African Perspective on Conflict, Peace and Justice in the Church in Contemporary Nigeria[1]

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Introduction

This paper provides the Church with various strategies for conflict mediation, prevention and resolution. Aside from the introduction and conclusion, the paper is divided into five sections. The first section provides a clarification of major terms examined in the paper, which includes conflict, peace, justice, and Church. A typology of conflicts is examined in the second section, while the third tackles (six) theories and (three) hypotheses of conflict. Section four describes some driving forces/causes of conflict and the fifth section deals with peace initiatives and peace theories.

Clarification of Terms
Conflict

The term 'conflict' derives from the Latin *confligere*, meaning "to strike [peace] together" as in making fire by friction. The term *confligere* initially had a physical rather than a moral or ideological connotation. Aside from striking peace among warring parties, the term also means "opposition among social entities directed against one another" (Albert,

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2001: 1-2, cf. Wright, 1990: 19). 'Opposition' here denotes a process by which social entities function in the disservice of one another, which contrasts the word 'co-operation'. So, when one is not cooperating, such a person is opposing, thus birthing conflict.

Conflict is an intrinsic and inevitable part of human existence. Violent conflicts occur when persons resort to the use of force in the pursuit of incompatible and particular interests and goals. Conflict emanates from the denial of basic human needs as exemplified by the human-needs theory (Deng, 2006: 351). Conflict is "a relationship between two or more parties who…believe they have incompatible goals" (Kriesberg, 1973: 17). Conflict is an incompatible behaviour between parties whose interests are/or appear to be incompatible or clashing. So, conflict emanates from social relationships in situations where conflicting groups or parties, physically or psychologically, reside near each other.

Conflicts arise from the pursuit of divergent interests, goals and aspirations by individuals and/or groups in defined social and physical environments. Fertile grounds for conflicts are found in changes occurring in the social environment, such as contestable access to new political positions, or perceptions of new resources arising from the physical environment. The inherent nature of conflicts is thus located in heterogeneous and competitive situations (Otite (1999: 1). So, Conflict is an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who pursue incompatible goals, compete for scarce resources, and suffer interference from others in achieving their goals. Transforming a conflict into a harmonious situation depends on perceptual and/or conceptual changes in one or more parties, leading to changes in will and relationships (Ntahoturi, 2001: 67).

In this presentation, the author adapts these definitions, especially the one given by Lewis Coser which views conflict as "a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the opponents aim to neutralise, injure, or eliminate their rivals" (1956:8; 1986). Here conflicting parties do not only aim to attain their desired

values but also aim to neutralize, injure and eliminate those whom they compete with. Conflict is a way of settling problems originating from opposing interests, which may end up in attempts at the annihilation of one of the conflict parties (Otite, 1999: 1). It is a salient part of life that begins from birth/cradle to the grave. It manifests itself in human incompatibility, disagreement, hostility, anger, quarrel, hatred, destruction, killing and war (Folarin (2013: 13ff). The paper also aligns itself with contributions by Jeong (2008: 4f), Nicholson (1992) and Wolff (2004) concerning its pervasive, natural, necessary, functional and/or dysfunctional nature. Mediation in conflict is most likely to succeed between disputants with residential and kinship ties that require them to interact in the future. Thus, when social relationships are enduring, disputants need to find a settlement to continue to live together amicably. Conflict may, however, result in a 'win-lose' situation, while conflict resolution/prevention, usually ends in a 'win-win' situation (Fred-Mensah, 2000: 35).

Peace (*Pax*)

The term refers to freedom from war, or the time when war or conflict ends, the signing of a treaty to live in harmony. It is tranquillity, a calm and quiet state, from disturbance or noise; mental calm—a state of mental calm and serenity, with no anxiety; harmony—freedom from conflict or disagreement among people or ethnic groups; peace treaty— a treaty agreeing to an end to hostilities between two warring parties; it refers to law and order: the absence of violence or other disturbances within a state; when there is an interjection. From the Anglo-Norman pes, and Latin *pax*, [to be] at peace, was first used in the 12th century. It is from the Latin that we have *Pax Romana*, 'the Roman Peace. Elaigwu (2012: 37) therefore asserts:

> Peace is not [merely] the absence of conflicts [or war].
> There shall always be conflicts where more than one
> person lives. The interests of people often clash, thus
> resulting in conflicts. It is not the conflicts but how they
> are managed that is important. Peace is about how

> conflicts are managed to ensure relative stability, law, or order, [or even completely resolved] to enable human beings to carry out their daily activities. Peace is a societal condition, which ensures relative social stability and order, through the dispensation of justice, fairness and opportunities for accommodation by formal and informal institutions, practices and norms.

To be at peace is a state of friendship and freedom from conflict and is a state of calm and serenity.

Justice

The term refers to fairness, and reasonableness, especially in the way people are treated or decisions are made. it is also normally used concerning the operation of a system (any system) or the application of the law, that is, the legal system or the act of applying or upholding the law. The term is used with regards to validity as in law, sound/good reason as per any rational thinking human being. Judges of all levels, but especially of a higher court are at all times tasked to give justice to the person who deserves it. The term was used in the 12th century via the French *Justitia*.

The Church

The term refers to the Christian religious building, used for public worship, and the service held within its precincts. It also refers to followers of the Christian religion as a group. Church also refers to the clergy as distinct from lay people. The term also denotes the Church or religious authority as opposed to that of the state. The term church is derived from the Old English *cir(i)ce*, *kirche*, *kryka* via the Germanic *kuriakon dōmā*, 'house' or 'dome of the Lord', *kurios* lord.

Emanating from the Greek *ekklesia,* it means a 'gathering' or 'assembly' of people. In ancient Greek, this means a political gathering of a city, *polis* or state. The term was adopted by writers of the Gospels

and Epistles to mean the assembly of Christians because of its communal connotation. The early Church, therefore, used the term to mean the *assembly* or *gathering of God's people*.

In this discussion, the Church we refer to is the 'Church of God found in Christ Jesus. This type of Church has been described in Acts and Paul's letters where the emphasis is on the 'Fellowship of the believers or the Saints' (Haruna, 2009: 8).

It is composed of the *Church triumphant* or *at rest* (the saints in glory) and the *Church militant* (born-again Christians presently on earth), which live for worship (I Peter 2:9-11), fellowship, encouragement, edification and guidance (Hebrews 10:23-25), after receiving confession and the three-fold baptism [of water, Holy Spirit and Fire]. Genuine Christians presently enjoy dual citizenship of heaven and the earth.

Typology of Conflicts: Creative and Destructive Conflicts

Albert (2001, 3) asserts that there are productive and destructive conflicts. Creative or productive conflicts are those that yield positive results; that is, those conflicts that allow for amicable dialogue by the parties involved and terms for settlement to be reached by the conflicting parties in the conflict. The situation becomes interesting according to him when the terms of the settlement led to mutual understanding and development. While alluding to creative conflict, Burton observes:

> Conflict, like sex, is an essential creative element in human relationships. It is the means of change, how our social values of welfare, security, justice and opportunities for personal development can be achieved…The existence of a flow of conflict is the only guarantee that the aspirations of society will be sustained. Indeed, conflict, like sex, is to be enjoyed (1972, 137-138).

A destructive conflict is usually characterized by violence whether in its physical, psychological or structural connotation. Such a conflict manifests itself as a disorderly show of power. Within this framework, a destructive conflict threatens and intimidates, rather than consolidates a governance process. A conflict becomes destructive when it exceeds the limit imposed by societal consensus.

Theories and Hypothesis of Conflict
Human Needs Theory
Major proponents of this theory include Abraham Maslow, John Burton, Manfred Max-Neef and Marshall Rosenberg. To these theorists, the conflict that usually manifests itself in violence is largely caused by unmet priority human needs. This they ascribe to the inability of individuals, groups or governments to meet basic human needs with the available opportunities at their disposal.

According to Jeong (2008: 189-191), human needs reflect universal motivations, which s/he considers be intrinsic to biological and physical survival, as well as self-esteem and autonomy making these basic needs to be universal and primordial, and perhaps even genetic. He goes on to assert that the denial of identity, security, and recognition is a critical and fundamental concern for most intractable conflicts and thus the suppression of a desire for self-fulfilment and human development provides a socio-political context of intractable conflict.

Relative Deprivation Theory

Ted Gurr is regarded as the major proponent of this theory. He asserts that when an individual or group is deprived of certain rights and privileges that they deem they are entitled to, especially concerning another individual or group whom they perceive to have what they do not have and as such feel entitled to. Gurr (1971: 23-24) explains this as the discrepancy between what people think they deserve and what they think they can get; that is the discrepancy between the 'ought' and the 'is' of collective value satisfaction. This discrepancy is what builds up the likelihood of violent rebellion due to long-suppressed frustration. Gurr (1971: 23-24) states that the higher the level of frustration that accrues

as a result of relatively deprived needs, the greater the degree of political volatility.
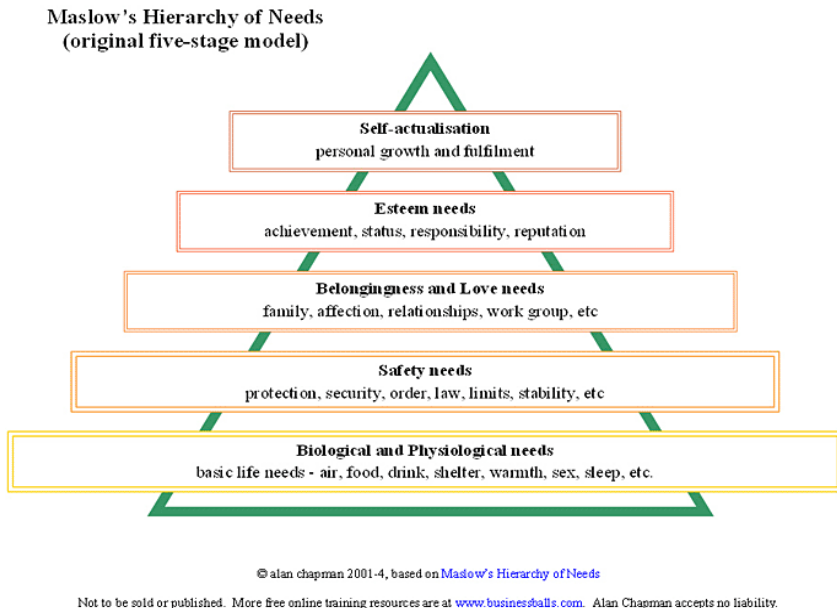
Greed and Grievances Theory

The major theorists in this field are Paul Collier and Hanke Hoeffler. Their works and major postulation seek to comprehend the impetus of soldiers, insurgents, mercenaries, militants and the like. They believe that most of these armed groups are involved in violent conflicts for economic gain. They still however do not dispel the fact that most of these groups are aggrieved and take up arms based on religious, ethnic, identity and social class grievances. However, it has been noted that over time, the dynamics of their grievances change to uphold a sole economic motivation. Collier and Hoeffler (2004: 564f) believe that rebellions that are rooted in grievances are highly motivated by greed as the groups involved seek to generate profitable opportunities. Some of these grievances are sometimes exaggerated and other times misperceived.

Frustration-aggression Theory

Frustration is the feeling of irritation and annoyance when something blocks you from reaching your goal, while aggression is a malicious behaviour or attitude towards something or someone usually triggered by frustration (Gonzalez, 2018). This theory was made popular by Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mower and Sears. These theorists, according to Rummel (1977) equate aggression with the desire to hurt or injure someone; they define frustration as an interference with a goal response. Their major assumption states that the occurrence of aggressive behaviour always presupposes the existence of frustration and contrariwise, that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression (Breuer and Elson, 2017). This theory underpins the manifestation of violent conflict (which is termed as aggression) to various forms of frustration, which is usually rooted in the inability of an individual or group to achieve their goals because of a real or perceived hindrance by someone or something to the attainment of said goals. The degree of aggression is hinged on the assertion that the closer

the individual or group is to the attainment of their goals, the more precarious the degree of frustration hence the more violent the aggressive manifestation. Frustration always results in some form of aggression. However, not all frustration leads to aggression (Rummel, 1977).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
(original five-stage model)

Self-actualisation
personal growth and fulfilment

Esteem needs
achievement, status, responsibility, reputation

Belongingness and Love needs
family, affection, relationships, work group, etc

Safety needs
protection, security, order, law, limits, stability, etc

Biological and Physiological needs
basic life needs - air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sex, sleep, etc.

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Social Conflict Theory

Karl Marx is the founder of this theory of conflict. Marx considers conflict to be inherent in every human relationship as the struggle over access and allocation of scarce resources ensues. He assessed humanity and social order based on the conflict between classes in society. Marx uses class struggles to explain his assertions on how one class controls and governs the other as a tactic for ensuring social order. He believes that this unbalanced social structure of the few bourgeoisie overpowering the majority proletariat will be upturned by a socialist revolution. According to Moffitt (2018), the social conflict theory sees

social life as a competition over resources, power and inequality. These competitions and inequalities engender conflict in society. This is because the way society is structured allows only a few to profit to the detriment of the majority. If the majority are constantly being alienated from the benefits that accrue the society due to their hard work and sacrifices, conflict continues to simmer until it brews into full-scale violence.

Protracted Social Conflict Theory

The most notable theorist in this field is Edward Azar (1991). This theory seeks to understand why some conflicts have gone along unabated for so long. Azar links the reasons for this to include identity issues, deprivation of some basic human needs, structural failure of government in providing the enabling environment for the attainment of such needs and international backing of secondary or shadow actors (Bosco, 2013). Azar believes that the state is habitually acutely involved in the underlying sequence of undue deprivations that tether to protracted conflicts. He also states that colonial heritage and multi-ethnic societies are certain preconditions that can help in facilitating a drawn-out conflict. Protracted social conflicts are predisposed to certain negative outcomes which include the deterioration of physical security, structural institutional decay, psychological ossification and intensified over-reliance on international actors and shadow parties.

Three Hypothesis of Conflict

Arnold Foster (1966, 142) considers the causative agents of conflict, particularly, political violence by their very nature to be beyond any simple causation because they are numerous and complex. There are three causative agents of conflicts, which include psychological, systematic and [inter-] group conflict hypotheses (Banjo, 1997, 6-7). The *Psychological Hypothesis* emphasise the role of psychological theories of motivation and behaviour, frustration and aggression as the cause of conflict resulting in violence. This is caused according to this school of thought by the relative deprivation gap which creates frustration leading to anger, then aggression and violence.

The *Systematic Hypothesis*, on the other hand, traces the origin of political violence to the social structure. This is caused by the breakdown of consensual norms, instances of political alienation, the cohesiveness of a ruling group and its legitimacy. The impact of rapid and large-scale changes in the social structure and process, trends such as industrialisation, urbanisation and/or modernisation create new classes with different perceptions, lifestyles, cultural matrices and even religious adherence, thus introducing new religiosity with new worldviews or cosmologies. Modernisation may produce or intensify conflict, especially over the distribution or competition over scarce resources between groups and this produces political violence.

Group or Inter-group Hypothesis views political violence or conflict as a product of the struggle for power among various groups within a given society, with emphasis on the cleavages within a society, flashing especially ethnic, linguistic, racial, and/or religious cards. This hypothesis argues that cultural pluralism increases the likelihood of conflict between members of communal or ethnic groups, increasing the probability of communal, ethnic and elite instability in Third World nations. Most of the conflicts can be linked to any of the following three causative or etiological factors: first, *resource control*. These very often involve strategizing to take over, maintain, keep and exercise power politically, economically, socially and legally. Second, we have conflicts resulting as a consequence of the yearning to meet dare *psychological needs* (love, affirmation, respect, approval and identity). Third, are *value-based* conflicts (especially those conflicts involving the pressure to protect/defend belief systems, culture, norms, taboos and ideologies). However, a close examination of remote and immediate causes of conflict very often involves a combination of two or all three of the broad categories just mentioned. We can, however, point to individual causes:

Driving Forces/Causes of Conflict
The Economic Cause

The economic problem is quite highly prized as a leading cause of conflict. One of the most popular explanations for ethnic conflicts worldwide is expressed as competition for scarce resources. Donald L. Horowitz notes that "economic interests may play a role in ethnic conflict, and the economic underpinning of group hostility has been a persistent undercurrent in the literature of ethnic conflict" (1985, 106). Economic interests underlie most ethnic conflicts in Africa have also been greatly documented (Uroh, 2001, 7). The conflicts in Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, Angola, Sudan, Liberia and Sierra Leone, among others, have to do with national wealth versus the contending interests for their appropriation and control. These include interests in oil, diamonds, copper, gold, timber, iron, cocoa, rubber, and coffee (Ross 2002, 30). Added to the economic factor is the economic arrangement as dictated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, through policies like the SAP, which have created negative consequences for African states. The SAP policies have created "bitter pills" that have in turn produced a loss of paid jobs, urban violence, conflicts and crises. Daniel Volman (1998, 155) notes that the dept repayment burden and SAP have weakened African states to such an extent that truncated governments are no longer able to control their citizenry, as internal disorder rises over increasingly scarce resources.

The Poverty Thesis

Closely related to the preceding is a second factor, which is the poverty thesis. It is argued that the ever-increasing level of poverty typified by joblessness and deteriorating infrastructures creates conditions for conflict to thrive. The 1997 Human Development Report by the UNDP, estimated that more than 1.3 billion people in the World lived on less than US $1:00 per day, including 200 million Africans (about 30% of the total population of Africa), (Onimode, 2000, 2). According to UN records, 26 out of 31 least developed nations are in Africa. The majority of Africans live in deplorable mass poverty. The consequences of a poor African economy have led to extreme poverty, marginalization and

dehumanisation of many Africans who are reduced to beggars instead of partners (Kasali, 1998, 21). The situation is worsening daily. Amoo (1997, 6) notes that Sierra Leone, Somalia, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Burundi, Angola and Liberia have witnessed ethnic conflicts are all at the lowest end of the UNDP's HDI. He notes further that while unattended poverty leads to conflict in Africa, even as wars also create poverty.

Even though Nigeria possesses abundant natural and human resources, its economy is largely dependent on oil rents, which supplies over 90% of its foreign exchange earnings, 78% of federal government revenues, and circa 11% of GDP in 2000 (Amaechi, et al. 2006: 14). However, despite her enormous natural resources, in 2006 Nigeria had a per capita income of about $390 (compared to $4,650 for Malaysia, $33,940 for the UK and $41,400 for the US) and life expectancy of 45 years. Her GDP stands at 72.1 billion US dollars, (with 118.3 for Malaysia, 2,140.9 for the UK and 11, 667.5 for the US), (Amaeshi, et al. 2006, World Bank, 2006). The *Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative* (OPHI) and the UNDP 2015 published data on the incidence of poverty in Nigeria showing that, on average, 46% of Nigerians are living in poverty. This is based on the UN Global Multi-Dimensional Poverty index which focuses on Education, Health, and Living Standards (Sanusi II, 2017).

Why is this situation prevailing in Nigeria? This is because the economic system in Nigeria is controlled by a few rich people, leading to gross and inhuman underdevelopment, whereby circa 70% or over two-thirds of her citizens are poor since they live in absolute poverty, that is, on less than 1 dollar a day. While an estimated 27% of Nigerians were poor in 1980, 70% earned less than $1 per day by 1990, and the figure has kept on rising.

Nigeria currently suffers from poor infrastructural development, with undeveloped road networks, and unassailable transportation networks that keep several communities cut off from each other. The education system is both unstable and grossly underfunded, with an illiteracy rate of up to 40% on average, but with some areas in the north reaching over 60%. Nigerian health care system is one of the worse in

the world, with a doctor/patient ratio of almost 1:1000. The public sector has been weakened by corruption and corruption threatens to bring the country to its knees (Amaeshi, et al. 2006: 14f). There is a general collapse of governance in Nigeria when compared with Western standards. In a nutshell:

> Businesses wishing to operate in Nigeria face many constraints, including poor infrastructure, particularly road networks and electric supply; inadequate physical security; corruption; weak enforcement of contracts, and the high cost of finance. These factors have deterred foreign entrepreneurs from investing in Nigeria and have also induced many Nigerians to take their money and skills abroad (Amaeshi, et al. 2006: 15; cf. NEEDS 2005: xv).

The underdevelopment of Nigeria is largely due to its inability to use the consumer habit of its massive population to boost its domestic industrial base. For this reason, Nigeria is an underdeveloped country.

Closely related to poverty is the fact of mass illiteracy, which is inextricably linked to the African situation that also creates structural injustice, marginalisation and general underdevelopment. In Africa, where 70 per cent of the demography in a great number of communities are illiterate, they become more vulnerable and easy manipulative tools for those in power (Aeschliman, 1990, 39). Thus, the conscious manipulation of ethnic consciousness under terrible social conditions gives rise to periodic explosions of ethnic clashes.

Struggle Over Land (Considered by others as their Ancestral Lands)

Thirdly, Danfulani (2006), observed that the crisis on the Jos Plateau is first and foremost a struggle over land. The majority of Plateau State indigenes (as defined by the Nigerian constitution) are Christians tied to the land as peasant farmers. The land thus remains an important emotive factor to a region that is predominantly inhabited by peasant farmers. Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) brought about the retirement and retrenchment of many public servants, semi or low-educated-petty

company workers and military personnel (most of who actively participated in the civil war) occasioned their return to the farmlands thereby exerting great pressure on land resources (Onoja, 1996:10; James, 2001: 147 cf. 1987 and 1990). Thus:

> Suddenly, land which used to be available to those who used or needed it became a prized possession. Both the host communities and settlers alike began to rationalise their inability to acquire and possess land to the presence of the other groups, thereby undermining the imperative of their co-existence and the basis of consensus and confidence building. These factors probably account for the preponderance of land disputes as an index in the perennial communal conflict profile of the Middle Belt (James, 2001: 147-148).

The land is central to survival; hence conflict very often occurs over access to pastoral and arable land. Most conflicts around the world, among them the protracted Palestinian struggle, are centred on land, especially ancestral lands.

Indigenes and Settlers, No Citizens

The fourth cause of conflict, as exemplified by the Jos Plateau crises is centred over the politics of participation in government by both "indigenes" and "settlers" (Danfulani and Fwatshak, 2002). The Indigene vs Settler question is supported by the Nigerian constitution being the basis of the Federal Character and quota system, which is used for appointments so that the big three (Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo) will not marginalize the other minority ethnic groups. There is a conflictual paradoxical paradigm playing itself out here: Do we erase the quota system and Federal Character so that citizens only will emerge? Or do we continue with the present arrangement where settlers have no place politically in Lagos, Kano, Jos, Gusau, Sokoto, Port

Harcourt, Umahia, or Owerri, among other Nigerian cities and communities?

The indigene, settler and/or citizenship syndrome in Nigeria has heightened and forced the political scenario to be overheated. In Jos for instance, the recurrent decimal constituted by the indigene/settler syndrome has traditionally been between the Hausa (Jasawa) and Fulani on the one hand, and the indigenous owners/natives of Jos town (the Berom, Anaguta and Afisare), (Danfulani, 2006) on the other hand. Today, Jos Plateau communities and indeed the rest of the Middle Belt believe that the Fulani are certainly angling and strategizing to take over the whole area through militancy, terrorism, scorch-earth, and ethnic cleansing tactics and pogroms.

Stages of Conflict Escalation

Consequently, conflicts that take on a dysfunctional dimension, which usually manifests themselves in violent conflicts, have been classified into five categories: First is the *Pre-conflict stage*. At this stage goals are incompatible; the conflict is latent and not well-known. If the opportunity lends itself, this is the best stage to resolve the conflict. Second is the *Confrontation stage* when the conflict becomes manifest. The third stage is the *Crisis stage*. This represents the peak of the conflict. Then comes the *Outcome stage*. This signifies the end of the conflict either with a ceasefire, a win-lose outcome or peace enforcement (which is a win-win situation). Fifth and finally comes the *Post-conflict stage*. This is the point where the underlying causes of the conflict are addressed and efforts are geared towards building peace (Best, 2006, 55-56).

Peace Initiatives and Peace Theories
Peace Initiatives

The conceptualization of peace is said to vary from culture to culture inadvertently meaning different things to different people. The implication of this statement is validated by how values, norms, religion, perception, visions, interests and the circumstances people are surrounded by tend to mirror their view of peace. Thus, a person who is

stricken by poverty and who therefore suffers from general deprivation may likely view peace as access to better living conditions and opportunities. So also, will a person who lives in an area characterized by violent conflicts view peace as the absence of violent conflicts? A very religious person is liable to view peace as inner peace of mind that gives solitude from all the troubles of life.

Galtung (as cited by Tilahun 2015) views peace to be either negative or positive. He depicted negative peace to mean an absence of war, violence and fears at all levels, while positive peace portrays the absence of unjust structures, unequal relationships, and the presence of justice and inner peace at all levels to integrate the human being into the society.

Deng (2006: 351) defines peace as the absence of war, fear, conflict, anxiety, suffering and violence. According to him, peace is concerned with creating and maintaining a just order (and organization) in society and the resolution of conflict through non-violent means. Thus, to ensure peace, there must be an absence of direct violence (no wars); absence of structural violence (presence of justice and development); respect and tolerance between people; peace as *gaia* (balance in and with the ecosphere); spiritual peace (inner peace); and peace as wholeness and making whole.

Anatol Rapaport (as quoted by Rinehart, 2005) conceptualized peace in the international system to mean strength, the balance of power, collective security, justice, revolutionary pacifism and personal pacifism. Rinehart also looked at the works of Gunnar Johnson which looked at peace from three perspectives namely: *peace as a world without war*, *peace as world justice* and *peace as world order* (organization). John Macquarries' (1973) work on peace was analysed by Rinehart (2005) to depict peace as the healing of fractures in society that has to do with estrangement, alienation, bitter division and war.

Peace does not essentially mean the total absence of conflict. It however reflects the total elimination of violent outcomes in any sort of conflict allowing positive peace to be the result of all outcomes. Even if

violence breaks out, it is the duty of all concerned to ensure that everything possible is done to bring back peace and maintain it. This is where peacebuilding through several peace initiatives comes into play.
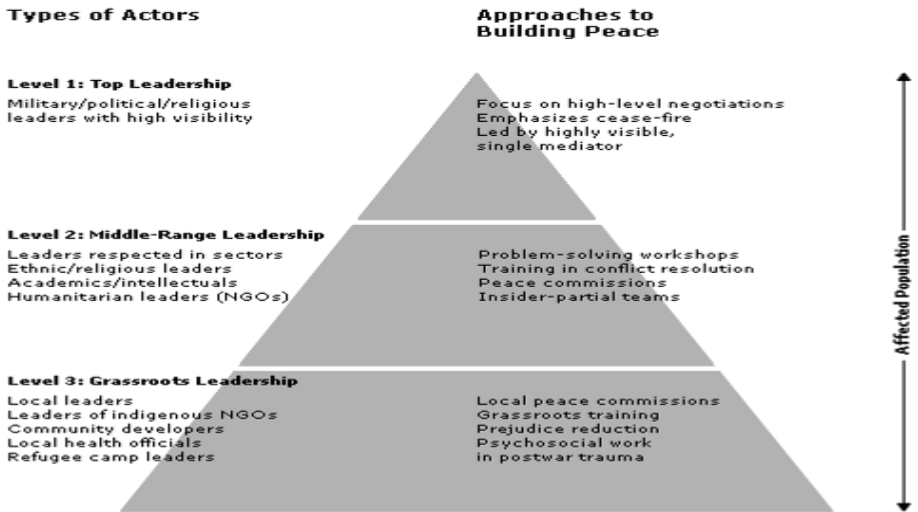
Peacebuilding (Peace Initiatives)

Peacebuilding, as the concepts of conflict and peace, has many definitions from various scholars. The term peacebuilding was coined by Johan Galtung in 1976 in his work: *Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peace-making and Peacebuilding*. To him, the building of peace entails all these concepts working in tandem with each other. He posited that structures have to be put in place to remove the root causes of wars by offering alternatives to situations that might deduce war. He strongly believes in provoking and stimulating indigenous capacities for peaceful management and resolution of conflicts.

A lot of international and indigenous non-governmental organizations are involved in various initiatives for peace enforcement, peace mediation, peace agreements and ensuring the sustainability of peace in conflict areas. The UN became highly involved in peacebuilding after the *An Agenda for Peace* publication by Boutros-Boutros Ghali in 1992. The UN and other international and indigenous NGOs are making remarkable efforts in identifying and supporting structures that will help in establishing and consolidating peace to circumvent a degeneration into violence.

Peacebuilding entails several aspects associated with consolidating peace in an environment that has been ravaged by violent conflict. This is done through processes that help in building capacity, especially state structures. Such structures ensure the reconciliation of warring parties and the transformation of dysfunctional conflicts into functional ones, and negative peace into positive peace. Peacebuilding initiatives can be carried out on a short, medium and long-term basis, or all three at once, depending on the situation. Peacebuilding also tries to ensure that parties shift from their positions and lean towards interests and issues to ensure that the peace that has been established is sustained.

John Paul Lederach is a major scholar in conceptualizing peacebuilding. He asserts that the concept incorporates, spawns and withstands all the progressions, methods and phases required to alter or transcend negative conflicts in the direction of more viable and non-violent interactions. All these efforts emanate before and after official peace pacts (1997, 1998). Lederach emphasizes conflict transformation which is a concept that aims to transform negative outcomes of conflicts into more positive ones that can transform relationships, attitudes, behaviour and structures in society for the better.

Types of Actors

Approaches to Building Peace

Level 1: Top Leadership
Military/political/religious leaders with high visibility

Focus on high-level negotiations
Emphasizes cease-fire
Led by highly visible, single mediator

Level 2: Middle-Range Leadership
Leaders respected in sectors
Ethnic/religious leaders
Academics/intellectuals
Humanitarian leaders (NGOs)

Problem-solving workshops
Training in conflict resolution
Peace commissions
Insider-partial teams

Level 3: Grassroots Leadership
Local leaders
Leaders of indigenous NGOs
Community developers
Local health officials
Refugee camp leaders

Local peace commissions
Grassroots training
Prejudice reduction
Psychosocial work
in postwar trauma

Affected Population

Lederach's Pyramid of Peacebuilding

Lederach's pyramid of peacebuilding focuses on the stakeholders involved in the enforcement, building and sustaining of peace at various levels of the peacebuilding process in ensuring a total transformation of the conflict and the restoration of relationships between the conflicting parties.

Theories of Peace

Ripeness Theory

This theory is hinged on what it calls the "mutually hurting stalemate". This is a condition where the parties to a conflict realize that victory cannot be achieved because furtherance of the conflict inflicts much more loss to them. Both parties must realize that there is no way that they can come out on top or victorious at the end of the conflict. As such, there seems to be no other way but to resolve the conflict. The ripeness theorists consider this situation to be a ripe moment for asserting, promulgating, building and ensuring peace. That is the right moment to intervene in bringing the parties to the conflict together to seek an amicable solution to ensure the restoration and sustenance of peace. Therefore, for this to be achievable, that 'mutually hurting stalemate' must be present, making the parties to the conflict more forthcoming and cooperative in finding a solution. In most conflict situations, the parties in the conflict for the sake of pride, ego and so forth, are not willing to approach their enemies to call for a truce and as such the responsibility of identifying the ripe moment to intervene is left on the shoulders of the mediators.

According to Zartman (2001), parties resolve their conflicts only when they are ready to do so, especially when alternative, usually unilateral means of achieving a satisfactory result are blocked and the parties feel they are in an uncomfortable and costly predicament. He asserts that at that ripe moment, they grab onto proposals that usually have been in the air for a long time and that only now appear attractive. Zartman's position, here, however, does not take cognisance of cases in which governments intervene by turning certain conflict spots, such as pieces of lands with many contesting parties staking claims to them into neutral and mutual community properties such as parks, gardens, schools, and hospitals, among others.

Jeong (2008: 189-191) defines ripeness as the precise moment or suitable time that action needs to be taken to invite the desired change with a potential for an agreement. He further asserts that appropriate

timing assumes that both parties have developed the same or similar processes and outcomes to break the impasse they have all both arrived at presenting the right stage for the de-escalation of hostilities and the building of peace to start.

Conflict Prevention Mechanisms

Though conflict is not unavoidable, it can be prevented. Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall (2005: 106f) advise that potential sources of conflict should be identified with a view to their early resolution, concrete steps must be taken to forestall armed confrontation. An early warning must be given in time for rigorous containment to take place if the conflict sharpens despite these measures. The prevention of violent conflict should apt be the main goal of any conflict resolution enterprise. Active preventive measures can be categorized into two: "light" and "deep". 'Light prevention' aims at preventing situations with a clear capacity for violence degenerating into armed conflict. The aim here is not to unearth the root causes of conflict or remedy them, but to prevent latent or threshold conflicts from becoming severe armed conflicts. 'Deep prevention' concerns itself with addressing the root causes including underlying factors of interest and relationships.

Early warning is essential for monitoring particular areas pausing potential conflict and seeking ways to act early enough to nip a potential conflict in the bud where this is feasible and appropriate. This involves two tasks: first, identification of the type of conflict, second, monitoring and assessing their progress to assess how close to violence they are (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall, 2005: 112f).

While governance is closely associated with conflict regulation—establishing common governance for instance is a crucial means of overcoming internal conflicts. The legitimacy of governance is the basis of consent. Good governance would usually elicit an excellent level of accountability and transparency, a government where the rule of law prevails, and a low level of corruption, armed conflicts here are less likely, because of the reality that armed conflicts degrade governance, deform institutions and retards and destroys development. Conversely,

good governance, sound institutions and effective development inhibit the influence of armed conflicts (Miall, 2003).

The ingredients of good governance are normally best represented in governments which are consensus-oriented, allow for citizens' participation at all levels (through conscientious, representation and delegation, for example in a democratic environment) and take accountability, feedback and responsiveness seriously. Good governance also entails a government that follows rule of law and is transparent; effective and efficient and accountable; equitable and inclusive and consensus-oriented, responsive and participatory. It should be a government that is free from all forms of corrupt practices including institutionalized corruption as exemplified in money laundering and the like.

Development is an important preventer of conflict (Henderson and Singer, 2000). High levels of development reduce the risk of internal conflict (Collier and Hoeffler 1998; Hegre et. al. 2001) because scarce resources, employment, and the good things of life—all producers and sustainers of the good life become readily available. Thus, the risk of violence is highest in the poorest communities, while violent conflicts in their turn further impoverish consummating parties and put the gear of development in reverse. If a package of policy measures were introduced that obtained a sustained economic growth of at least three per cent per year in the poorest economies, according to Collier, et. al. (2003: 187), conflicts would be shortened by a year and the rate of relapse into conflict in post-conflict period would be halved.

Inequality between different groups in a society is another factor. Horizontal inequalities add significantly to the risk of conflict among the majority low income and middle-income communities (Steward 2002). Similarly, gross human rights abuses and violations have been globally recognized as an indicator of incipient conflict. Human rights violations are often an early warning sign of impending conflict, and of course, human rights abuses are both a trigger for escalation and a concomitant of protracted fighting. No human community is happy

when they are referred to as 'rats' and 'cockroaches', because 'they are people like us (ter Haar, 2005). It is curious to observe that high levels of respect for human rights resonate with and is accompanied by a good level of governance, more democratic governments, and more highly developed societies.

Conflict Resolution and Management

Peace agreements are an integral part of conflict resolution, for, without some form of agreement among conflicting parties, it is hard to talk about conflict resolution. However, even when an agreement is implemented, it may not sufficiently guarantee lasting peace. A peace agreement, is, however, a necessary step toward lasting peace. Thus, Wallensteen provides a preliminary definition of conflict resolution as a situation "where conflicting parties enter into an agreement that solves their central compatibilities, accept each other's continued existence as parties and cease violent action against each other" (2002: 8).

The key to conflict resolution is communication, dialogue and meaningful or positive compromise. There are three typologies of communicative dimensions of conflict resolution and management: *Interactive conflict resolution* initially referred to as 'controlled communication'. Here the conflict is mediated by various parties by searching for mutually acceptable outcomes to intractable conflicts. *Dialogical conflict resolution* takes us to a stage where channels of communication are opened to overcome prejudice and misunderstanding, towards building trust. *Discursive conflict transformation* deconstructs discourses that reproduce violence—it aims at fostering non-violence situated in 'the unhindered process of inter-subjective communication. Dialogical conflict resolution may involve intercultural dialogue where parties recognise that they require/thirst for 'badly needed dialogue, 'better intercultural understanding' and frankly curve 'a broadly agreed view of the past, while avoiding statements that are 'partisan, extreme, polemical, hurting and sometimes deeply offensive' (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall, 2005: 228ff; Parekh,

2002). These could be conducted at the interpersonal or intergroup levels.

Development is a key factor in post-conflict management. It should wear a human face and it should be holistic. It ought to examine areas of security building and enhancement of state institutions and structures and introduce structural strengthening measures. Development must reform and revamp local governance, re-establish the rule of law, reconstruct infrastructure and civil society, and use the media towards peace-building in advertorials, programmes and productions. It must reform education, revive health care, protect the environment, revamp the economy, and improve the national financial and fiscal base. Development ought to engage in an urgently needed dialogue of life where the community is encouraged and galvanized into working together on projects of mutual interest, such as setting up clinics and/hospitals, schools, the building of roads, and town halls, providing space and buildings for the post-office, police post, and the like.

Conclusion

Through this paper, the Church has at its disposal various methods for conflict resolution and prevention. Even though it is not expected that the Church, which is the light and salt of the world (Matthew 5: 13-16) should depend on the world system it has been mandated to transform to adjudicate in its crisis or problems. It is unfortunate nowadays to see the Church taking canonical, doctrinal and sacramentally settled issues to the mundane or profane secular systems of justice (1Cor 6:7). The Church knows well that there is no justice in the world system since justice resides exclusively with God alone and with His Church (1King 10:9, 2Chronicles 9:8; Psalm 89:14, Matt 18:17). This paper has presented several conflict resolution and prevention approaches and options, which even though are located outside the Church, are not new to the Church itself. They are in tandem with the principles of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), the epitome of peace and the only founder of a world religion whose titles (Jesus, meaning Saviour and Christ, denoting the "Anointed one" or Messiah) transparently and

directly refer to peace and who's humble and servant-leader lifestyle exemplified peace.

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