

“Let there be No Quarrel among Us” (Genesis 13:8-9): Using Abraham’s Model for Restructuring in Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria is blessed with so many natural resources which are the principal sources of income through which she is sustained. Disparity in the income so generated has been posing a serious challenge to almost every Nigerian administration on the ratio for its sharing, hence becoming a major problem and challenge affecting federal practice in Nigeria. The problem of resource control and restructuring so noticed has been as a result of disagreement within the three tiers of government of which no one seems to accept to sacrifice some pleasures in order to ensure that peace is attained. It will be germane to posit that for there to be a restructuring in Nigeria that will be effectively sustained and generally satisfactory, the Abraham’s model must be adopted who gave Lot his nephew the opportunity to choose from the best part of the vast arable land so that there may be no quarrel among them. In this regard therefore, Abraham is seen as a leader who is endowed with virtues of love, peace, selflessness and sacrifice and must be emulated by Nigeria leaders if restructuring will be achieved. This work adopts a sociological method and will be theoretically framed with relative deprivation theory. The paper observes that there has been tussle within the tiers of government on the sharing formula which has not been generally accepted. Secondly, it discovers that there has been agitations by the host states on resource control and restructuring which is not workable for the federal government, it goes on to observe that Abraham’s model could help to solve the problem if the federal government assumes the role of Abraham by allowing

producing states to determine the percentage of the allocation. It finally observes that there has been lack of a leader who has the vision and willingness to handle the problem once and for all which has made the problems to continue lingering. The paper therefore recommends that the tiers of government should be willing to make sacrifices in order to ensure a harmonious and peaceful co-existence. The work also recommends the need for visionary and selfless leaders who will sincerely tackle and implement true and acceptable federalism for the good of the common man.

Keywords: Quarrel, Abraham's Model, Restructuring, Resource Control.

Introduction

The issue of resource control and restructuring has been an aged long problem in Nigerian administrative landscape. This has attracted a lot of debate and contributions from the academia in a way of proffering a lasting and acceptable solution, but it has remained unresolved and unabated. Resource control and restructuring have always been issues that are met with dissatisfaction within the tiers of government and the host communities. This problem so noticed is not without enmity and bridging of societal peace which is unhealthy to every administration that has existed. It will be pertinent to posit that resource control and restructuring are germane issue in Nigerian government and politics, which is due to the value attached to resources by the government and the host communities. According to Shebbs and Njoku (2016), there are two sides of debate over resource control in Nigeria which are the government on one hand and the people on the other hand. The government maintains that Nigerian state needs resources to sustain her daily administration and by the exploration and sale of resources, she acquires some income with which to run the state without loss and deficits. Parkinson (2012) in Shebbs and Njoku (2016) observes that

it is expected that with view to the governmental idea of the democratic space, the government is expected to provide for its people and must utilize every income made from resource exploration to the best interest of the people.

Parkinson (2012) further opines that the state is also expected to furnish an arena suitable enough to host its human society without glitches and catastrophe by allocating the right values and privileges to the people living in the various sections and regions of the state. This cannot be done if the state is in chaos and or is witnessing an unstable peace in its resource's administrative process. In this regard therefore, the Abraham's model which is an embodiment of peace, selflessness, love, sacrifice and justice is going to be considered in line with this problem of which suggestions will be drawn from to be followed in arriving at a more workable and acceptable restructuring and resource control that will promote peace and unity among the Nigerians as one indivisible entity.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this paper is the relative deprivation theory. This theory in Morrison (1971) was propounded by a sociologist, Samuel A. Stouffer (1900-1960), after World War II, in his study titled "The American Soldier" (1949). It was originally used to explain the origins of social movements that gave birth to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Right Acts of 1965 that were born from African-Americans' feelings of deprivation in relation to the Caucasian segment of society, especially the racial segregation in public schools that was pervasive throughout the United States. African-American students were considered inferior to the white Caucasian students as judged by limited resources and teacher quality. It was further improved by the works of Gurr in 1970, Wilson in 1973, Morrison in 1978 and Townsend in 1979 who made valuable contributions to its development.

The theory argues that collective actions have their foundations among people who feel deprived of some goods and services. Just as frustration produces aggressive behaviour on the part of an individual, so does relative deprivation predict collective violence by social groups. In some cases, relative deprivation has been cited as a factor driving incidents of social disorder like rioting, looting, terrorism, disharmony and civil wars. In this nature, social movements and their associated disorderly acts can often be attributed to the grievances of people who feel they are being denied resources to which they are entitled. Walker & Pettigrew (1984) believe that the theory of relative deprivation is based on the concept that persons may feel deprived of some desirable thing relative to their own past, other persons or groups, or some other social category. It is suggested that the theory offers an instructive special case of social identity theory of intergroup relations, which is based on the categorization of the social environment, the composition of the individual's social identity, and the process of social comparison. Someone is labeled as deprived if he/she is underprivileged in a material or immaterial way. A person will be relatively deprived if he/she feels anger or dissatisfaction because of his/her discrimination in relation to the better situated others. Relative deprivation is, in short, the perceived discrepancy between personal status and the status of some relevant others. Without using the concept of quality of life explicitly, the concept of relative deprivation is described from the beginning in terms of quality of life substantially.

Conceptual Review of Resource Control and Restructuring

a. Resource control

The concepts of resource control and restructuring seem to be different issues that can be handled differently. This is negated by Odje (2000) in Ebegbulem (2011) in his write up on “The Challenges of True Federalism and Resource Control in Nigeria”, thus in

examining the Nigerian true federalism and resource control, he maintains that the two concepts mutually complement each other. Hence, he posits that a true federal state (Federalism) practices resource control while resource control functions vibrantly in a true federal state (Federalism). Therefore, in proffering a definition to resource control, he opines that it is an indication of the practice of true federalism. Resource control has myriad definitions from different scholars which are proffered as results of variegation in opinion and ideas. In the opinion of Ifedayo (2010) in Atayobi et al (2013), resource control involves the access of communities and state governments to natural resources located within their boundaries and the freedom to develop and utilize these resources without inference from the federal government. This is in consonance with Douglas (2005) who observes in Atayobi et al (2013) that resource control is the “actual control of resources by the people who live in communities with these resources for the support of life.

Furthermore, Ofeimum (2005) in agreeing to the above views captures it as the principle that every federating unit must be empowered to be self-governing. In his ideas, the resource control amounts to an expression of self-determination by the zone which places a mutual duty on other parts of the country to assist the zone realizing their objective. Ige (2011) as quoted in Atayobi et al (2013) in aiding his voice to the definition has it as an attempt of a people to acquire direct political power over resource production, management and utilization in their area of location to ensure regeneration of the environment and all round development of the people. This Ige’s assertion was not well accepted by Atoyebi, Lawal, Adekunyo and Kahri (2013) who define it as the way and manner the government revenue are shared among the various tiers of government. Consequently, Citing Ofeimum (2005), Dickson and Asua (2016) posit resource control as the principle that every federating unit must be empowered to be self-governing through an expression of self-

determination. Agreeably, Henrik (2009) in Nwobashi and Itumo (2018) maintains that it is the control and management of resources by state or local government from whose jurisdiction the resources are extracted and in which these are managed under federal guidelines and then remit prescribed percentage to the federal or central government. Daffione (2001) likens resource control to be the practice of true federalism and natural law in which the federating units express their right of ownership to primarily control the natural resources within their borders and make an agreed contribution toward the sustenance, survival and maintenance of the common resources of the government at centre.

b. Restructuring

In trying to get a concise assertion of restructuring, Epelle and Nweke (2019) posit that the concept of restructuring means different things to different people. In their notion, there is hardly a consensus among people on what restructuring means which is as a result of challenges facing the practice of federalism the world over. Because federalism goes hand in glove with democracy, there is always the tendency that, in line with democratic principles, there is likely going to be those who are dissatisfied with the existing arrangement, hence would press for change from the political system for a better deal. According to Linz (1997) in Amuwo and Harault (2000) it is observed that “federalism can only assure that nobody could be fully unhappy but certainly not that everybody will be happy with the solution”. Epelle and Nweke (2019) maintain that Federalism in Nigeria has been able to bring all the different ethnic nationalities together over the years but unfortunately it has not been able to keep them happy. All the ethnic nationalities in Nigeria appear to be living together grudgingly over the years due to perceived social injustices. To liberate them from this menace, the quest for restructuring becomes necessary.

In their contribution, Ahmed, Norafidah & Knocks (2017) assert that it entails both political re-configuration of the country and devolution of powers to the constituent units as it is practiced in other countries. This notion of Ahmed, Norafidah and Knocks was upheld by Najakku (2016) when he maintained that it is the re-organization and re-arrangement of the nature of resource control by the various governments and regions to foster unity and development. Going by all these definitions above by different scholars, it is clear that the persistent clamour for political restructuring is an evidence of social injustice where ordinarily there should be justice. When there is injustice in a political system that is structured to achieve not only justice but unity in diversity, there would then be quest for justice with a view to bringing it back to the original ideals for which the union was either formed or made to exist.

In view of the above noted fact, Amuwo and Harault (2000) opine that restructuring seeks to restructure the existing federation in such a manner that the powers of the federal government are drastically reduced with a view to giving the component units or federating states (by extension ethnic nationalities) the opportunities to participate in their own affairs as obtained in developed federations. Tamuna (2000) agrees to this notion when he said that federalism as he gathered is a form of government where the component units of a political organization participate in sharing powers and functions in cooperative manner through the combined forces of ethnic pluralism and cultural diversity, among others who tend to pull their people apart. In his own contribution to defining the concept of restructure, Okonkwo (2018), has it to mean changing an existing status quo in order to make it more functional. Deductively from this definition, Ideobodo, Okolo & Eze (2018) assert that restructuring is a purpose-driven activity that hinges on replacement of an existing nature of a system with a new one that will be suitable to achieve the purpose of the system. In view of this, they maintain

that restructuring is operationally seen as a significant alteration, re-organization, reformation and re-arrangement of an existing structure, form or status quo in a revolutionary or evolutionary manner, with the aim of making it more improved, effective, efficient and functionally competent.

Restructuring Nigeria: A Retrospect

It has been generally agreed as noted in Osadolor (1998) that federalism was introduced in Nigeria in 1954 following the adoption of the Lyttleton Constitution. The system was retained at independence in 1960 and has been reflected in the country’s constitutions of 1960, 1963, 1979 and 1999. Since then, Nigeria has to contend with several challenges in applying the federal model to achieve national integration. These relate to designing acceptable institutions and structures as well as political processes. In the opinion of Ayoade (1998) and Tamuno (1989), the perceived imbalance in the federal structure and the concentration of power in the centre has led to continuous agitations for political restructuring of Nigeria. These agitations have a long history, beginning with the creation of the modern Nigerian state by British colonialists. It started with the dilemma of the British on how to effectively govern the colony and effectively manage the ‘natives’ to guarantee the maximum exploitation of their resources. The act of amalgamation of the Colony of Lagos and the protectorates of southern and northern Nigeria in 1914 was an apt solution to the dilemma at the time. However, in the course of colonial rule and the emergence of nationalist agitation for self-government and independence, the colonial authorities had to confront the emergent political realities as underscored by the politicization of ethnic and regional identities, which the colonial state actively encouraged through its divide and rule strategies (Dan- Azumi, Jega and Egwu, 2019).

Furthermore, Epelle and Nweke (2019) opine that since the enthronement of civil democratic rule in Nigeria in May 1999, there has been an upsurge in the activities of rights activists agitating for remediation of issues which they feel are of grave concern to them. This unprecedented increase in violent demands on the Nigerian state at the threshold of the Fourth Republic has been attributed to the fact that military rulers that were in power before now had literally silenced the civil society and placed a cover on the freedom of individuals to associate with one another and openly express themselves (Epelle, 2015, Idahosa, 2012). Hence with their exit from the political scene coupled with the libertarian air of civil democracy, it was not surprising that up till now bottled up emotions and sentiments among the populace began to bubble up. Currently, the topical issue almost threatening the corporate existence of the country is the call for a restructuring of the polity. In line with this, Epelle and Isike (2005) posit that the Fourth Republic opened with renewed agitations by environmental rights activists in the Niger Delta for a control of the resources they produce. Having received impetus from the activities and subsequent martyrdom of Ken Saro-Wiwa; the sympathetic ear of the international community to the resource control struggle; and the modest success recorded. Even if it is only in drawing global attention to the environmental injustice of the diabolical double act of the Nigerian state and the oil multinationals, youths and other concerned groups in the Niger Delta region renewed their call for a fair deal from the Nigerian state.

Ebohom and Emuedo (2009) maintain that there has been noticed problem of how best to share the revenue from the national level to all tiers of government which has remained obstinate from the period of political independence in October 1960 till date, as successive administration has always devised a formula that reflects and furthers its interest. Expectedly, this political maneuverings and manipulations of an issue bordering on the economic security of a people must

certainly draw the anger of the section of the country whose economic future is being threatened. The standard practice in developed federal systems like United States of America, Canada and Germany is for a region and or state to exploit the natural resources embedded in its territory and pay tax or royalty to the central government. The benefit of this type of federalism, called “fiscal federalism”, is that it boosts the revenue profile of the resource producing region, allowing it enough funds to make up for any environmental hazard suffered in course of the resources exploration and exploitation; and encourages healthy competition and rivalry among the federating units as each of them will be proactive in searching for new revenue-yielding resources to add to its fund (Epelle and Nweke, 2019).

In his opinion, Epelle (2004) argues that this is not the case in Nigeria, pointing at the Land Use Act (1978) which vested “ownership and control of all lands and resources therein in the federal government” thereby making all revenues accruing from the exploitation of these resources the exclusive preserve of the federal government. Epelle goes on to say that this Act, along with an earlier promulgated Oil Mineral Rights Decree No. 51 of 1969 officially ensured that regions/states which lay the golden egg hands over the chicks when hatched, while states which produce no resource get sometimes, even more revenue relative to the resource-bearing states from the monthly federal allocation. This bizarre federalism is strengthened by the fact that, in Nigeria, what is used in distributing revenue is not what is derived from your region/state, but such unformulated variables as “equality of states” (40%), “population” (30%), “social development sector” (10%), “land mass/terrain” (10%) with “internal revenue effort” getting a trifling 10%. This abnormal situation undoubtedly in the opinion of Epelle and Nweke (2019) was the reason behind the feeling of resentment, dissensions and agitations for remediation from persons in the resource-producing region/states. At the end, the best the Nigerian state could offer in return was a

marginal increase in the derivation principle from 3% to 13% and the establishment of a panacea interventionist agency for the region, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). Ironically, before the pre-eminence of petroleum to the commanding height of the Nigerian economy, the derivation principle was left at 100% and only in 1964 was it reduced to 50%. Citing Epelle and Isike (2005) in Epelle and Nweke (2019), it is pertinent to know that this period also coincided with the era when the regions had a fair spread of tradable agricultural produce: groundnut in the North, cocoa in the West and palm-oil in the East. In other words, at that time the three regional governments retained the lion share of revenue from resources gotten from their regions and bequeathed only a little fraction of it to the federal government. However, all these, as we can see, changed with the discovery of crude oil in the Niger Delta region.

This issue of discovery of oil in Niger Delta region conveys a fearsome inequality in access to power and other resources between the minority and majority ethnic groups in the Nigerian state, which is the source of conflict. To lessen these conflicts and ease the feelings of minority elements in the country, the ruling elite have over time brought out policy instruments and programmes which in their opinion, equals the process of social mobility for all concerned while serving as affirmative action for minority elements and other less-advantaged groups in the country. Some of these policies include state creation, quota system and, its effect, federal character principle. Apart from this, Epelle and Nweke (2019) noted other affirmative action, the federal character principle which intends to ensure that public offices in the federation are spread in a manner that all qualified elements from all sections of the country are adequately represented as provided for in Section 7 of the third Schedule of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and also aimed at addressing the fears of domination by minority sections of the country. Nevertheless, beyond the political undertone which it

pursues on the one hand for the governing elite who exploit it, on the other hand it served to reduce the entrepreneurial spirit in some persons or sections of the country who apparently see no need to strive for high socio-economic achievements. Purportedly, Epelle and Omoruyi (2003) vividly posit that the net effect of the policy of quota system and federal character principle has “been to demoralize those from sections of the country where there is high achievement orientation while promoting mediocrity and encouraging those involved in indolence to see it as a virtue”.

According to Agara (2014), the demands by all the ethnic minorities are a show that they do not feel secure in the Nigerian federation as presently constituted, hence their call for a restructuring of the polity. Some of these calls have come in the form of peaceful protests, advocacies, lobbying of state and federal legislators and even outright violence, the last method of which became a more effective tool beginning with the erstwhile military regimes of General Ibrahim Babangida and late General Sani Abacha infamous marginalization of specific ethnic groups and social deprivation. The issue of religion is another problem that has negatively challenged the process of nation-building in Nigeria; this is because in spite of the fact that the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria precludes the state from adopting any religion as a state religion, the country is always faced with one religious violence or the other. Nigeria as secular state has been registered as a member of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) during the General Ibrahim Babangida regime and officially licensed to operate an Islamic banking in the country; the Sharia law also operates in many states in the Northern part of the country. With the 1999 Constitution literally giving official legitimacy to it, by making provision for Sharia courts in place of the customary courts prevailing in the Southern part of the country. This also poses a question to the oneness of Nigeria. Against all these, Epelle (2017) also posits that through the existentialist

activities of Boko Haram, a militant Islamic group based in the Northern part of the country, over 13,000 lives has been lost as at 2015. The group has also burnt over three hundred villages, destroyed over two hundred churches, and kidnapped over two thousand young boys and girls. Hence, in the face of all of these issues, the question every rational mind will ask is: is Nigeria still a secular state? Does Nigeria still operate a constitution and what is the solution to all these problems? It will be germane to assert here that these questions and more are the pressing reasons for the demands for a restructuring of Nigeria.

Need for Restructuring and Resource Control in Nigeria

The emergence of Nigerian federalism is not without challenges. This is observed by Nwabueze (1982) in his book, “A Constitutional History of Nigeria” on which he identified the greatest problem of federalism in Nigeria today as the lack of proper understanding among the leaders and the general public of the nature of federal relationship as manifested between the federal and state governments. Going further, Nwabueze was referred by Ebegbulem (2011) to have noted that in the Nigerian experience, the autonomy of each tier of government is misconstrued to mean competition and confrontation with each trying to frustrate the other, whereas the conception underlying the system is that the federal and state governments are mutually complementary parts of a governance mechanism.

To Nwabueze, federalism demands cooperation between each level of government in order to promote the welfare of the people through their combined powers. He goes further to examine what he calls the six different principles involved in his definition of federalism namely: separateness and independence of each government, mutual non-interference of inter-government immunities, the question of equality between the regional/state governments, the number of regional/state governments whom a

federal government can meaningfully exist, techniques for division of powers and a supreme constitution. He proffers some answers as to why revenue allocation has evoked intense controversy in Nigeria. In his opinion, the main reason is that federally collected revenue is the mainstay of the finances of the state governments accounting for over 90 percent of the total revenue and their entire developmental initiative is embodied in this. More so, the Nigerian federalism originated from an existing unitary state devolving some of its power to the newly created governmental units based on the three regions of the country. Had the federation been formed by the coming together of existing independent states with already developed sources of revenue of their own, the question would have been how much of such sources of revenue should be surrendered to the new federal government (Ebegbule, 2011)

In Azaiki (2003), one major character of the Nigerian union which was to remain for many years was that the three regions of the North, West and East retained control of their natural resources which ought to be one positive aspect to the practice of federalism in Nigeria. Azaiki noted in Nwobashi and Itumo (2018) that “while resource control is a basic economic theory grounded in the fact that land, labour, capital and entrepreneurship are factors of production within the context of federation, it implies that the federating units within a federation have a right to primarily control the natural resources within their borders, and to make an agreed contribution towards the maintenance of common services at the centre” as was obtained in Nigeria until the military struck in 1966. According to Ofin-Esin (2005), it is pertinent to note that “the demands for resource control clearly demonstrate that (federalism) is still an imposed issue and we must find a way to resolve it if we are to continue as a federation”. In supporting vein, Ikelegbe (2001), asserts that “the tempo, activity, cohesion and commitment of the civil groups indicate that, the state-resource authority and the state regional resource

distribution would have to be negotiated, redefined and reconstituted if national stability and unity is to be sustained. It is alarming to Ekpo and Ubok-Udom (2003) that the wealth of the nation decentralizes on its owners but in Nigerian case, the people have nothing to show for it, except for paradoxical poverty. In addition, they also argue that in the United States of America, the oil producing states control their oil resources and wonder why the same principle could not be applied to Nigeria.

With the notice of the cancellation of principle of derivation and the rights and control of the natural endowments of the Niger Delta transferred to the federal government, Azaiki (2003) questioned the place of federalism and resource control. He goes further to argue that were Nigeria to uphold the principles of true federalism, the present call for resource control would be non-existent. This is because true federalism guarantees resource control. True federalism protects the fundamental rights of both the individual and the federating states. It affords states the benefit of deploying their resources for their own development. Against this backdrop, Davidson (1992) in Ebegbulem (2011) posits that Nigeria is currently operating a defective and fallible federalism because the Nigerian federal system has consistently undermined one of the most cardinal philosophical principles of federalism. In his assertion, “the relative autonomy, independence and self-determination of these units must be appreciated and guaranteed in clear terms.” Hence, advocates for resource control have argued that in any true federalism, powers are shared between the federating units and the central government in such a way that each government has its own apparatus for the conduct of its own affairs. Thus, stressing that in any true federalism, the oil, gas or any other mineral found in any state belongs to that state.

Nwobashi and Itumo (2018) maintain that the fact that the areas that provide the national wealth are the poorest in the country is

provocative. The condition of these areas and their people have been described by Duru (1999) in this startling words, thus, “Foremost is that although the bulk of crude oil, the country’s main source of revenue is derived from their land, they belong to the ranks of the most marginalized groups in the country. Another is that several years of exploration and hazards of spillage and gas flaring which accompany it, have degraded their environment and left the communities desolate. Not only have farming and fishing, the major occupations of these mostly riverine minorities been decimated, their territories have continuously lacked basic infrastructure and amenities like electricity, roads, schools, hospitals, portable water and so on.” The observation of Duru was not without corroborating supports; hence Nnoli (2007) makes it loud that “the cruelest twist is that half a century of oil extraction in the Delta, has failed to make the lives of the people better. Instead, they are poorer still and hopeless”. With this irony, resource control is seen within the contest between the states of the Niger Delta region and the federal government as signifying the political-legal authority by states to manage natural resources within their territories, in terms of defining the manner and mode of exploitation as well as the utilization of proceeds accruing thereto (Ibanga, 2002).

In summary, it is necessary to posit the opinion of Okumagba (2002) who posits that resource control transcends the narrow confines of crude oil to include coal, hides and skin, tin, limestone, groundnut, rubber, cotton, palm oil and solid minerals on earth. Consequently, any state that is endowed with any of these resources will be empowered to control and manage same upon payment of taxes to the federal government. More so, he noticed that resource control will stimulate the healthy competition among the states and eventually lead to even development of the country. New barriers will be broken; more resources will be discovered and managed for the benefit of the Nigerian federation. The fact is that resource control

will lead to diversification and revamping of solid mineral sectors which have been neglected. To this end, the believe is that the practice of resource control will improve the pace of economic development of the whole country in general and particularly make the respective states to identify their comparative advantages which best serves the country.

A Hermeneutical Consideration of Genesis 13:8-9

In trying to have an exegesis of this biblical portion in relation to the two personalities that captured the discussion. Obiora (2011) posits that human inclination to self-preservation could generate self-centeredness when one craves for innate desire at the detriment of other human beings. Such egoistic attitude in her opinion breeds conflict and its adverse consequences. In Genesis 13, the writer presents the figure of Abraham as a strong proponent of peaceful resolution of conflict and restructuring. Hence this text is still relevant and instructive today where conflict and the need for restructuring are evident. Abraham has been noted as a figure in the foundations of both Judaism and Christianity (Millard, 1992). A name of which the Scripture supplies its traditional etymology as “father of multitude” (Gen 17: 5). He was regarded as Israel’s progenitor (Exo. 2:24; 4:5; 32:13; Isa 29:22; Ezek 33:24; Mic 7:20; John 8:39.53; Rom 4:16), even though the eponym remains Jacob who was given the name Israel (Gen 32:28), and who was the immediate ancestor of the twelve tribes. However, Israel’s God is pre-eminently the God of Abraham (Exod 3:6.15; 4:1; 1Kgs 18:36; Ps 47:9) (Obiora, 2011).

According to Igbokwe-Ibeto & Fatile (2013), the story of the Hebrews started with Abraham, a simple and easy-going man whose concern and feelings for the progress of mankind made him very popular and generous within his time. He was a clan chief that believed in one single God, who left Ur and became the father of Nations (Genesis 17:5). Abraham sowed the seeds that helped destroy

paganism, planted the roots for the three major monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), and permanently changed the world with the ideas of monotheism, justice, and compassion. They furthered by highlighting some characters and attributes that were in Abraham that gave way to his practical sound life. In their opinion, Abraham was humble, He was an individual of great humility hence, he referred to himself as “but dust and ashes” (Genesis 18:27). Abraham had a vision, the vision of which was targeted at finding a new Nation –the Promised Land, where his descendants would live as a unified people believing in monotheism, concern for the helpless, and justice for all. Abraham was a monotheist in a pagan society and spread the name of God wherever he travelled (Genesis 12:8; Genesis 13:4; Genesis 13:18). Abraham had courage and confidence; hence the Bible relates how Abraham mobilized his clan and, with only 318 people, waged war with four powerful kings in order to rescue his nephew Lot (Genesis, 14).

He cared about people and had a strong sense of justice. Abraham was also extremely hospitable to strangers which were seen by his taking care of angels unknowingly. Abraham’s concern for others was also manifested when he heard that God intended to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. This upset him and gave him concern that he dared to ask God “Is the Judge of all the earth not going to do what is right”? (Genesis 18:25). Abraham had charisma which gave him the ability to influence others for the good of his people. Abraham had the ultimate divine gift since God assured him that “I shall make a great nation out of you and shall bless you, I will bless those that bless you and him that calls down evil upon you I shall curse and all the families of the ground will certainly bless themselves by means of you” (Genesis, 12:3). It is noted above all that Abraham was willing to make sacrifice for his beliefs; this is made clear by the story of his test, in which God asked him to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac, indicated Abraham’s willingness to make a personal sacrifice

for God (Genesis, 22). It is interesting to note Abraham's reaction after being told by an angel of God saying "Lay not your hand upon the lad nor do anything to him for now I know that you are a God-fearing man" (Genesis 22:12) (Igbokwe-Ibeto & Fatile, 2013).

Abraham was a person that was willing to make a great sacrifice and that is why he proved that he was the right choice as the first patriarch. This is seen in the restructuring that took place between him and Lot. It is important to also note that when Abraham and his nephew Lot left Egypt they both had a considerable amount of cattle. Their respective shepherds began to quarrel because there was insufficient grazing land for the two herds. This implies that the land for grazing was limited and not enough for them any longer. Here comes in the issue of resource control. There was the question of who controls the resources, will it be Abraham the leader (Federal government) or Lot the led (Federating unit). It was at this point that Abraham saw the need of their peaceful separation as the only solution to the problem otherwise the end point may be disastrous. Hence, Abraham, been a lover of peace and selfless man said to Lot "please let there be no quarrel between me and you and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen. Is not the whole land available to you? Please, separate from me. If you go to the left, then I will go to the right, but if you go to the right, then I will go to the left" (Genesis 13:8-9). Abraham, though Lot's uncle and the head of the clan, was not arrogant and allowed his nephew to decide first in which direction to head.

In these verses, it is important to know that there was a quarrel that erupted because Abraham who had great possessions was still with Lot who also had acquired as many possessions as he. It is explicitly stated that the problem was lack of space for both great companies. And because of the person of Abraham, who was not interested in mundane thing to the extent of bringing enmity between him and his nephew, made a generous proposal to Lot. Lot accepted

the proposal; hence, it served as a peaceful solution to the conflict between his herdsmen and that of Lot. The quarrel that arose between the two groups was typical of semi-nomads when their possessions outgrew their living space and sustenance. In order to maintain the viability of the groups, peaceful separation of each becomes necessary. What is significant in Abraham’s case is that he allowed Lot to make the choice first. I wish the federal government can learn from this.

It is worthy to note that in this hermeneutical consideration, Abraham was the first to perceive the crisis and he responsibly pleaded for peaceful solution. He appealed for peace because he knew that Lot was his next of kin. Strife with one’s kindred is folly and means one inflicting injury on oneself. As a father, Abraham was responsible for his family and the herders who will suffer the aftermath of possible open confrontation with another group. (So is the federal government responsible for all of us and should be concern of the suffering of the people both now and in the years to come). His proposal to Lot portrayed further his paternal care for Lot and for the members of both families. Separation is the best solution in a vast land that they have before them. It is necessary to say here that sense of great responsibility preserves life and secures wellbeing and peace for oneself and for those around and our leaders should be made to understand that.

Contextualizing Abraham’s Model in Nigerian Restructuring Polity

Haven made a concerted effort in the hermeneutical understanding of Abraham’s model of restructuring; it is germane to posit here that this model was purely based on peaceful separation. This became clear when the land was no longer enough for them which gave rise to who controls the resources (available grazing land). Abraham saw no need of strife among them because they were brothers, hence the need for

him to approach Lot for restructuring to take place. As a solution to this problem, Abraham made a way for separation which was the best option for them as at that time. We are not going to toe the line of Abraham which was purely on peaceful separation, hence the need for re-reading the model in our context. In trying to re-read this model in a way to contextualize it, the paper argues that the cry and call for restructuring will still be seen as an illusion until Nigeria gets a leader that will possess the same qualities like Abraham. A leader that will not give room for conflict and bridging of peaceful co-existence among his people. A leader that understands the real essence and meaning of leadership and is ready to actualize it. A leader that is selfless, loving, peaceful, sacrificial, just and has concern for human life. A leader that is willing and ready to listen to the cry of the people and proffer a possible solution to their problem. It will be pertinent at this point for us to look at some of those characteristics that were in Abraham which made him to be exceptional in his time and examine how they can help in giving room for restructuring if they are seen in the lives of our leaders.

Nigeria needs a humble leader. Humility was seen in the life of Abraham which was made clear by him (Abraham) approaching Lot when he noticed the problem between their herdsmen. He was not arrogating himself as the elder (federal government) whom the Lord has promised to bless and through whom also Lot (federating unit) has received his blessings, but he humbly spoke to Lot in love. He went to Lot to renegotiate their staying together and possibly make way for separation which is seen in the words of this topic, “let there be no quarrel among us for we are brothers. Our leaders should not be ashamed or arrogating themselves in approaching the other units in the tiers of government and give way for renegotiation and sorting things out so that there may be peace. Our co-existence is no longer peaceful as an entity and our continuation in pretense will not help out and it is only a humble leader that will make a positive impact.

Nigeria needs a sacrificial leader: Abraham was a man that his name was synonymous to sacrifice; hence it was not difficult for him to propose any deal on sacrifice. When he approached Lot in humility, it is clear from the text that he made a request that was sacrifice epitomized. He said to Lot, “is not the land before you, separate yourself I pray thee, choose you the left side or the right”. Here one can see Abraham been ready to sacrifice anything and everything in making sure that peace exists among them. He was not looking at himself as the leader or the person that has the call of God. Neither was he looking at the side that has more pasture, but he was looking at their common humanity and oneness which must continue beyond the grazing land. This paper posits that our country needs a leader that will be ready to make sacrifices for the betterment of our togetherness and for the interest of peaceful co-existence. It is clear that the Federal unit needs the oil but the federating states also need it which implies that there must be need for sacrifices if restructuring will be achieved.

We need a selfless leader for restructuring to be effective in this nation. The notion of sacrifice connotes selflessness. This is the idea of not seeing oneself but being concerned more with the needs and wishes of others. The offer by Abraham to Lot was not a small one as some of us may think. Looking at this in its practicality, one side was flourished and good for grazing (oil zones) and the other was not (no oil zones). It takes extra grace to allow the younger one to make a choice first. Abraham was not looking at what Lot was looking at but had a different view of life. Until our leaders are endowed with this virtue of selflessness, it will still be business as usual. The problem of our nation is that the federal government is more interested in satisfying the central needs without considering the needs of the other units. If we think that the land is no longer enough and conducive for us as is seen today in every of her affairs, let us adopt the Abraham’s model of selflessness which will give room for been considerate. Our

leaders should see people suffering in the federating units and consider them because they are also human beings that are entitled to enjoying normal essential needs just as our leaders are enjoying.

There is need for a leader that is interested in peace and pursuing of it for restructuring to be achieved. Peace is a concept of societal friendship and harmony in the absence of hostility and violence. In a social sense, peace is commonly used to mean a lack of conflict and freedom from fear of violence between individuals or heterogeneous groups. The peaceful co-existence of Nigeria as a nation is becoming a mirage. The nation has always been characterized with fears, violence, hostility and insurgence which are not good to our unity. The worst aspect of this is that it seems as if there are sacred cows that have the coverage of the law which gives more room for the occurrences that distort the nation's peace. The issue of herdsmen that are causing more havoc in the society with much records of killing and instead of been proscribed as terrorist group are granted a radio station is a case in point. There is no gain saying the fact that our peaceful co-existence in Nigeria is in doubt and it can vividly be seen that we need a leader that is interested and ready to work for peace and do away with anything that will be a threat to our peaceful co-existence.

Nigeria needs just people in her leadership. In this regard, the researcher saw justice as what we regard as right base on our moral concepts of ethics, rationality, religion, equity and fairness. It ensures that all decisions and actions are in line with a country's law. It therefore portends that a just leader is one whom his behaviour is according to what is morally right and fair. Abraham in suggesting for peaceful separation to Lot made it in justice, because he saw Lot as his brother and has to treat him as one. He dealt ethically to him with equity and fairness because he has a conscience that cannot allow him to do otherwise. One of the problems we have in this nation is that most of our leaders are no longer interested in doing what is ethically

right but doing things in a way to benefit them. In this regard, it is seen that if our leaders are still interested in fighting just cause, the issue of restructuring and resource control would have been settled long ago. We need leaders that will have the same thinking like Abraham who will always put himself in whatever action he wants to take with regards to other human being.

The paper finally posits that we need leaders that are concern with the affairs and welfare of the people. Abraham requested for separation from Lot because of the concern he had for the herdsmen. In this regard, the problem between them if allowed to exacerbate will more be felt by their people than themselves. Hence, Abraham has to consider the fated and future of the herdsmen and their possession and sought for a peaceful approach which he was ready to pay its price. The call and cry for resource control and restructuring in Nigeria has sent many people to early grave. This is because of lack of concern by some of our leaders. It is ironical to say that most of the communities that are hosting the sources of Nigeria income (crude oil) are among the poorest communities with regards to the United Nation poverty assessment. This is because they are not benefiting from the oil, their lands are polluted that the farm produce are not doing well. The waters are polluted that the aquatic animals are suffering it. The air is polluted by continues flaming which is also affecting the ozone layers and causing more deadly diseases to the inhabitant and yet they are not benefiting from the income. If the government should adopt this aspect of the model, and have concern for the suffering of the people, the issue of resource control and restructuring would have been resolved long ago.

Conclusion

The core of restructuring polity is to allow each state or region in a federation a significant measure of independence to manage its affairs. The debate of restructuring in Nigeria centres essentially on

the need to understand the basis of the contract of true federalism and resource control. This debate has been long-standing, passionate and inconclusive. Despite the contrived arrangement as articulated by the ruling class, the regular dysfunction has resulted in series of violent, dramatic and traumatic inter-ethnic regional confrontation, giving way for the essence of the debate. Indeed, the most spectacular and deliberate expression of the centrality of the contention is the unprecedented demand of the Niger Delta states for resource control. More so, political observers have argued that the agitation for resource control is a test for the enthronement of true federalism in Nigeria. It is not to be argued that true federalism (restructuring) and resource control are two concepts mutually complementing each other. Hence true federal state practices resource control while resource control functions vibrantly in a true federal state.

Furthermore, it is believed that political restructuring of Nigeria has been longstanding in the national political discourse which can be traced back to the colonial period. This is because the federalism as brought by the colonial master was shallow and was used by the British government of which they were able to achieve a feat because the pre-colonial political institutions and structures provided a suitable platform upon which their choice for federalism smoothly sailed through. Despite nationalist agitations, they were able to manipulate the political processes to continue the exploration and exploitation of the vast resources the country was endowed with. This is what the succeeding governments have been building on which has made them to always give a deaf ear to the cry for restructuring and resource control. It has been noticed earlier that restructuring the nation loom large of which should not be glossed over otherwise the consistent clamour by the populace will continue to be an illusion.

It is pertinent to posit here that this paper started by examining surrounding issues in the quest for restructuring and resource control. It dealt extensively on the theory of relative deprivation as a

framework which is suitable for this work because most of these communities that are producing oil are deprived of some essential needs of life which is not the same with other oil producing nations. The paper relying on sources and authorities reviewed the concepts of resource control and restructuring in Nigeria perspective.

A retrospective survey of restructuring in Nigeria was done which suggested the need for a restructuring and resource control in Nigeria. In this regard, the Abraham’s model was reviewed, re-read and contextualized in Nigerian nation. The model therefore holds that for there to be a restructuring in Nigeria that will be generally acceptable, we need leaders like Abraham who was interested in their common humanity and oneness and was ready to promote it by making the required sacrifices. Therefore we need leaders that are endowed with pursuance of peace, love, sacrifice, selflessness, justice and concern for human life. It is clear now that our unity is in question but a transformational and selfless leader can make any scarifies in bringing it back.

Recommendations

Haven gone through this work with ideas from pieces of information available, it will be necessary to take note of the following recommendations:

The paper recommends that the Federal government can learn from Abraham who humbled himself to Lot for a renegotiation of their stay when it was obvious that there was trace of quarrel by taking a humble approach in renegotiating for continued existence with the federating units.

The Federal government can borrow a leaf from Abraham who for the interest of peace and brotherhood allowed Lot to make a choice by allowing the producing states to decide on the ratio they are satisfied with so that peace may rain if we must still continue as one indivisible entity.

The Federal Government should tie the derivation fund that accrue to the oil producing states from the federation account to specific development projects in the oil producing communities to prevent the local ruling elite from diverting or misappropriating the funds as they are currently doing. This will enable the oil producing communities to benefit directly from revenue allocation.

The entire citizens of Nigeria irrespective of tribe or region of origin should be value re-oriented and psychologically engineered towards understanding the need for both unity in their diversities and advantage of restructuring the country into an egalitarian society. This will also make them to change their laissez-faire attitude and embark on a nationalistic call for restructuring without fear of suppression.

The paper finally recommends that there is need for a visionary and sincere leader who will be ready to tackle this issue of restructuring and resource control once and implement a true and acceptable Federalism for the good of the nation. This paper recommends that the Federal government should increase the derivation formula of 13% for the producing areas to possibly 30% in order to help them cope with life and recover from threat of life they are receiving due to oil explorations and exploitation. The paper also recommends that an agreed percentage of tax or royalty should be paid by the states to the central government, and the oil producing states should be allowed to participate in the exploration and exploitation of oil and gas in the states just as it was before the military rule.

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