

Poverty and Hunger Alleviation: A Kairos for Status and Processus Confessionis by the Church in Nigeria

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Accepted 29 January, 2013

Abstract- Given the pervasive influence of penury and its associate legacy of hunger and starvation in Africa, this paper holds that the *kairos* for the Church to declare *status* and *processus confessionis* for poverty alleviation has come. *Status confessionis* is described as a faith based confession, which arises from a realization that the Church's *raison d'etre* is under gravitational challenge to declare that a *kairos* for an embodied witness against a prevailing ungodly state of affairs has arrived. *Processus confessionis* is proposed as the Church's approach to prophetic witness against the evil. The paper presents and concludes with social welfare concern as an integral theological maxim for the Church's celebration of human dignity; social activism as a theological witness; Christian pedagogy as a theological political enterprise, and networking as a theological practice of orthopraxis. Continuing salient complicity with persons and structures which breed, enthrone or sustain poverty is summarily sinful and must come under the embodied prophetic critique of the Church.

Keywords: Poverty, Hunger, Human Dignity, Orthopraxis, Social Activism, Christian Pedagogy, *Status Confessionis*, Victims of Society, Theological Witness, Ideological, MDG.

Introduction

The late Professor Kwame Bediako of Ghana once lamented over the total absence of theological voice as a response to the Osama Bin Laden led September 11 2001 terrorist attack on America: 'I must confess with unease that this impact appears to be making us think of the world in less theological terms. It is clear that in the mode of international reporting and commentary on this new turn of events, geopolitical, economic and now military considerations have come to dominate.' His lamentation tends to reflect the seeming lackluster attitude of the Church towards the ongoing attempt to realize the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) as a historical reality in Nigeria. For instance, while it can be said that the civil society and the academic try to discuss and engage the burning issue of poverty alleviation from the anthropological, socio-political and economic perspectives, the Church whose prophetic voice and praxis ought to stand out as a catalyst to such actions can be said to have rather taken over the bed and pillows. This is a vexation because it makes a mockery of the Church's claim of being anointed to preach the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to proclaim recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed and to announce that the time has come when the Lord will save His people (Lk 4: 18-19).

The Church, a South African theologian Professor Ignatius Swart has argued, is 'a facilitator, enabler and catalyst of

others agendas, a servant of the people's or social movements, the movements of the poor who are the authentic agents for development.' Its role as a voluntary and people's organization *inter alia*, include: 'to activate a broad mass of voluntary activism; to serve the emancipatory strivings (economic, political and social) of the movements of the poor and act as mediating institutions between people and bureaucracies, people and business; to function as democratic spaces for social movements' self-expression; to act as the support base and facilitators for peoples alliances across boundaries.' This vexation stems from the seeming unwillingness of the Church to declare or propose a *kairos* for *status* and *processus confessionis* against poverty and hunger which mocks its claim of being engraced with a spirituality and social ethics that brings good news to the poor. The Church speaks about people of goodwill who scatter to do the *voluntas revelata Dei* (voluntarily revealed Will of God) and gather to reflect, refresh and resolve to represent Christ in their daily engagements.

People of goodwill as Martin Luther King Jnr has argued are indispensable in the search for a society where every body is somebody. Such persons embody and demonstrate the courage to put an end to suffering by willingly or graciously suffering themselves rather than inflict suffering on others. They envision and work for the actualization of a world of peoplehood, cooperation and peace which rejects racism, materialism and violence. Being God's people, the Church seeks and espouses the knowledge of the true God through the sovereign, gracious and self revelation, imaged in Jesus Christ (Col 1: 15). True godliness John Calvin has emphasized consists of a pure and true zeal which loves God as a real father and looks up to him as a real Lord. True godliness embraces God's righteousness and detests offending God more than dying.

Thus, *status* and *processus confessionis* are indispensable in the quest for true godliness. They represent a more substantive theological approach to discerning the *voluntas revelata Dei*; *fides quarrens intellectum* (faith seeking understanding); and as good news to the victims of society. By victims of society, we mean people who are suffering from the stereotype of society, or those whom the structures of society questions and demeans their human dignity inordinately. The victims of society include people who bear the brunt of the associated pains of science and scientific reflections and dispositions as well as technology and technocracy which reduces them to objects of pity and exploitation. They are the poor.

¹ This paper was presented and given critiques in a colloquium on Poverty, Hunger and Religion, organized by Hugh Goldie Lay/Theological Training Institution in November 2012.

² African Theology as a Challenge to Western Theology' in Christian Identity in Cross Cultural Perspective: Studies in Reformed Theology 8, Brinkman, Martien E & van Kuelen, Dirk

The World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995 said that poverty is a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. It depends not only on income but also on access to services. It includes a lack of income and productive resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increased morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments and social discrimination and exclusion. It is also characterized by lack of participation in decision making and in civil, social and cultural life. It occurs in all countries: as mass poverty in many developing countries, pockets of poverty amid wealth in developed countries, loss of livelihoods as a result of economic recession, sudden poverty as a result of disaster or conflict, the poverty of low-wage workers, and the utter destitution of people who fall outside family support systems, social institutions and safety nets.

For the UN, poverty is defined "as the total absence of opportunities, accompanied by high levels of undernourishment, hunger, illiteracy, lack of education, physical and mental ailments, emotional and social instability, unhappiness, sorrow and hopelessness for the future. Poverty is also characterized by a chronic shortage of economic, social and political participation, relegating individuals to exclusion as social beings, preventing access to the benefits of economic and social development and thereby limiting their cultural development."

And for the World Bank, "Poverty is an income level below some minimum level necessary to meet basic needs. This minimum level is usually called the "poverty line". What is necessary to satisfy basic needs varies across time and societies. Therefore, poverty lines vary in time and place, and each country uses lines which are appropriate to its level of development, societal norms and values. But the content of the needs is more or less the same everywhere. Poverty is hunger. Poverty is lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. Poverty is not having access to school and not knowing how to read. Poverty is not having a job, is fear for the future, living one day at a time. Poverty is losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water. Poverty is powerlessness, lack of representation and freedom.

The poor as His Eminence, Rev Professor E.M. Uka has shown includes those who are destitute of wealth, material goods; the weak whose prosperity and social status are lowest (Ex. 23: 2, 30: 15; Lev 14: 21; Prov 22: 16). Also constitutive of the poor are those who are impaired physically and psychologically and so utterly helpless (Job 24:28, Psl 82: 13, Jerr 40: 7). They also include the humble workwomen/men from the lowest economic class (2 Cor 9:9, Psl 112: 9).

The concept of poverty presented in this work speaks about life in penury which is set and maintained by structural and human *pseudo*-ethical ideologies, praxis and dispositions. Such unwholesome ethics often questions and demeans the human dignity, reflections and ethics of its victims hence we summarize it as a vexation. It also bequeaths the victims and the perpetrators of these social ills with a seeming philosophy

of truism/unhealthy individualism, which often leads to what we summarize as a monster called ideological poverty. In other words, poverty can be described as living the life of the suffering victims of society who groan under the weighty pains of dependency syndrome, *consumerism*, exploitation, oppression, affliction, suppression, false accusations, etc as it is evident in our Nigerian experience. They cry and wonder when divine intervention will inspire them to join the biblical Virgin Mary to sing the *magnificat*.

Given this pervasive influence of the vicious circle of ideological penury and its associate legacy of hunger and starvation in Nigeria, it has become obvious that the *kairos* for the Church to declare *status* and *processus confessionis* for poverty alleviation has come. Continuing salient complicity with persons and structures which breed, enthrone or sustain the vicious circle of ideological poverty is summarily sinful and must come under the embodied prophetic critique of the Church as *status* and *processus confessionis*.

Status Confessionis

Status *confessionis* can be described as an embodied demonstration of faith based confession as a protest against a prevailing ungodly state of affairs in a given context. Being a decision of faith, status *confessionis* arises from a realization that the faith community's *raison d'etre* is under weighty pressure from the prevailing states of affairs, to declare that a *kairos* (moment of truth or moment of decision) for an embodied witness against such ungodly happenings have come. From the beginning, the people of God in times of crisis, always have a way of confessing to the world saying; because of our faith, this is who we are, what we believe, and what we intend to do, vis-à-vis our status. As people of goodwill, they seek to discern and embody the the *voluntas revelata Dei* as faith seeking to understand and life out what they have believed in more substantive ways. In other words, status *confessionis* represents a discernment and embodiment of the truth as the *voluntas revelata Dei* in ethos, in structures and in fact every sphere of human life, as an embodied approach to *fides quarrens intellectum*.

It is perhaps from this insight that Professor Ernst Conrade from his South African apartheid experience presents *status confessionis* as that faith-based confession which can be understood as the Church's realization of significant truth about its *raison d'etre*. That is, that truth which issues from our realization that a prevailing state of affairs puts a heavy pressure on the people of God to declare that the *kairos* or moment of truth (decisive moment) to state its position against ungodly state of affairs has arrived. It is a moment where nothing less than the confession of the Gospel in words and deeds is the spirituality and identity of the Church. In many cases, the ungodly states of affairs may transcend injustice and idolatry within the faith communities (Church) and the larger society, which would normally require a prophetic witness stressing a call to conversion in the faith communities. Such distressing states of affairs often metamorphose into heresy that can lead to explicit theological legitimization of evil, false teaching, debased thought patterns that have gained substantive grounds in the Church itself, and the failure of the people of God to recognize and unmask such

³ "The Third Public: Hermeneutical Key to the Debate on Church and Development" in Religion and Social Development in Post-Apartheid South Africa, Swart Ignatius et al, eds., (Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2010), Pg 215-217.

⁴ I Have A Dream: Writings And Speeches That Changed The World (London: HarperCollins, 1992), Pg 134.

⁵ Truth For All Time: A Brief Outline Of The Christian Faith (Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust), Pg 3.

⁶ Ndukwe, Olo. Celebration of Life: Religion, Mission & the Victims of Society (Ohaia, Nigeria: Preciousgrace Publications, 2011), Pg 39-53.

thought patterns. *Status confessionis* as an embodied confession of faith is proclaimed against false doctrines as well as ideological distortions which threaten the Gospel itself within the community of faith, and the larger society. In such ungodly environments, the integrity of the Gospel and its witness are at stake.

Allan Boesak also drew from the decision of the 22nd General Assembly (Seoul 1989) of the World Alliance of the Reformed Churches (WARC) to say: Every declaration of the *status confessionis* is based on the conviction that the integrity of the Gospel is at stake. It is a call from error to truth. It demands of the Church a clear and unambiguous decision on the truth of the Gospel and identifies the contrary view in doctrine and conduct of life as heretical. The declaring of the *status confessionis* is related to the practice of the Church as well as to her teaching. The practice of the church must conform to her doctrine that demands the declaration of *status confessionis*. The declaring of *status confessionis* must be directed at a specific situation. It draws errors that threaten a particular church to light. At the same time the underlying danger of this error endangers the integrity of the preaching of all churches. Declaring the *status confessionis* in a specific situation is simultaneously aimed at all churches and calls them to join in the profession of faith.

Status confessionis is that confession of faith which puts a weighty pressure on a community of faith to embody its confession of faith as a lived, living and liveable reality that must be demonstrated as witness against a prevailing and distressing manifestation of utter ungodliness in a given moment. *Status confessionis* is a theological declaration that is often best celebrated than explained or translated from one context to another with meaningful critiques. The Belhar Confession which led to declaration of apartheid as heresy/the total collapse of apartheid in South Africa; the Barmen Declaration against Hitler and Nazism in Germany; and the Accra Confession which was adopted by the delegates of the 24th General Council of the WARC –now World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) – in Accra, Ghana (based on the theological conviction that the economic and ecological injustices of today's global economy require the Reformed family to respond as a matter of faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ) are historical examples of *status confessionis* and its results. They make it indispensable for the Church's witness against the distressing legacies of poverty in Nigeria.

The Nigerian poverty experience speaks about penurious life which is predominantly set and shaped by structural and human *pseudo*-ethical ideologies, praxis and dispositions, which usually result in false visionary pursuit of capitalism and *consumerism*. False visionary pursuit of capitalism and consumerism leads to *pseudo*-ethical spirituality that is rooted in unbridled sacrifice of tomorrow on the alter of today's individual happiness and insatiability. They often usher in and sustain dependency syndrome, which deludes and creates in the mind of the victim a false self image of one as an inordinate dependent.

What is needed in our nation is a Gospel proclamation that is under mandate to be re-presented to the perpetrators of ideological poverty and the victims of society in substantive ways that can portray *euangelion* as a discernment and

embodiment of the divine truth. It must serve as a witness of the *voluntas revelata Dei* against utter ungodliness, as an embodied approach to faith seeking understanding. What is happening in most Nigerian societies mock our pieties, doubts our concerns and questions our commitments to the proclamation of the Good News as God fearing and seeking faith *laos* (people) of God.

This ungodly spirituality also bequeaths the victims and the perpetrators of these social ills with a seeming philosophy of truism/unhealthy individualism, which often leads to what we can summarize as a monster called ideological poverty. Ideological poverty has to do with living and reasoning as one that has been banished to the fringes of society and reduced to the status of present-absent human beings by uncontrollable circumstances of life. It can be described as the life of a self-imposed suffering that groans under the weighty pains of denial, exploitation, oppression, affliction, suppression, false accusations, etc that cries and wonders when divine intervention will inspire it to join the biblical Virgin Mary to sing the *magnificat*. Ideological poverty is often the grandchild of salient complicity with persons and structures which corrodes the human dignity of persons.

This concept of poverty includes the fatalistic conscious and unconscious acceptance of the status quo in the society as simply a decree of fate against which no significant action can be taken. Often characterized by stigmatization and discrimination, such a fatalist philosophy also reduces the victims of society to objects of pity thereby pigeonholing them into the status of unhealthy consumers in a consumerist society. It is summarily a vexation as far as the gospel of Jesus Christ is concerned.

The politically ethical gospel of Jesus Christ has what it takes to transform both the perpetrators of poverty and the victims of society to decision makers and catalysts for decision making. Being disciples of Jesus Christ gives them the responsibility of viewing their status in the society not as a simple decree of fate but as one that is within the redemptive-restorative purpose of God in the Messiah. In Jesus Christ, we have a faith that assigns moral responsibility to those who have as well as those who had no legal or moral status in their cultures. As witnesses of Jesus Christ, both accept and own their status as meaningful witness and ministry. Thus it constitutes an affront to God's redemptive-restorative vision for work ethics made manifest in Jesus Christ.

Status confessionis demands the Church to embody its confession of faith as a lived, living and liveable reality that must be demonstrated at the given moment. As mentioned above, it represents a discernment and embodiment of the truth as a witness of the *voluntas revelata Dei* against utter ungodliness in words, in deeds, in ethos, in structures and in fact every sphere of human endeavour. *Status confessionis* is a decision of faith commitment which also represents an embodied approach to faith seeking understanding that demands a *processus* (process).

Processus Confessionis

While *status confessionis* speaks about the a faith-based confession against a prevailing ungodly state of affairs,

⁷ <http://www.un.org/404?aspxerrorpath=/index/Home/WSSD1995.aspx>

⁸ What is UN Definition of Poverty? YahooAnswers <http://www.un.org/Pubs/chronicle/2002/is...>

⁹ Poverty <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty>

¹⁰ Equipping the Saints for the Challenges of our Time Time: Eph 4: 11-12 (Calabar, Nigeria: The Presbyterian Bookshops and Press, 2002), Pg 98.

processus confessionis can be presented as the approach or processes or methodologies which the Church adopts to communicate *status confessionis* as a discerned *voluntas revelata Dei* and as *quarrens fides intellectum*. As Conrade has observed, it describes the Church's process of recognition, education, confession and action regarding injustice. It also speaks about the Church's work against human degradation as a demonstration of Christian concern for the wellbeing of the neighbour among the nations.

To curb the tides of the Nigerian experience of ideological poverty, we present the following as *processus confessionis*: social welfare concern as an integral theological maxim for the Church's celebration of human dignity; social activism as a theological witness; Christian pedagogy as a theological political enterprise, and networking as a theological practice of orthopraxis.

Social Welfare Concern as an Integral Theological Maxim for the Church's Celebration of Human Dignity

Serious reflection and theologization on social welfare ministries as integral theological mission as indispensable responsibility of the Church today vis-à-vis the endemic cries of the victims of society in Africa today. This is true particularly, when one remembers that for the Church as the recipient and communicator of the *beneficia Christi*, justice and justification by faith, worship, social and political action, the spiritual and the material as well as the fact that personal change and structural change belong together. This is crucial in dealing with the problems of ideological poverty which constitutes an affront to meaningful realization of the MDGs as historical reality by the Church in Nigeria.

A social welfare ministry as integral theological mission puts a demand on God's people to call one another to repentance in all areas of life. It teaches us that as recipient of underserved love we are to demonstrate grace, generosity and inclusiveness as a theological response. Here we call one another back to the centrality of Jesus Christ in whose life and ministry, grace also defines justice as not merely honouring a contract, but helping the disadvantaged. As in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ being, doing and saying are at the heart of our integral mission.

Serious reflection and theologization on social welfare ministries as integral theological mission places the *laos* of God under mandate to exercise political discernment in the pursuit of preferential option for the poor as a theological maxim that pays significant respect to the burning issue of celebrating the human dignity of the poor.

This is about advocacy, which is envisioned and developed from the mission of God who, as Guder points out, calls and empowers His people to be the sign, foretaste and instrument of God's new order under the lordship of Jesus Christ. If our concern is faithful witness to the Gospel, then God's gospel must be made known to all people as an invitation to healing and to enlistment in the service of God. This is constitutive of our central task as a part of the divine witnessing people of God. Our witness must be corporate in

order that it can also show that God calls a people into discipleship formation by Jesus, in order to send them out as an apostolic community, with that flame of the Spirit ignited on every member.

In other words, our contemporary proclamation of the Gospel can only reflect the New Testament message if it includes a call for the character formation of individuals to take responsibility to allow God to make the society more habitable for all especially, the poor through our own lives. It is about integral mission, which the Micah Declaration Network says describe a wholistic and transformative proclamation and demonstration of the Gospel, which breeds social consequences. Since we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ, embodying the grace of God as a historical reality as well, is the heart of integral mission. This speaks about social activism as a theological witness.

Social Activism as a Theological Witness

Here social activism becomes a theologically rooted action planned and taken with the intention of affecting the social norm in the quest to please God. Things like demonstrations, grass-roots political action committees and organizing groups can all be focused on an issue to bring it to the public's attention and change it for the better. Social activism consists of intentional efforts to bring about social, political, economic, or environmental change. It takes a wide range of forms which include writing letters/newspapers, political campaigning, economic activism such as boycotts or preferentially patronizing businesses, rallies, street marches, strikes, sit-ins, and hunger strikes. Social activism can also take the form of persuasive communication by a collective, for the purpose of benefiting the common interests of both members of the group and the broader society.

This is very necessary in dealing with the challenging legacies of ideological poverty, which represents the diligent midwife which delivers, nurtures and enthrones hunger and starvation within our social orders. Ideological poverty manifestations in *pseudo*-capitalism and consumerism breathes the imperial rhythm, deprive the poor of their *pathos*.

Thus, the Church as a facilitator, enabler and catalyst of others agendas, a servant of the people's or social movements, the movements of the poor who are the authentic agents for development cannot shy away from social activism as a theological witness. Its role as a voluntary and people's organization *inter alia*, include the challenges to activate a broad mass of voluntary activism; to serve the emancipatory strivings of the poor and to act as the support base and facilitators for peoples alliances across boundaries.

The concern here is on social activism as a *processus confessionis* that seeks a Christian theological witness of the divine *No!* to economic injustice and God's appreciative *Yes!* to justice. The poor also need to be part of the prophetic throng singing the *maginifcat* as it is expressed in Luke chapter 1 verses 46-55. They are created in God's image as others hence their human dignity must be sought for, rediscovered, recovered, celebrated and promoted as a

¹¹ Consumerism is a socioeconomic policy with gravitational emphasis on consumption rather than production and preservation. It is a belief that the free choice of consumers should dictate the structures of society. The term consumerism as it is used in this article describes people's inordinate quest for acquiring and consuming goods and services. It is a cancer that is eating deep into the fabrics of the Nigerian social order, reducing many to the status of unhealthy consumers who are trapped in ideological poverty.

¹² Song of praise as found in Luke 1: 46-55 especially the opening verse (v 46) 'My soul doth magnify the Lord.'

¹³ 'Globalization, Consumerism and the Call for Status Confessionis' in Globalization II: Global Crisis, Global Challenge, Global Faith: An Ongoing Response to the Accra Confession. Boesak, Allan & Hansen, Len, eds (Beyers Naudes Centre: Stellenbosch University, 2010), Pg 53-54

theological witness of the Church in our quest to understand and embody the *voluntas reveleta Dei* as a lived, living and liveable historical reality in contexts. The *voluntas reveleta Dei* is the ground for the Church's vision for theological enterprises, identity and spirituality, and in short, *raison d'être*. Consequently, the Church engages in Christian pedagogy as a theological political enterprise

Christian Pedagogy as a Theological Political Enterprise

Theologically, Christian pedagogy describes human participation in the rhythms of the Holy Spirit (Jn 14.26), which seeks faithful discipleship in a complex world. It is about Christian education as the ministry that engages people in the understanding of Jesus' commandments to love God and to love neighbor. Christian education is a ministry and it supports and under girds all other ministry. It includes the methods and series of instruction/discipline which are intended to enlighten the understanding, correct the temper, form the manners and habits of persons, and fit them for usefulness in their life engagements.

Christian pedagogy seeks to reproduce persons whose central concern is to transmit to the world a witness of love. Hence we reflect on Christian pedagogy as a science or approach to Christian education whose major concern is to present Christian principles in such a way that they come alive in the contemporary settings of people's lives. Christian pedagogy as political witness also substantiate the Church's attempts to help persons experience abundant life in Jesus Christ, especially and in our case, the poor.

This means that as a political witness, Christian pedagogy in forms of primary, post-primary and tertiary institutional programs in Nigeria must present God's preferential option for the poor as an indispensable responsibility of every person, as a justification of her/his identity as *homo sapiens* and *homo loquens*. It makes it necessary for Christian pedagogy to seek the realization of *ezi ndu* as a historical reality in the lives of the suffering victims of society. Christian pedagogy must realize that it is under divine mandate to ensure that the innate and acquired human dignity of the poor are celebrated like that of every other person whom God has *engraced* with the *imago Dei*. Continuing salient complicity with persons and structures which breed, enthrone or sustain poverty is summarily sinful and must come under the embodied prophetic critique of the Church. Since the Church cannot do it alone, it must begin to demonstrate networking as a theological practice of orthopraxis.

Networking as a Theological Practice of Orthopraxis

So far, it is obvious that this theological vision seeks to re-present a Christcentred realization of the practice of the rule of Christ as true orthopraxis within historical contexts. Both the Church and the wider society are the *loci* for an embodied proclamation of the lordship of Jesus Christ, whose private and public life broke the yokes of ideological poverty and paved the ways for even the poor to celebrate their humanities. Yet the Church bespeaks of a visible and

distinctive polis with a unique calling and witness, which envisions and reflects a structured social body. Its calling to faithfulness is visible and definable in bodily political terms.

Described as royal priesthood in search of a 'priestly kingdom,' the people of God are called to engage in networking as a barrier bridging practice of orthopraxis. It also provides us with a conceptual platform to re-present our identity, spirituality and vision for theological engagements as a Christocentric, trans-community people of God who are under mandate to be what the larger world is called to become ultimately. That is, an assembly of various people from different backgrounds, ethnicity, race, sex, stature, etc.

The Church represents God's entrepreneur whose social ethics posits our presence as a people serving God and ruling the word. The ability to network without losing identity and focus in the melting pot of social interactions is one of the most crucial skills any entrepreneur can have. This is very significant for the Church in Nigeria, as an entrepreneur of Jesus Christ who scatter to discern and do God's *voluntas reveleta* as an indispensable business.

In the Nigerian experience of ideological poverty, the pseudo-visionary pursuit of capitalism and consumerism often dehumanizes the poor and reduce them to the status of unhealthy dependents that are predominantly plagued with dependency syndrome. As a result, the question of how to improve the GNP, GDP or capita per income is scarcely their concern. Often the poor wallow in the stinking waters of ideological poverty, restrained from substantive participation in the social affairs in general and the national economy by the great chasm which separates them from the rich.

One of its central tasks is to gather to refresh, reflect, empower one another and resolve to go out as *persona grata* of Jesus Christ in order to represent the Lord and Master within a given political economy. We are called to re-present to all and sundry an embodied vision of God's kingdom as revealed in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, in the now. In the kingdom of God, everybody is somebody and each is *engraced* with at least one spiritual gift to contribute generously towards the development of God's people. One of the rhetorical rhythms here is that she/he who has been *engraced* by God must embody graciousness as identity and spirituality that inspires and sustains a trans-community witness of the *beneficia Christi*.

This is the *kairos* for the Church to declare *status* and *processus confessionis* as our indispensable religiosity for active and substantive participation in realizing the MDG as a historical reality in Nigeria. Continuing salient complicity with persons and structures which breed, enthrone or sustain the vicious circle of ideological poverty is summarily sinful and must come under the embodied prophetic critique of the Church. The pervasive influence of the vicious circle of ideological penury and its associate legacy of hunger and starvation in our beloved country is an indicting challenge. We must play visible roles in the quest for how to improve the GNP, GDP or capita per income of Nigeria.

The challenge before us as Emeka Anyaoku has said is how and when what most of the international community regard

14 Is an Ethical Status Confessionis Possible? Hervormde Teologiese Studies, Vol 65 No 1 (Pretoria 2009), Pg 2.

15 The World Communion of Reformed Churches is an ecumenical Christian body formed in June 2010 by the union of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Council. With more than 80 million members, the WCRC is the third largest Christian communion in the world, after the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Churches. After a two-day meeting ending on 1 February 2006, Douwe Visser, president of the Reformed Ecumenical Council and Clifton Kirkpatrick, president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, said in a joint letter to their constituencies, "We rejoice in the work of the Holy Spirit which we believe has led us to recommend that the time has come to bring together the work of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Council into one body that will strengthen

as Africa's sleeping giant will wake up. Nigeria's friends and well wishers are optimistic that the giant is destined to wake up when she succeeds in managing more effectively her enormous human and material resources. From its Christian theological perspective, this paper concludes that this feat is achievable with the generation and installation of rebranded Nigerians as royal priests who seek to serve God by ruling the worlds of their various locations within the Nigeria political economy.

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and continue their struggle for justice and peace in the world. The World Communion of Reformed Churches is the largest association of Reformed churches in the world. Its member denominations on the whole could be considered more liberal than the member denominations of the International Conference of Reformed Churches or the World Reformed Fellowship, which are also large ecumenical Reformed organizations.

¹⁶ *The Politics of Jesus: Behold The Man! Our Victorious Lamb* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1994), Pg 172.

¹⁷ *Globalization, Consumerism and the Call for a Status Confessionis*, Pg, 55-56.

¹⁸ "The Church as a Missional Community" in *The Community of the Word: Towards an Evangelical Ecclesiology* (Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2005), Pg 125.

¹⁹ That is: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me – holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts, he has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers."

²⁰ 'Nigeria: Dealing with the Missing Link' in *Nigeria: Half a Century of Progress & Challenges*, Ikokwu, Constance Chigor, ed (Nigeria: True Expression Press, 2011), Pg 205.