. Rourke, *The Roots of Pope Francis’s Social and Political Thought: From Argentina to the Vatican* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 72.

¹¹⁶ Rourke, *The Roots of Pope Francis’s Social Thought*, 72.

toward the people led Gera and other proponents of the Theology of People to concentrate theologically on culture, as they saw it as a wellspring of resources for theological reflection and pastoral direction. Here it is obvious that the Theology of People, contrary to the top-down approach of neo-liberalism, embraces a bottom up approach, one that engages the people and ‘enables’ them, to borrow the word of the critical realist, to be part of building their lives.

Moreover, Gera noted that the historical, as opposed to the ahistorical approach of the social sciences, would be a far more qualitative way to understand culture as embodying elements of incarnate faith. According to the theologian Sebastian Politi, “The living substance of the real, of the people, of men and women and their struggles and hope, can only be perceived in its own dynamism and the concrete becoming of their aspirations, realization and failures.”¹¹⁷ Gera insisted that the Church in Argentina “must involve and incarnate itself in the national experience of the Argentine people,” always drawing near “to the poor, the oppressed and those in need.”¹¹⁸

A pastoral line that would develop from this theology is a commitment to strengthen the people’s historical expression of themselves religiously and to evangelize the poor. Gera drew a fine line between a pastoral action that would focus on the poor or target their problems and one that would truly emerge *from* the people. As active agent of their own history, the people are the factor that illuminate and bring together the problems of their lives. Rather than seeing the problems as an internal partisan conflict or difficulty, they are to be seen from their position as embedded, as the people of God, in

¹¹⁷ Rourke, *The Roots of Pope Francis’s Social Thoughts*, 73.

¹¹⁸ Rourke, *The Roots of Pope Francis’s Social Thoughts*, 73.

the people.¹¹⁹ The people, instead of being mere recipients or beneficiaries of exterior projects, are rather protagonists and shapers of their own history.¹²⁰

The Church, therefore, has a duty to the people as opposed to the people having a duty to the Church. Its duty to the people from the perspective of the people and their interests involves executing discernment with regard to its liberative or salvific action. What the Gospel calls “the signs of the times,” are found “in the happenings the people perform or which affect them.”¹²¹ This search for the “signs of the times” is best executed by adopting an historic perspective of the people. Gera held that people have their own rationality from which they get their own projects. Hence Gera’s words that, “Either theology is the expression of the people of God or it is nothing.”¹²² It was essentially in this sense of the people themselves and their responsibility that gave the theology of the people its distinctiveness. In theology of the people, the center receives its meaning from the periphery. Living by faith, the people’s daily formative relationship informs and becomes their source of meaning as opposed to their submission to an official religion.¹²³ While Gera’s contribution was foundational, it received further strengthening from the contribution of Fr. Rafael Tello.

iii) Theology of People as a Focus on Human Person Embedded in History and Culture

Fr. Rafael Tello, the second most important person in the development of the theology of the people, understands that this theology from Vatican II’s call for a return

¹¹⁹ Rafael Luciani, “The Centrality of the People in Pope Francis’s Socio-cultural Theology in Wisdoms and the People’s Theology,” eds. Carlos Mendoza-Alvarez and Po-Ho Huang, 59.

¹²⁰ Luciani, “The Centrality of the People, 59.

¹²¹ Rourke, *The Roots of Pope Francis’s Social Thoughts*, 73.

¹²² Rourke, *The Roots of Pope Francis’s Social Thoughts*, 73.

¹²³ Rourke, *The Roots of Pope Francis’s Social Thoughts*, 73.

to the focus on the human person in his/her historical situation. Though the focus here is on the particular, this would not eliminate universality in the understanding of the quality of each person as created by God. Tello insists that the best way to encounter the depth of people in the particular was by paying attention to the distinctiveness of their culture. Tello sees culture as “the quality, disposition, accustomed ways of using and disposing of things, of self-expression, of style, the entire conception of life within which every human activity has its place, that conforms to and proceeds from a communal environment historically constructed.”¹²⁴ Faith and baptism formed the culture of the people in Latin America and set them within a cosmic order that determined their identity and a fundamental dignity and equality as sons and daughters of God. The common and indigenous people are all part of this popular culture, which has two main characteristics.

First, the culture is characteristic of the region and it exists along side modern or postmodern culture. Secondly, the popular culture is locked in constant tension with postmodern, global culture. While resisting secularism, popular culture upholds God and life in God as the utmost reality and characterizes temporal life as a necessary condition to reach God. As opposed to being individualistic by seeking perfection in oneself, one in the popular culture seeks perfection in communion with God and with neighbor. Moreover, the popular culture promotes the common good for the community and for each individual as opposed to individualism. Issuing from these cultural roots is a particular way of seeing the contemporary struggle. The first way is that the predominant struggle is neither exactly capitalism as against socialism; secondly, nor is it capitalism versus the popular culture.

¹²⁴ Rourke, *The Roots of Pope Francis's Social Thoughts*, 74.

And thirdly, nor is it Marxism pitched against the traditional culture. The struggle lies in the tension between the real, historically based Latin American culture in opposition to modern culture. The point is that individualistic capitalism and Marxism are both foreign impositions devoid of any rootedness in the culture and life of the people. This distinguishes the theology of the people from the socio-political focus of liberation theology given its acceptance of modern culture. The Theology of the People accepts the social-justice aspect of liberation theology. What differentiates them is that while liberation theology engages in the liberation defined wholly from modern terms, the theology of people does this by keeping the historically constituted people with their culture and its pastoral method at the heart of the analysis.¹²⁵ Fr. Tello's elaboration was consolidated by the contribution of Juan Carlos Scannone.

iv) The Theology of People as Distinctive from Liberation Theology

Juan Carlos Scannone, an important contributor to the advancement of the theology of people, presented five elements that distinguish the Theology of People from liberation theology. First, Scannone reexamined Gustavo Gutierrez's point that in theology of liberation faith is a critical reflection on historical praxis, and inquired whether it is the historical praxis of Latin American people or that of a group of people committed to the theology of liberation that ought to be the focus of critical reflection. He also raised the question whether it is the faith praxis of the people of God that is to be critically examined, or the historical praxis in general. He contended that if it were the historical praxis in general, then it would not be particular to faith praxis but to praxis itself. Praxis would not be a distinctive trait of the people of God and might just turn out

¹²⁵ Rourke, *The Roots of Pope Francis's Social and Political Thoughts*, 75.

to be what unites adherence to the theology of liberation with other adherents of the same political goals. Second, Scannone held that while liberation theologians were known to accommodate the mediating role of dependency theory and Marxist social science, proponents of the theology of the people accord prominence to the historical experience of the people.

Third, proponents of the Theology of People saw the praxis of liberation immanent in the history of the people, while liberation theology highlighted history merely as the history of oppression. Theology of the People prized popular culture and saw it as a wellspring of wisdom that must direct reflection on praxis, while liberation theology did not see culture from that perspective. Fourth, these differences will manifest in different assessments of the popular religious culture in Latin America. As the theology of the people was seen to encapsulate much wisdom and theology, it enjoyed a predominantly positive appraisal. Liberation theology, on the contrary, tended to see culture as inadequate and a reflection of oppression and alienation in need of the enlightenment provided by liberation theology.

Fifth, this next point obviated a deeper division over the Enlightenment. The Theology of the People was suspicious of the Enlightenment ethos that backed both the liberal modernist approaches to development and the Marxist alternative— seemingly two branches of the one rationality that held the unenlightened culture of the people in a critical light. Consequently, the Theology of People saw in liberation theology elements of yet another foreign imposition.¹²⁶ Moreover, through the critical lens of the Theology of the People, Pope Francis saw neoliberalism, as was liberation theology, as yet another

¹²⁶ Rourke, *The Roots of Pope Francis's Social and Political Thought*, 76.

imposition on poor nations; hence his rejection of neoliberalism for reasons which I now present.

3c) Understanding Pastoral Conversion—a Rejection of Neoliberalism Model of Development with its Purported “trickle down effect” of Wealth

Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* calls for the dismantling of the structural causes of poverty by renouncing the absolute independence of markets and financial speculations.¹²⁷ For him, one of the structural causes of poverty, and thus underdevelopment, is the “trickle down effect” theory.¹²⁸ Pope Francis insisted that while this theory has failed, and while we continue to place a naïve and crude trust in the credibility of the economically powerful and the sacralized workings of the prevailing economic system, the poor continue to wait. Pope Francis is not alone in this view. Charles Taylor captured the failure of this theory in the following words,

Wealth does not “trickle down” very adequately. This is partly because the continued boom goes with an upping of the ante—a whole range of new products that one has to get to be well-equipped at home, in the car, etc. Much of each year’s growth is preempted by the already affluent who expect a rise in their standard of living. It is very hard to price some off to redistribute to the poor. When growth slows down as we have seen in recent years, the resistance to redistribution increases.¹²⁹

Moreover, technological advancement, in the language of critical theorists, constitutes a restriction to the “trickle down” of wealth because it increases the cost of being poor. For instance, Taylor wrote,

If a society moves from bicycle to automobile, then cities are laid out accordingly and proximity of housing to jobs is planned on the assumption

¹²⁷ Tornielli and Galeazzi, *This Economy Kills*, 45.

¹²⁸ Tornielli and Galeazzi, *This Economy Kills*, 13.

¹²⁹ Markate Daly, *Communitarianism: A New Public Ethics* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1994), 67.

that people have cars. So it becomes necessary to have a car in order to have a job, or at least a good job, and to get around safely on the streets.¹³⁰

Obviously, the more technology restricts the “trickle down” of wealth, the more the poor have to wait for the promised incentives, and the wait continues unending. According to Pope Francis, this long wait, a restriction according to the critical realist theory, has resulted in indifference to the plight of the poor.¹³¹ Consequently, Pope Francis used the term “globalization of indifference”¹³² during his visit to Lampedusa to remember the migrants who died at sea and further sensitize the world to those ongoing calamities. He held that the globalization of indifference, a restriction in the parlance of critical theorists, disables our ability to be compassionate at the outcry of the poor or to weep because of the pain of others. It desensitizes us to help others. We declare that the needs of others are the responsibility of someone else and not our own. Thus we deny others of what enables them, which they could derive from acknowledgement of their rights, mutual aid and support.

Furthermore, “the globalization of indifference” anesthetizes us to the reality of the lives of others retarded by the lack of opportunity. While the pains of others fail to move us, we come alive, however, when the market provides us with something new to purchase. This is a strong critique of neo-liberalism, which places emphasis on the market as opposed to persons. In this scenario it is very easy to glide into the spirit of profiteering, of an extractive economy that acts at the expense of the human person. Pope Francis called for a reaction to this anesthesia of conscience, a “globalization of indifference,” a restriction on the lives of the poor, which involves, “The inability to cry,

¹³⁰ Daly, *Communitarianism*, 67.

¹³¹ Tornielli and Galeazzi, *This Economy Kills*, 36.

¹³² Tornielli and Galeazzi, *This Economy Kills*, 36.

to be touched, to feel a wound in the flesh given the tragedies of our brothers and sisters who live thousands of miles from us or before our eyes.”¹³³ Avoiding this globalization of indifference, according to Pope Francis, calls for the prioritization of the person.

i) Pastoral Conversion Prioritizes the Human Person as Opposed to Free Market Economy

Pope Francis was convinced that ideologies, like the ideology of free-market liberalism, with its claimed “trickle-down effect” of wealth, always leads to a form of dictatorship rather than the promotion of development, human life and progress. He was convinced that ideologies lead people to serve political or personal interests instead of the needs of people. Such an attitude results in the commodification of persons, relationships and environment as was clearly the case in Ogoni land—a classical case of extractive economy according to critical realism. In our contemporary world, the commodification of persons, of relationships and environment has produced great harm, threatening a forgetfulness of the virtues of friendship, community, family, and mutual aid. The aftermaths of these conditions are too stark to be missed. We have too easily become estranged from one another. We have reduced human interactions and relationships to commodities so that the other person is important only to the extent that he or she satisfies our needs, to the extent that we feel good or are instantly gratified by dealing with the other; otherwise, commitment goes down the drain and the escape of divorce drives it to finality.

Consequently, many people find security in money and material things. The more money they have, the more they want. They also find security in that which is new, large

¹³³ Tornielli and Galeazzi, *This Economy Kills*, 36-37.

and extensive: big and fast cars, big buildings, big corporations, powerful machines, weapons, information processing systems, more knowledge, and more experts. Old things cry out to be replaced by new ones, and new ones cry out to be replaced by newer ones. Our society is more than ever automated; yet there is never enough time for things we want to do. Time, our elusive companion, is ever more the enemy. Whatever we have, we want more, and wherever we are, we want to go somewhere else. The economic abundance of the technological age has not brought peace of mind or serenity of spirit. And the ideology of free-market makes this situation worse in claiming to think on behalf of the people, while preventing the people to think for themselves.

Moreover, it denies the developing world serenity of spirit that comes from acting for the people rather than with them. Pope Francis contrasted such an attitude with that which seeks effectively the true good of the people by first being concerned for them as a people and valuing and engaging them in their individuality. Alluding to the large social inequality and the harrowing statistics of poverty in Paraguay that was caused by lack of concern for the people and their individuality, Pope Francis called for the respect of the poor person as opposed to using them to wash away our sin.¹³⁴ He insisted that one must be willing to learn from the poor, as they have many things to teach us as regards goodness and sacrifice.

Pope Francis is not one to negate the material aspects of life and the need for Christians to be engaged in labouring for the actualization of the material welfare for all; in fact, he underlined the point that work “is a right that gives dignity to people. To bring bread to the house, to offer one’s children roof, health and education are essential aspects

¹³⁴ Rourke, *The Root of Pope Francis’s Social and Political Thought*, 77.

of human dignity, and business people, politicians, economists must fight for them.”¹³⁵ In order to actualize these elements necessary for human development and flourishing—even within the Church—Pope Francis’s Pastoral Conversion holds that emphasis should be given to the people situated in their culture.

ii) Pastoral Conversion Advocates Development as Meeting the People Embedded in their Culture

Pope Francis insisted that the Church, as people of God, must divine its presence and action from the perspective of the people, their way of life, their cultures, and their existential realities, as they are the subject of history. Their culture becomes the proper centre for discerning the signs of our times as explained in the San Miguel Document:

The Church must discern its liberating or saving action from the perspective of the people and their interests, for inasmuch as the people are the subject and agent of human history, which is intimately linked with salvation history, the signs of the times become present and decipherable in the events proper to the people or that affects them.¹³⁶

Thus, the project of ridding the world of poverty or underdevelopment calls for a hermeneutic in which reality is understood from the perspective of the periphery, from the perspective of poor people. This challenges us to move from our zones of security and comfort to the place where the poor, the discarded live. In Francis’s words, it is where the discarded and the poor live that “the truth of reality”¹³⁷ can be understood. Pope Francis is convinced that, “the great changes in history were realized when reality was seen not from the centre but from the periphery. It is a hermeneutical question: reality is

¹³⁵ Rourke, *The Root of Pope Francis’s Social and Political Thought*, 77.

¹³⁶ Luciani, *Pope Francis*, 56.

¹³⁷ Luciani, *Pope Francis*, 56.

understood only if it is looked at from the periphery, not when our viewpoint is equidistant from everything.”¹³⁸

Seeing things from the perspective of the poor, from the periphery, requires conversion. Moreover, economic and political changes are feasible on condition that there are fundamental changes in individual values and attitudes—changes that are made possible through conversion. Erich Fromm articulated this well when he wrote, “A new society is possible only if, in the process of developing it, a new human being also develops, or in more modest terms, if a fundamental change occurs in contemporary man’s character structure.”¹³⁹ Pope Francis called this needed change in man’s character, this needed radical reform “Pastoral Conversion.” He is convinced that this kind of option for the poor—which he termed pastoral conversion—makes possible the building of true common good and the realization of the energy needed to arrive at a higher unity— that of a nation! The most challenging part of pastoral conversion is a process that calls us to become friends of the poor and the excluded, acknowledge them as people, as protagonist and not as simply as objects. The beginning of this conversion is the encounter with the people, articulated by San the Miguel Document which presupposes,

...loving the people, becoming attuned to them and comprehending them; trusting in their creative capacity and in their transforming power; helping them to express themselves and organize themselves; listening to them; grasping and understanding their sayings and forms of expression even though they may come from a culture different from our own; being familiar with their joys and hopes, anxieties and suffering, needs and values; knowing what they want and desire from the Church and its ministers; discerning in all that what should be corrected or purified, what is currently the case but only transitory; what has permanent value and holds promise for the future; not separating from them, or getting ahead

¹³⁸ Luciani, *Pope Francis*, 56.

¹³⁹ Richard Lucien, *Christ the Self-Emptying of God* (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 25.

of their real desires and decisions; not transferring to them issues, attitudes, norms or values that are foreign or alien to them, especially when these deprive them of or weaken their reasons for living and reasons for hoping.¹⁴⁰

This pastoral conversion quotation suggests an inversion of the pyramid, both in the political sphere of a country and in the institutional forms that the Church must assume to regain its integrity in our world today. An inversion of the pyramid implies a bottom-up approach to development instead of a top-down approach of neoliberalism. In this bottom-up approach, the poor are enabled to be active participants in their own development, which draws from the incentives of their time, talents, treasures and personhood. This process eventuates in a social structure that is inclusive as opposed to the extractive structure of neoliberalism. Francis challenged the Church to contribute to the process of change, as, “together with the various sectors of society, it supports those programs that best respond to the dignity of each person and the common good...and by so doing, can propose in a clear way the fundamental values of human life in order to transmit convictions that can then find expression in political activity.”¹⁴¹ Pastoral Conversion or Incarnational Reversal helps to absorb the cultural shock that this can produce in both the ecclesiastical institution and educated elite society. If the location of the Church and the Christian community is not the same as the location of the people, then the Church cannot truly be called the people of God that are made up of members who are brothers and sisters to one another, inserted in culture and in relationship with one another and with God.

¹⁴⁰ Luciani, *Pope Francis*, 8.

¹⁴¹ Luciani, *Pope Francis*, 10.

iii) Pastoral Conversion Promotes a Development by the People with an Ethos and in Relationship with God

The people are not only embedded in their culture and in relationship with one another, but are also in relationship with God. In order to understand their relationship with God, we must enter into their ethos. This ethos has a religious soul or heart, always dependent on hope even against the odds of the material deprivation of their lives. It is when we place ourselves in the people's life-world, not outside it, that we come to understand and appreciate their ethos and values. Consequently, our option for the poor assumes an ethical choice of the people's culture through our coming to know, preserve and empower it. This process, more than ordinary knowledge of popular religiosity or people's religion, involves partaking with hope and charity in their daily life of faith in a way that is different from a privatized kind of religion.¹⁴² This process can also be distinguished from a highly intellectual, scientific or technical way of talking about the people, in which "real persons, common individuals in their personal reality, disappear and are worth nothing, and with them the people itself disappears, for the people only exist and subsist in the persons who make it up."¹⁴³

Committed to the teaching of the Church that the "pueblo fiel" (faithful people) was infallible in its belief, Pope Francis gleaned another formula from this, "When you want to know what to believe, go to the Magisterium; when you want to know how to believe, go to the faithful people. The Magisterium will teach you who Mary is, but the faithful people will teach you how to love Mary."¹⁴⁴ Hence, he did not subscribe to the

¹⁴² Luciani, *Pope Francis*, 12.

¹⁴³ Luciani, *Pope Francis*, 13.

¹⁴⁴ Rourke, *The Roots of Pope Francis's Political and Social Thoughts*, 78.

use of “el pueblo” (the people) with a populist political undertone, nor did he use the term the way academicians and Marxists used it in relation to class and sociological categories. Instead he used it in a pastoral sense to imply the “people who follow Jesus [and] look to Jesus, and the Virgin and have a basic fidelity pointing in that direction.... I started to talk about the holy people of God, the faithful people... the santo pueblo fiel de Dios” (the holy faithful people).¹⁴⁵

The Theology of the People is anti-elitism and Pope Francis shared in this as well, acknowledging the presence of the historical Word immanent in the people. He thus extricated himself from both the clerical right and the revolutionary left. Pope Francis, convinced about the connection between the Incarnate God and His people, agreed with Dostoevsky, “He who does not believe in God does not believe in the people of God. However, the one that does not doubt God’s people will also see the holiness of the soul of the people, even when up to this time he had not believed in it. Only the people and their future spiritual strength will convert our atheists, cut off from their own roots.”¹⁴⁶

A failure to meet the people in their own roots—in their culture and in their relationship with neighbour and God—according to Pope Francis, results in the endorsement of the various exploitative social, political and economic systems around the world that are based on exploitation. He noted that those who exploit others chose “not to pay what is just and strive to make maximum profit at any cost, taking advantage of others’ work without worrying the least about their dignity, a clear case of extractive

¹⁴⁵ Rourke, *The Roots of Pope Francis’s Political and Social Thoughts*, 78.

¹⁴⁶ Rourke, *The Roots of Pope Francis’s Political and Social Thoughts*, 78.

economy. This, according to Pope Francis, goes against God!”¹⁴⁷ He elaborated on the ethics behind this attitude in no 57 of his exhortation,

Behind this attitude lurk a rejection of ethics and a rejection of God. Ethics has come to be viewed with a certain scornful derision. It is seen as counterproductive, too human, because it makes money and power relative. It is felt to be a threat, since it condemns the manipulation and debasement of the person. In effect, ethics leads to a God who calls for a committed response that is outside the categories of the marketplace. When these latter are absolutized, God can only be seen as uncontrollable, unimaginable, even dangerous, since he calls human beings to their full realization and to freedom from all forms of enslavement. Ethics—a non-ideological ethics—would make it possible to bring about balance and a more human order. With this in mind, I encourage financial experts and political leaders to ponder the words of one of the sages of antiquity: “Not to share one’s wealth with the poor is to steal from them, and take away their livelihood. It is not our own goods which we hold, but theirs.”¹⁴⁸

Pope Francis added that while it is true that evil dwells in our hearts, it must also be recognized that there is evil “crystallized in unjust social structures.”¹⁴⁹ This, he added, cannot constitute the source of hope for a prosperous future. He noted that we are still far from the so-called ‘end of history,’ as the conditions for a sustainable and peaceful development have yet to enjoy adequate articulation and realization. This statement, considered one of the strongest in *Evangelii Gaudium*, highlights one of the distortions previously rejected by John Paul II in the encyclical *Sollicitudo rei Socialis*, which was centred on the issue of “structures of sin.”¹⁵⁰ In terms of contextualizing Pope’s Francis call to Pastoral Conversion in the larger body of the Catholic Social Ethics, there are three elements that are implicit in it: the *common good*, *solidarity* and *preferential option for the poor*.

¹⁴⁷ Tornielli and Galeazzi, *This Economy Kills*, 29-30.

¹⁴⁸ Tornielli and Galeazzi, *This Economy Kills*, 38-39.

¹⁴⁹ Tornielli and Galeazzi, *This Economy Kills*, 40.

¹⁵⁰ Tornielli and Galeazzi, *This Economy Kills*, 40.

Implicit in Pope Francis notion of Pastoral Conversion are the virtues of the *common good*, *solidarity*, and *preferential option for the poor*. These constitute part of the Catholic Social Teaching, a teaching which neoliberalism violates. These values are implied in the alternative social structure that Pope Francis's Theology of People presents. While not constituting a social structure in themselves, they are elements that should go a long way in, drawing from critical realist theory, enabling, incentivizing people as opposed to restricting them from the goods and resources of this world. As opposed to an extractive economy, these virtues encourage an inclusive economy such that everyone brings his or her talents and ability to bear on the development processes of her community, and shares equitably with others in enjoying the resources of the common wealth as well. The common good is obviously person rather than market centred. Pastoral Conversion calls for and promotes the common good. The question as to what is the common good is the next focus of this thesis.

The Principle of the *Common Good*

The focus of this paper remains how a social structure can enable people so much that it can bring about their socio-economic development. Neoliberalism for the reason explained above failed in doing so, as its structure, often oriented toward profiteering, excludes the majority from enjoying total freedom, while favouring a few. The pursuit remains a search for a social structure that can benefit every member of the community. While Pope John Paul II defines the common good as the "good of all and of each individual,"¹⁵¹ the Compendium defines it as "the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfilment more fully and

¹⁵¹ David Hollenbach, "The Common Good" in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought*, ed. Judith A. Dwyer (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1994), 193.

more easily.”¹⁵² Achieving perfection in life remains the goal of many, and achieving this perfection is itself a process. This process involves taking responsibility for one’s actions and intentions, especially vis-à-vis developing the human community through love and justice. John XXIII in *Pacem in Terris* believed that this process of attaining perfection also challenges one to be engaged with others and institutions in building:

universal employment for all who desire work and greater access to goods and services necessary for a better life through productive work; more equitable relationships across the society; equality between sectors of the economy; balance between new production and services for citizens; a more humane way of existence that is sustainable and which respects the needs of future generations...¹⁵³

David Hollenbach describes the common good of the “earthly city” as that which is of key concern to all who strive to love their neighbour. However, this “terrestrial common good” does not have absolute value, as only God can be accorded such status. Hence his conclusion that the transcendent dignity of the person is a prerequisite for the realization of that earthly and political good that knows its own limitations. According to Hollenbach,

personhood and the good of the community are mutually implicating realities. Negatively, as finite and limited persons, human beings need other persons and the larger society in order to thrive or even exist at all. These needs are for material goods such as food and shelter, for higher goods such as moral and intellectual education, and for God as sustainer of their very existence and as the fulfilment of their capacity for relationship.¹⁵⁴

In order to achieve the common good, individuals must be willing to harmonize their personal interest with the needs of the community. Moreover, they must donate their

¹⁵² David L. Coleman, “The State and Civil Society in Catholic Social Teaching” in *A vision of Justice: Engaging Catholic Social Teaching on the College Campus*, eds. Susan Crawford Sullivan and Ron Pagnucco (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press: 2014), 48.

¹⁵³ Coleman, “The State and Civil Society,” 48.

¹⁵⁴ Hollenbach, “The Common Good,” 194.

goods and services following the prescription of the civil authorities, according to the norms of justice and as their competence allows.¹⁵⁵

John XXIII held that “The common good would be achieved when through the fulfilment of rights and obligations, duties and responsibilities, all members of the global human family had the means of subsistence and dignity.”¹⁵⁶ In no. 55 of *Pacem in Terris* he explained that to ensure the realization of the common good, the ethnic characteristics of the various people who make up society must be respected; however, these values and distinctiveness do not account for all the content of the common good. Given that the common good is inextricably linked with human nature, it can only exist fully on condition that the human person is taken into consideration and the principal nature and actualization of the common good is kept in view.¹⁵⁷ The consideration of the human person as the key concern of the common good distinguishes it from neoliberalism, which makes the market the epicentre of concern. This prioritization of the human person by the common good re-amplifies the emphasis that the Theology of People placed on the person in relation with others and embedded in culture.

Following the critical realist theory in its notion of inclusive theory, the common good is not only concerned for the individual; furthermore, it cares for all, which is the community—a notion that John XXIII captured in no. 56 of *Pacem in Terris*. There John XXIII maintained that given the nature of the common good, all members of the state are required to share in it. This sharing takes place according to each one’s tasks, merits and circumstances. Consequently, it behoves every civil authority to ensure that all participate

¹⁵⁵ John XIII, *Pacem in Terris*, in *Catholic Social Thought: the Documentary Heritage*, eds. David J. O’Brien and Thomas A. Shannon (New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 140.

¹⁵⁶ Coleman, “The State and Civil Society in Catholic Social Teaching,” 48.

¹⁵⁷ John XIII, *Pacem in Terris*, in *Catholic Social Thought*, 140.

in the common good without prejudice to any single citizen or civic group. In view of justice and equity, it is not unacceptable for those in government to give preference to the less privileged members of the community. This is particularly true given the deficiency in the poor's ability to defend their rights and insist on their legitimate claims. In nos. 57-59, John XXIII insisted that the common good goes beyond the material needs to include the needs of their soul. Hence, civil authorities have to address both the material and spiritual needs of their citizens. In pursuit of the common good, civil authorities and individuals must desist from measures that jeopardize the realization of eternal salvation; rather, it is imperative that they subscribe to means and ways that promote the common good.¹⁵⁸

What is interesting about the common good is that it coheres to the Theology of the People in as much as it seeks the good of individual in relationship with others in a socio-economic, cultural, and religious context. It seeks not only their material wellbeing, but also their spiritual wellbeing as well. The Theology of the People sensitizes all to the need to promote and actualize the *common good* for both individuals and communities. Critical realism, not least The Theology of People, with its notion of the need for providing incentives and enablements for the people promotes the common good. While the *common good* seeks the good of all, the neoliberal benefits only the few, leaving the majority without the necessities of life. It is in its inclusiveness of all—individuals and community—that the Theology of People bears a clear resemblance to the *common good*, which contrasts with an extractive economy that caters to the good of a few. Moreover, while neoliberalism is blind to the person and fails to cater to the less privileged in the

¹⁵⁸ John Paul III, *Pacem in Terris*, in *Catholic Social Thought*, 140.

society, the Theology of People and the *common good* call for intervention on behalf of those who cannot protect their own interests. It is important to note here that neither Catholic social teaching nor African theology thinks of the common good as simply the total sum of individual goods. To realize the common good collectively as a society and as individuals, the principle of solidarity is necessary. This virtue presupposes the interdependence and interconnectedness of all, and it stands in opposition to neoliberal reliance on the market. The market itself cannot be relied upon to safe guard the common good. What is the principle of *solidarity*?

The Principle of *Solidarity*

The word “*solidarity*” means commitment to the community. For *Sollicitudo rei Socialis*, solidarity is a core principle of Catholic social teaching. Pope John Paul II in no. 39 of *Sollicitudo rei Socialis* held that “solidarity” is a new name for development:

In this way, the solidarity that we propose is the path to peace and at the same time to development. For world peace is inconceivable unless the world’s leaders come to realize the interdependence in itself demands the abandonment of the politics of blocs, the sacrifice of all forms of economic, military, or political imperialism, and the transformation of mutual distrust into collaboration. This is precisely the act proper to solidarity among individuals and nations.”¹⁵⁹

In no. 38, John Paul II reiterated the traditional Catholic commitment to the value of community when he wrote that “solidarity is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say, to the good of all and of each

¹⁵⁹ Charles E. Curran et al, “Commentary on *Sollicitudo rei Socialis* (On Social Concern)” in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, ed. Himes, Kenneth R., second edition. (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2018), 437.

individual, because we are all really responsible for all.”¹⁶⁰ Apart from being a Christian virtue constituting the central part of conversion, solidarity is also a duty to protect the human rights of all. Pope John Paul also noted to solidarity as a principle and an attitude.¹⁶¹ In no. 37 of *Sollicitudo rei Socialis* he offered solidarity as the right means to overcome the structure of sin.¹⁶² Contrary to the neoliberal and Western individualistic portrayal of the individualistic character of the human person, Catholic social teaching contends that, “we are first and foremost social beings, embodied agents in-the-world engaged in realizing certain forms of life.”¹⁶³ No single individual is engaged in attaining this form of life alone; we do this with others in solidarity, committed to the community as Jon Sobrino reminds us,

This social spirituality, as it is called, entails seeing ourselves as members of society, part of the people, and part of the world today, set into that world and in solidarity with its problems, and working passionately on behalf of this world that God has placed in our hands. Being in touch with what is going on in society is now regarded as an important aspect of the faith that acts through love. Saint Ignatius of Loyola said that, “the good is more divine insofar as it is more universal.”¹⁶⁴

Catholic social teaching sees solidarity as a regular tendency of the mind and heart through which the human interdependency is both an empirical fact and a moral charge to cultivate the bond of authentic mutual relationship.¹⁶⁵ Contrary to the neoliberal way of seeing the other as an “object” in the service of the market, one to be used and discarded when no longer useful, solidarity leads each member in a society to recognize the other as a fellow creature of God. According to Pope John Paul II in no. 39, solidarity enables us:

¹⁶⁰ David Hollenbach, “The Common Good,” 193.

¹⁶¹ Charles E. Curran et al, “Commentary on *Sollicitudo rei Socialis*” in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, 444.

¹⁶² Gregoire Catta, *Catholic Social Teaching as Theology* (New York/ Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2019), 51.

¹⁶³ Daniel Bell, *Communitarianism and its Critics* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1993), 93.

¹⁶⁴ Jon Sobrino, *Toward a Liberation Spirituality* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1991), 7.

¹⁶⁵ David Hollenbach, “The Common Good,” 195.

to see the ‘other’—whether a person, people or nation—not just as some kind of instrument, with a work capacity and physical strength to be exploited at low cost and then discarded...but as our ‘neighbour,’ a ‘helper’ to be made a sharer, on a par with ourselves.¹⁶⁶

Solidarity’s call that the other be seen as a person and not an instrument stands in sharp contrast to neoliberalism’s focus on the market alone. Worse still, neoliberalism’s commodification of person and of relationship leads to exploitation so much that people are denied of the much needed incentives, enablements according to the critical realist theory and opportunities for accessing the common good. This is very much in line with the tenets of the Theology of People, which promotes solidarity as a way of building individuals, community and the common good. It recognizes their personhood in relation with others, with God and within their culture.

Moreover, Solidarity challenges the influential who have greater resources to be ready to share their resources with others; those who have fewer resources should not be envious—but should apply themselves to what is good for all. Those in the intermediate groups must “not selfishly insist on their particular interests, but respect the interests of others.”¹⁶⁷ This implicates an international interdependence that must be transformed into the virtue of solidarity, which upholds that all of the earth’s possessions are destined to serve the needs of all. Thus, the products of human labour through the processing of raw materials must support the needs of all. Against the dictatorial tendency of the free market economy, solidarity rejects any kind of domination or kingship of the rich and powerful countries over poor ones, and it promotes an international relationship that is based on the foundation of equality of all people as well as mutual respect for differences.

¹⁶⁶ John Paul II, “*Sollicitudo rei Socialis*” in *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, eds. David J. O’Brien & Thomas A. Shannon (New York: Orbis Books, 1998), 422.

¹⁶⁷ John Paul II, “*Sollicitudo rei Socialis*” in *Catholic Social Thought*, 420.

Solidarity seeks to overthrow the structures of sin associated with an extractive economy and the profiteering tendency of neoliberalism. Both radically obstruct peace and development.¹⁶⁸

Pope John Paul II held that there are negative factors that militate against an awareness of the universal common good and the importance of promoting it. These factors create the impressions in persons and institutions that they are obstacles that cannot be dismantled. These factors constitute what Pope John Paul II called the “structures of sin,” which are first tied to the individual who introduced them, solidify them and ensure their permanence. These structures metamorphose into the source of other sins that, in turn, change the action of others. John Paul identified two attitudes and actions in particular that typify sinful structures in no. 37 of *Sollicitudo rei Socialis*: “on the one hand, the all-consuming desire for profit, and on the other, the thirst for power; with the intention of imposing one’s own will upon others.”¹⁶⁹ These attitudes assume greater damage when they are absolutized or where they are inextricably intertwined. These attitudes can be embodied in individuals, nations or blocs, and they can also be “hidden behind certain decisions, apparently inspired only by economics, or policies, ideology, class, technology.”¹⁷⁰

Apart from solidarity that exists as an international interdependence, there is also the solidarity that exists among those who are oppressed and marginalized; that is, solidarity of the poor among the poor who struggle to support themselves.¹⁷¹ To ensure that the poor’s pursuit of justice and equity is not in vain, Catholic social teaching

¹⁶⁸ Curran *et al*, “Commentary on “*Sollicitudo rei Socialis*” in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, 441.

¹⁶⁹ Curran *et al*, “Commentary on “*Sollicitudo rei Socialis*” in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, 436.

¹⁷⁰ Curran *et al*, “Commentary on “*Sollicitudo rei Socialis*” in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, 437.

¹⁷¹ Curran *et al*, “Commentary on “*Sollicitudo rei Socialis*” in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, 442.

prescribes that Christian spirituality should have as its foundation a preferential option for the poor, a solidarity with the victims of history. What is the Preferential Option for the Poor?

Preferential Option for the Poor

Sollicitudo rei Socialis is the first document of the universal magisterium that explicitly endorsed a “*preferential option for the poor*.” The principle was central to Latin American liberation theology, and it pointed to Jesus as the one to be imitated in a love of preference for the poor. Moreover, it is among the poor that Christ is to be encountered.¹⁷² In the New Testament, Jesus identifies with the poor in birth, life, suffering and death. Thus, Sobrino’s articulation of Catholic social teaching is:

We are called to create economic, political, social and spiritual conditions so there will be no hungry people, so each human being will live with dignity, so that things of this world will be used well, and so that all of us can live together on this planet like brothers and sisters and all like the children of God.¹⁷³

The preferential option for the poor was implied in the final 1968 document of the Latin American bishops’ assembly in Medellin. There the bishops held that the Church is called to denounce the unequal distribution of this world’s goods, and the sin that causes it. It also held that the Church is called to proclaim the Gospel and live in spiritual poverty, and to bind itself to material poverty. The Latin American bishops believed that this would lead to “preference” for and “solidarity” with those most in need concerning the pastoral orientation to be taken locally and globally.”¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² Catta, *Catholic Social Teaching as Theology*, 72.

¹⁷³ Sobrino, *Toward a Liberation*, 11.

¹⁷⁴ Catta, *Catholic Social Teaching as Theology*, 72.

When the Latin American bishops' conference met in Puebla ten years later, they proclaimed the centrality of the principle of the preferential option for the poor when they wrote, "We affirm the need for the conversion on the part of the whole church to a Preferential Option for the Poor, an option aimed at their integral liberation (Pue.1134)."¹⁷⁵ The origin of this principle is not derived from social analysis or from human compassion; rather it is rooted in God—a theocentric, prophetic option that has its origin in the unmerited love of God and is demanded by God's love. In the Old Testament, God's chosen people are the Jews, the marginalized, the outcast, the wretched and the defenceless, and God sent God's prophets to denounce the injustices meted on them. More than this, God sent Jesus, whose mission was:

to bring good news to the poor...
to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour (Luke 4: 18-19).¹⁷⁶

Pope John Paul II, following the spirit of Jesus, gives his approval to the principle of the "preferential option for the poor"—which he also termed "love of preference for the poor."¹⁷⁷ He endorsed,

An option, or a special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness. It affects the life of each Christian inasmuch as he or she seeks to imitate the life of Christ, but it applies equally to our social *responsibilities* and hence our manner of living, and to the logical decisions to be made concerning the ownership and use of goods¹⁷⁸ (SRS 42).

¹⁷⁵ Catta, *Catholic Social Teaching as Theology*, 72.

¹⁷⁶ Catta, *Catholic Social Teaching as Theology*, 74.

¹⁷⁷ Catta, *Catholic Social Teaching as Theology*, 72.

¹⁷⁸ John Paul II, "Sollicitudo rei Socialis" in *Catholic Social Thought*, 425.

John Paul II enjoined leaders of nations and socio-economic and political fields to use the principle of the preferential option for the poor as the basis for discernment in daily life. He saw this principle as the root principle for the social teaching of the church—but that are strengthened anew by this principle. Pope John Paul II in (*SRS* no. 42) explained that as the goods of the world are supposed to be for all, private property, though a valid and necessary right, is often under “social mortgage.” By implication, private property performs an intrinsically social function, and it is meant to serve the common good and the needs of those who are most disadvantaged.¹⁷⁹

In John Paul’s view, the preferential option for the poor must be implemented “at all levels into concrete actions”¹⁸⁰ and in what is required by the condition of international imbalances. *SRS* no. 43 acknowledges the reforms of the international trade system and the monetary and financial system of the world, the injustices that occur in the area of technological transfers, and the needed reform of the international organization in order to render them more efficient.¹⁸¹ While the preferential option for the poor highlights some parts of the mystery of Christ and invites us to imitate Jesus in his relations to the poor, it also reminds us that this option for the poor affects the life of each Christian to the extent that we seek to imitate the life of Christ. The goal in this paper of an in depth examination of the principles of the common good, solidarity and preferential option for the poor is to explain how they are implicit in Pope Francis view of Pastoral Conversion. As Pastoral Conversion contravenes the application of the logic

¹⁷⁹ John Paul II, “*Sollicitudo rei Socialis*” in *Catholic Social Thought*, 424.

¹⁸⁰ Catta, *Catholic Social Teaching as Theology*, 73.

¹⁸¹ John Paul II, “*Sollicitudo rei Socialis*” in *Catholic Social Thought*, 426.

of the market as a panacea to the problem of poverty in Africa, so do the principles of common good, solidarity and the preferential option of the poor.

The preferential option of the poor goes beyond the prioritization of the person to the prioritization of the poor person. The corollary of this is found in Pope Francis's Pastoral Conversion of the Theology of People that uses the bottom-up approach to the processes of developmental engagements. This preference for the poor becomes more urgent and cogent in light of the socio-economic inequalities between the developed and developing countries. This is especially true when neoliberalism continues to widen this economic gap by making the rich richer and the poor poorer as we saw in the implementation of the SAP, MDGs, and Ogoni oil crisis. The preferential option for the poor, as does Pastoral Conversion in the Theology of People, places the marginalized at the heart of socio-political and economic agenda. This is a sharp distinction from neoliberalism that places the market over and above all else. The preferential option for the poor makes for an inclusive economy, and according to critical realist, it also creates a possibility for the socio-economic enabling and incentivising of the poor.

The preferential option for the poor, like the Pastoral Conversion of Pope Francis, challenges us to oppose whatever stifles the right of the poor to share in temporal goods as well as that which threatens their human vitality. This principle of Catholic social teaching, like Pope Francis's Pastoral Conversion, reminds us that neither you nor I can be wealthy, educated or healthy until you *and* I—all of us live in an emancipated community, society and world order. Eugene Debs put it right when he wrote, “While there is a lower class, I am in it; while there is a criminal element, I am of it; while there

is a soul in prison, I am not free.”¹⁸² While there are people who are denied the right to what they need for human flourishing, the world must take a stand for their socio-economic enablement. This value of co-responsibility, especially as captured by the common good, solidarity and the preferential option of the poor, forms part of African ethical and cultural values. This thesis holds the view that unless the economic logic of the market is rooted in these ethical and cultural values, it will fail in ridding the continent of poverty.¹⁸³ What are these African ethical and cultural values?

4) A Bridge Between Pastoral Conversion, African Identity, Ethical and Cultural Values and the Notion of an African Theory of Development

Paul Appiah Himin Asante’s piece, “African Concept of Community and Individual in the Context of the Market,” looks at the African notions of individual and community. It does so in a bid to respond to the question of moral responsibility for the harms that markets cause to distant others. Asante, focusing on the culture of the Akan people, a matrilineal tribe in Ghana, explained that the woman (mother) transmits her blood (*mogya*) to the baby during conception, while the man (father) gives the spirit (*sunsum* or *ntoro*). The Akan culture, like that of Nigeria and many African nations, is religious. The people believe that God gives the soul (*okra*) to the child. The blood that is provided by the woman in its matrilineal descent from the founding ancestress makes her lineage one with people who share in her blood.¹⁸⁴ Consequently, the blood subsumes the lineage in the child and the child is in turn subsumed in the lineage, and everyone who shares in this same blood makes up an *abusua*, a “community” domiciled in a territory.

¹⁸² Sam Keen, *The Passionate Life: Stages of loving* (San Francisco: Harper, 1983), 206.

¹⁸³ Asante, “The African Concept of Community,” 203.

¹⁸⁴ Asante, “The African Concept of Community,” 207.

In addition, the natural environment is a constitutive part of their concept of community and must be accorded respect. The spirit (sunsum or ntoro) from the man(father) endows individuality, character and personality to the child, while the child's soul, (okra), which is from God is immortal and divine. The soul endows the child with uniqueness, rationality and transcendence.¹⁸⁵ Ontologically, therefore, the individual is understood to be part of a triadic relationship, namely the spiritual from God, the community from the woman, and the individuality from the man (father). The individual must actualize and concretize these constitutive elements in daily life for his or her own survival or happiness. Through these elements the individual realizes his or her independence and at the same time his or her dependence, which is unique and relational.¹⁸⁶

Community is such an intrinsic aspect of an individual Akan's being that the individual must learn how to be "community." This socialization and education according to the core of community values is produced through rituals. These are designed to confirm and validate the individual's membership in the community. The individual is a community and must concurrently constitute a community and an individual. A perceived separation in a person between the individual and the community contradicts the nature of the individual's being and is hence considered unreal.

Moreover, the Akan people believe that humanity belongs to a single and universal God; hence, their claim to be anthropologically religious—a claim that John J. S Mbiti makes for all Africans. Their anthropologically religious bent makes them

¹⁸⁵ Asante, "The African Concept of Community," 208.

¹⁸⁶ Asante, "The African Concept of Community," 208.

relational such that they are simultaneously independent and dependent. Their religious bent inclines them to both a socio-centric and religious worldview. Their relationship and dependence on God provides their lives with meaning. Their culture, rooted in anthropology, promotes “adaptability, flexibility, and transcendence.” Their culture is dynamic, since it honors both conformity and conflict as a way of life at the same time.

Solidified and externalized in their culture is a set of core values which are derived from their anthropology. In the words of Asante, “religiosity, sacredness of life and of the environment, common good, love, unity, solidarity, togetherness, dialogue, justice, reciprocity, self-reliance, hierarchy and equality, change and continuity, independence and dependence, and dignity of the person and the community are the characteristics of the Akans”¹⁸⁷ Here we see a strong link between the principles of Catholic social teaching—which are also implicit in Pope Francis Pastoral Conversion—and African ethical and cultural values. They are in the service of both the individual and the community as opposed to the market. Thus for the Akans, the “whole” is represented in the individual, and the individual corporately represents the whole community. Whatever affects the individual affects the whole and whatever affects the whole affects the individual. The Akans would be in agreement with the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s,

All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects others indirectly. In other words, all life is interrelated. I cannot be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you cannot be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be.”¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ Asante, “The African Concept of Community,” 208-209.

¹⁸⁸ Martin Luther King, Jr. *The Strength to Love* (New York: Pocket Books, 1963), 65-66.

While the individual is unique in this situation, he or she maintains a corporate identity. Consequently, when such an individual secretly or publicly commits a heinous offence against a god, “mother earth”¹⁸⁹ or a neighbor, this affects all members of the community. To cleanse such an evil act or social evil, sacrifices must be offered to reestablish harmony with the deity, all members of the family, the individual who committed the offence and the environment. This accounts for the enforcement of taboos within the community as a way of protecting the relationship between the individual and the community and between the individual and the environment. An individual Akan, therefore, had a consciousness of personal relationships. Even when the concept of individualism arose, it was anchored within the milieu of the entire body or community. The Akan people, therefore, understood themselves to belong to God corporately such that no one could claim ownership over another Akan.

God’s redemptive act was understood to be for all Akans without exclusion. God’s redemptive act obliterated any social classification and slavery, and the theology of god rejected the oppression of any Akan by another. Therefore, God detested the enslavement or bondage of some by others. The suffering of any member, even the least members of the brotherhood, is the suffering of the entire community. In these values that make up the self-understanding of the African, especially the Akan people, are found substantial traces of a Capability Theory of Development and immanent principle as captured above.¹⁹⁰ This understanding of the African ethical and cultural values lays bare the enormity of the evil visited on the Ogoni people by the military junta and

¹⁸⁹ Asante, “The African Concept of Community,” 209.

¹⁹⁰ Asante, “The African Concept of Community,” 212.

multinational companies in their exclusion of the people from sharing in the common good.

While the social realist theory described the action of the oil companies and the Nigerian government as simply denying the Ogoni people of their entitlements and incentives of the land, and excluding them from participating in the common good, the African ethical and cultural values deliver a heavier verdict on it. That behavior is a taboo, a violation of the individual, the community, the environment and God! This scenario violates the community's sense of solidarity, common good and the preferential option for the poor, all of which a constitutive element of the African ethical and cultural values—values that encapsulate the Pastoral Conversion of the Theology of the People. Just as the misdemeanor of an individual rubs off negatively on all members of the family, so does the success of an individual bring joy and pride to all members of the community. The community takes pride in associating with such an individual.

Even when an individual is celebrated, his or her individuality is never to the exclusion of the community. This captures the saying, “I am because we are, and since we are, therefore, I am,”¹⁹¹ which comes from the Kiswahili word “Ubuntu” which was popularized by J.S Mbiti. Sometimes this is wrongly interpreted to mean the domination of the community over the individual. Instead the quote simply points to the fact that it is in the community that the life of an individual takes meaning. It is not in living as an island—but in the interaction with other members of the community that individuals actualize their social aspirations. T. Okere concurred with this notion when he stated that man is not just an individual or an island unto himself and self-sufficient. Rather an

¹⁹¹ Asante, “The African Concept of Community,” 210.

individual is essentially a member of a community. The community and the individual complement each other in many African traditional societies such that both the common good of the individual and the community are promoted in this symbiotic relationship. African society embodies features of communality and individuality. The African is an individual, but his individualism is defined in reference to the community. Western individualism is such that the individual is autonomous, totally detached and exists alone in the world.¹⁹²

The implementation of the market economy as the road map to development upholds the notion that Africa must jettison tradition and the “local” if it must march to contemporary forms of social and economic organization and thought. Development carries the restrictive meaning of, “a movement from traditional relations, traditional ways of thinking, of dealing with health and education, of methods of production to a modern way.”¹⁹³ In this economy, the human person is simply a *homo economicus*—one that is purely rational and materialistic, driven by the pursuit of self-interest through maximizing his or her utility or profits on the basis of the availability of perfect information.

This thesis stands for the proposition that an African anthropology presents a more adequate notion of the human person as—spiritual, individual, communal, rational and emotional. In doing so it provides an adequate basis for the realization of development. This is contrary to the theory that the African lineage systems are so static and anachronistic that they perpetuate illiteracy, disease, ignorance, low productivity,

¹⁹² Asante, “The African Concept of Community,” 210.

¹⁹³ Asante, “The African Concept of Community,” 212.

lack of capital, and underdevelopment that betide the continent. Apart from the fact that Western anthropology legitimizes a myopic understanding of individuality and social structure, it constitutes a kind of cultural capital often employed to construct both the self and the society confronted with the present day socio-economic quagmire. On the bias of using this cultural capital as the basis for negotiating, appropriating, contesting and interacting with the social structures of the market, adherents of individualism unwittingly solidify the prioritization of market-based thinking over traditional notions of individuality and community.¹⁹⁴

Margaret Archer, on the contrary, argues that the structure and the agents are concomitantly accountable for each and every state of affairs. Pierpaolo Donati's words that structures' causality always arise through agency adds weight to Archer's argument. Unfortunately, the new structure created by the market based economy benefits only a few, leaving the majority economically deprived as was the case in MDGs. As seen in the case of Nigeria, and other developing African nations, only a few were lifted out of poverty, while the majority found themselves pushed deeper into penury. The majority who are plunged into poverty are the ones classified as the distant others in our globalized world today. It is certainly a matter of injustice and a violation of the dignity of the human person that economic choices increase dramatically the disparity in wealth.¹⁹⁵

Today in Africa generally, the market plays a very important role in how people interpret the "I am" and the "we are" in the maxim "I am because we are, and since we

¹⁹⁴ Asante, "The African Concept of Community," 212.

¹⁹⁵ Asante, "The African Concept of Community," 212.

are, therefore I am.”¹⁹⁶ Still people within the same family might have a different interpretation and application of the maxim to their daily life. In the business circle, especially given the influence of Westernization, many individuals now interpret the “I am” in a sense of focusing on themselves as individuals—self-centered, self-detached and inclined to personal success in life. However, they are at the same time haunted psychologically by the communal aspect of the maxim, which calls them to care for their families.

So while “I am” is practiced in the market in a self-centered way, such individuals are at the same time haunted by guilt feeling arising from their corporate personality as a “right” and also as a “self.”¹⁹⁷ This communal aspect, namely “we are” is open to interpretation as to the extent to which it involves care for others. Some insist that “we are” implicates caring for one’s immediate family and minimal lineage, whereas others extend its sphere of care to include the clan, the tribe, and even all who constitute the village. Still others extend it to involve care for all citizens of the nation, the entire African nation and ultimately all of God’s children. These ethical and cultural values definitely negate profiteering to the detriment of others, or the commodification of another person for material gains—an extractive economy that contravenes the African understanding of life, Pastoral Conversion and the principles of the common good, solidarity and the preferential option for the poor.

There is often a tension within the individual in African society between conformity with Western individualism and traditional African value. As a result, the

¹⁹⁶ Asante, “The African Concept of Community,” 213.

¹⁹⁷ Asante, “The African Concept of Community,” 213.

individual is bedeviled by “conflicts, ambivalence, tension and dynamism.”¹⁹⁸ The market remains a powerful force, as many African entrepreneurs and foreign investor continue to live according to free-market economic rules of maximizing profit and contributing to the growth of the market economy. The result of this is the emergence of a new socio-economic order, which is built on progress, development, and efficiency—one that operates on the logic of the market with its emphasis on consumerism, materialism, and social inequality as opposed to African traditional cultural and ethical values.

Though the market economy of Africa shows some creativity, it is burdened by domination of nature and social inequality, which forecasts a liability for the long-term growth of the market, the socio-political sphere and the integral development of the human person. This potential liability can be averted if the market is founded on the ethical principles of solidarity, subsidiarity, and the common good. This is a confirmation of Pope Benedict XVI’s words that, “Economic activity cannot solve all social problems through the simple application of commercial logic.”¹⁹⁹ The traditional economic activity of Africa is founded on the common good and the good of the individual. Inherently and inextricably built into the African economy is a core set of ethical values such as the common good, solidarity, reciprocity, generosity and the dignity of the person. These values condition and sustain the African economy. In going beyond economic and commercial logic to integrating ethical values inherent in the African notion of community and individual, entrepreneurs, businessmen/women and bankers are challenged to see their work not just as a profession but also as a vocation.

¹⁹⁸ Asante, “The African Concept of Community,” 213.

¹⁹⁹ Asante, “The African Concept of Community,” 214.

In Ghana we see an economy, which continues to strive on the strength of increasing solidarity based on kingship. According to the Bank of Ghana, remittances from private individuals, especially those living in the diaspora, increased from about \$449 million in 1999 to \$1.79 billion in 2009. These figures account for funds sent through official means. They do not include funds sent funds through individuals to another and by means of courier. The funds that are sent from abroad are usually invested in real estates or are also used to establish micro-enterprises; thus, they contribute immensely to expanding Ghana's domestic market. They go a long way in complementing government social services by providing clinics, schools, etc. Remittance to developing countries saw an increase in the last two decades to a high of \$325 billion in 2010, while the remittances to African countries by Africans living in the diaspora reached almost \$40 billion in 2010— a figure representing 2.6% of Africa's gross domestic product.²⁰⁰

It is not surprising as Takyiwaa Manuh asserts that international migration has come to constitute an important strategy for attaining a better livelihood in the face of receding socio-economic situations. In Africa, the fact that the remittance market is growing attests to the fact that Africans, though living in the West with its individualistic bent, never lose sight of their commitment to their home community irrespective of their fight to achieve individual identity. There is a strong basis to conclude that for human and economic development, Africa in general, Nigeria and Ghana in particular stand a better chance with a modern economic system that is anchored on the values that issue from their concepts of communality and individuality. This demands a complementarity

²⁰⁰ Asante, "The African Concept of Community," 214.

in an economy of both public and private enterprise founded on African cultural and ethical values—a need that Pope Benedict XVI asserts, “Authentic human social relationships of friendship, solidarity, and reciprocity can also be conducted within economic activity and not only outside it or ‘after’ it.”²⁰¹

Conclusion

This paper explains how Pastoral Conversion, through its promotion of the person, inserted within a culture and in relationship with neighbour and God, promotes a model of development that approximates critical realist theory of enablement, incentives and an inclusive economy. This is in contrast with neoliberalism, which restricted the lives of Africans and other developing countries through its implementation of SAP and MDGs and the Ogoni oil crisis. Consequently, I propose an African model of development, similar to capability theory and Pope Francis’s call for Pastoral Conversion. This model of development, championed by Ike and the Africa Civil Society Initiative, 2001, describes the desired development in Africa as,

A multi-dimensional people-centered process. It aims to create conditions whereby each human being can realize his or her potential for political, social and economic fulfillment, in harmony with the common good. The rights, obligations and participation of individuals are central to this process and its objectives. The first priority is the eradication of poverty. This involves empowering people to gain control over their own lives and obtain the resources required to meet their basic needs, without destroying the environment. Genuine development is a grass root bottom-up process, where local communities are the key players. Economic activity should be managed by people, and should respect the limitations of a fragile and non-renewable environment. The market may be a means to achieve these

²⁰¹ Asante, “The African Concept of Community,” 215.

goals, but is not an end in itself...Development is about people, about culture and people's aspirations for a better life.²⁰²

This model of African development is theocentric and sees God as the origin and destiny of all things. It propels us to introduce a moral and spiritual vision to development. This can be similar to Pope Francis's Pastoral Conversion. The absence of this dimension occasions an economic dynamic that sometimes propagates human greed and selfishness. The resultant effects are all too common in our contemporary world: "economic downturns, poverty, injustice, wars, violence, protectionism, terrorism and other allied evils."²⁰³ In an echo of Jean-Marc Ela, we are confronted with a challenge, "how to utter God in a practice of faith where I must decide what I wish to do with the woman or man I find in my path—make of him or her a human being with a right to life or a slave for life."²⁰⁴

Treating an individual as a human being with a right to life is especially difficult in a situation of excruciating poverty. In the cry of a woman or man who has no money for medical care, in the cry of the poor widow, in the anxiety of the rich aristocrat, in the despair of many jobless Nigerian youths or those who cannot afford to go to school, we sense the deepest longing of the human heart for meaningful development, happiness and transcendence. Stan Chu Ilo notes that this longing is, "written into the very structure of our human history whose ultimate term is found in God."²⁰⁵

To put the unseen God in the whole picture of development is not an add-on. Rather, as Stan Chu Ilo observes, "it is the very condition of possibility to find the

²⁰² Ani Casimir, Emma Omeh, Chinedu C. Ike, "Poverty and Governance—A Critical Appraisal of a Philosophy and Practice of Development in Africa," 177.

²⁰³ Ilo, *The Church and Development in Africa*, xxxi.

²⁰⁴ Jean-Marc Ela, *African Cry* (Maryknoll: New York: Orbis Books, 1986), 139.

²⁰⁵ Ilo, *The Church and Development in Africa*, xxx.

authentic direction of human history and the ethical impulses and spiritual forces that will direct our steps.”²⁰⁶ This is the gift of Pope Francis’s call for Pastoral Conversion to our world. The World Bank and the United Nations in their SAP and Millennium Development Goals are well intentioned in their vision to bring about the development of African nations and eradicate poverty in the world by 2030. They assume, however, too much of the availability of the goodwill of people, especially those in the developed countries, who have amassed so much wealth at the expense of others, to make this happen. Worse still, they fail to acknowledge and address the fact that underdevelopment is, among other factors, a function of greed, a moral issue and, as such, the question of the conversion of the human person as a key element toward the realization of development cannot be overemphasized.

Pope Francis’s Pastoral Conversion is a great contribution to the quest for the realization of development in Nigeria and other parts of the world. Its most salient point is the call to our common humanity and a relinquishing of privileges. The limiting or controlling of our desires is what Martha Nussbaum calls “the therapy of desire”²⁰⁷—an inversion of the pyramid according to Pope Francis that should go a long way in bringing about a new world, a better era in our world and Church. This new era in society and the life of the Church demands a return to a sense of the people. It calls us to struggle for the recognition of their personhood, embedded in their sociocultural locus and in relationship with one another and with God.

²⁰⁶ Ilo, *The Church and Development in Africa*, xxx.

²⁰⁷ Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 13 & 497.

It challenges us to rebuild with the people the social and ecclesial bonds that have been broken and have plunged nations into both economic devastation and moral decline. It is an ethical challenge to heal the wounded people, often side-lined by different types of ideology such as the free market liberal economy. It is a challenge to refashion entire societies on the economic strength of inclusion and participation.²⁰⁸ It especially means integrating the principles of solidarity, the common good and the preferential option of the poor with African ethical and cultural ethics. To inaugurate this new era Pope Francis provided the Church and the world *Evangelii Gaudium* as a “road map” to “new paths for the Church’s journey in years to come.”²⁰⁹ And the spirit of *Evangelii Gaudium* is that of pastoral conversion, urgently needed in Nigeria and in Africa in general.

²⁰⁸ Luciani, *Pope Francis*, 15.

²⁰⁹ Tornielli and Galeazzi, *This Economy Kills*, 31.



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