

**Pontifical University: St. Patrick's College**

**Maynooth**

**Sinful Social Structures and the Issues of Migration and Refugees:  
Reassessing Pope Francis's Agenda on Migration/Refugee Crisis  
and the Response of the Church to the Challenges of Internally  
Displaced Persons in Nigeria.**

**By**

**Peter Ewaoche Johnson**

**17110024**

**Being a Doctoral Degree Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of  
Theology.**

**Supervisor: Dr Joseph Padraig Corkery**

**Date: 26th June 2023.**

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the loving memory of my dear sister, Maria-Beatrice Abakpa who passed on mid-way my studies. Thanks for loving and nursing me from childhood till your departure from this world to glory. You are in my heart forever.

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is an original result of my own research and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part for a degree in this or any other university. All sources used in this research have been accordingly acknowledged.

I agree to deposit this dissertation in the university's library to be accessed according to the rules guiding the use of academic materials in the library.

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Peter Ewaoche Johnson

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

So many have contributed to the success of my studies and this dissertation. I acknowledge them with sincere gratitude.

I acknowledge with thanks Bishop Michael Ekwoyi Apochi, who gave me the opportunity for the studies. Sincere thanks to the Archdiocese of Dublin, the Handmaid of the Sacred Heart Sisters, the Clarisaen Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament and Church of St. Lawrence O'Toole, Kilmacud for offering me shelter and enabling platform for ministry and studies. Thanks to Fr Joe Mullan, Fr. Paddy O'Byrne and Fr Donie O'Connor for every friendship and encouragement. Thanks too, to all staff of the secretariat of St. Lawrence O'Toole for handling all paper works for me. I acknowledge with gratitude all those who helped proofread the dissertation.

I am indebted to all whose publications and articles I have consulted in my studies. You have all shaped my mind and contributed immensely to the success of the dissertation.

To my amiable and proficient supervisor, Rev Dr Joseph Pdraig Corkery, I say a million thanks for giving me all needed guidance and time. In the same vein I thank all my professors and teachers, my internal reader, Suzanne Mary Mulligan and external Reader, Professor Daniel G. Groody. Your critical analysis and recommendations have helped shaped the dissertation.

I acknowledge with profound gratitude Dr Michael Kinsella, Former Director of Aid to Church in Need (ACN), Ireland, and ACN for providing me sponsorship for my PhD Studies. I am grateful to the Scholarship and Grant Board of St. Patrick's Pontifical University (SPPU) for the grants and scholarship I received during my studies. I acknowledge with gratitude the former Rector of St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary, Makurdi, Nigeria, Fr. Godwin Atede and my colleagues of same institute. Special thanks to Fr. Emmanuel Abuh who introduced SPPU to me and facilitated my application and admission processes. Thanks to all the staff of The Theology office, SPPU.

To late Hellen McGrath, Liam, Noel, Cecilia and all members of the Allegiance to the Truth Ministries, I say a big thank you. Your friendship and faith have been a great source of inspiration and strength in my studies. Many thanks to you, Sr. Julie Doran OLA (Mama

Africa). You were a reliable shoulder to lean on all through. To all student-colleagues of the Postgraduate School, SPPU and all my friends, I am grateful for your love and time. A million thanks to my mother, Clementina Anyaoyi Johnson, my siblings, and all family members. Your prayers and love have been a huge source of strength.

All Praise and honour to you, Lord God for the gift of life, health, sound mind and the graces and blessings for knowledge and academic pursuit. May this dissertation advance the cause of all your numerous children facing the challenges of migration, displacement and refugees.

# ABSTRACT

The United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees testifies that an unprecedented 89.3 million people around the world have been forced from their homes by conflict and persecution. Among them are 27.1 million refugees, 53.2 million Internally Displaced Persons and 4.6 million asylum seekers. Over half of the world's refugees are under the age of 18. 1 out of every 88 persons in the world has been forced to flee.<sup>1</sup> Behind the cold numbers of staggering statistics that characterise contemporary global phenomenon of migration, “lie human faces struck by tragedies of immense proportions, with loss of land and homes, family separation, physical sufferings, rape, sexual violence, psychological damage, lack of opportunities for education, uncertain future, and death itself.”<sup>2</sup> Migration is a perennial concern for the church and theology and has been addressed in many ways but fundamentally, through the church's teaching on unconditional hospitality, and the human rights and dignity of victims. The complex nature of modern migration calls for a greater attention to the structures of society and the role they play in the migration and refugee crisis. Hence, this thesis addresses the migration/refugee crisis through the lens of “sinful social structure.” This is necessary because conflict and poverty, the two major causes of forced migration, both have roots in local/international structures. A review of Pope's Francis' agenda on the migration regime, and an X-ray of the situation of Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria provide deep content for the task of the Thesis.

**Key words: migration, refugees, conflict, poverty, sin, sinful structures, human rights, human dignity, hospitality.**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/en-ie/figures-at-a-glance.html> (Accessed on 15th June 2023). Earlier in 2004, the United Nations' world Economic and Social Survey had affirmed that one out of every thirty-five persons on earth was a migrant, and the world Bank has rightly called migration one of the determining factors of the twenty-first century.

<sup>2</sup> Peter C. Phan, “Deus Migrator-God the Migrant: Migration of theology and theology of Migration,” in *Theological Studies*, 2016 vol. 77, no. 4, 846.

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# Introductory Chapter

## 0.1 Introduction

The research addresses the humanitarian crisis of migrants and refugees through the theological concept of sinful social structures. It is inspired by the huge concern of modern migration with its complex nature, and the plight of Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria. A critical examination of the migrants and refugee crisis reveals that the crisis is fuelled and sustained by social structures that drive global and local politics and economies. These social structures as understood by *Critical Realism* are systems of relations between people of various positions and have inbuilt mechanisms that cause people to make choices within the structure. The social structure is thus considered sinful if it contains mechanisms that cause people within the structure to make morally harmful choices.<sup>3</sup> Our thesis argues that there are sinful structures in operation within the political, social, and ecclesiastical life that continue to fuel and sustain the crisis of migration, displacement, and refugees. These sinful social structures need to be addressed to strengthen the church's advocacy for migrants and refugees.

The concern of internally displaced persons in Nigeria is examined for practical exploration into the role of sinful structures in the migrant and refugee crisis. In his message for the 106th World day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Francis refers to the drama of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) as “an often-unseen tragedy that the global crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated.”<sup>4</sup> Amidst this humanitarian crisis, the big economies and political powers of the world continue to advocate structures that promote profit and

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<sup>3</sup> Daniel K. Finn, “Social Structures” in *Moral Agency within Social Structures and Cultures: A Primer on Critical Realism for Christian Ethics*, Daniel K. Finn ed. (Washington: Georgetown university Press, 2020), 29-41.

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco\\_20200513\\_world-migrants-day-2020.html.1](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20200513_world-migrants-day-2020.html.1) (All other subsequent Vatican sources that shall be cited can be found on this site except otherwise stated)

material gains at the expense of the dignity of the human person. These structures extol political and economic considerations above humanitarian concerns. Such structures have created great indifference and insensitivity to the plights of IDPs and other migrants and refugees all over the world. In Nigeria as in many other parts of the world a small “privileged” group live in affluence, maintained by ill-structures, and are determined to do everything to maintain the status quo. This is responsible for the restiveness that is fast becoming the trademark of the Nigerian nation. The Christian message of salvation, solidarity, hospitality, and care for the poor is challenged by the prevailing attitudes and situation.<sup>5</sup> The voice of the church risks losing its efficacy and impact as some of the sinful structures are identified within her operations. This forces apathy and indifference to grow even among the faithful. The present scenario makes it difficult for Christians to truly assimilate the message that IDPs and other vulnerable people offer us the opportunity to meet the lord, and to respond adequately to their pastoral challenges.<sup>6</sup> The situation calls for a re-examination of the church’s social advocacy for migrants and refugees and especially for IDPs both in Nigeria and the wider world. Our thesis embarks on the re-examination of the church’s advocacy for migrants and refugees with the theological theme of sinful social structures.

## 0.2 Thesis Statement

The principle of Structural Sin is a veritable theological tool for addressing the humanitarian crisis of migrants/refugees. The thesis argues that we need to complement the church’s concern and advocacy for migrants and refugees with adequate re-examination of the sinful structures, both *ad extra* and *ad intra*, that create and sustain the conditions of displacement and migration.

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<sup>5</sup> See message of Pope Francis for the 106th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2020, 3. The Holy Father states that sharing is an essential element as evidenced in the life of the early Christian community for God did not want the resources of the planet to benefit a few.

<sup>6</sup> See message of Pope Francis for the 106th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2020, 2.

### 0.3 Research Questions

1. How is the concept of sinful social structures a useful moral evaluation tool in the Migrant/refugees' crisis?
2. How independent are social structures as causative agents for social behaviour?
3. In what ways does the sociological theory of *Critical Realism* assist in establishing the independent causal character of social structures to demonstrate how social structures can be sinful?
4. What are the implications of the independent causative agency status of social structures for contemporary migrant and refugee regime?
5. How much has the concept of sinful social structures been employed in the agenda of Pope Francis and the Nigerian church on the migration and refugee crisis?

### 0.4 Aim and Objective

The aim of the research is to advance the understanding of Structural Sin as a relevant theological concept for addressing humanitarian and social issues. The objective is to complement the church's advocacy for migrants/refugees by addressing the migrant/refugee's crisis through the lens of Structural Sin.

### 0.5 Scope and Limitation of Study

The study concerns the church's advocacy for migrants and refugees in general. However, we shall narrow in on an exclusive group of migrants, Internally Displaced Persons. While appreciating the various theological angles from which the migrant and refugee crisis has been addressed, our study shall limit itself to the relevance of sinful social structures in addressing the crisis. Relevant experiences and data from all over the world are considered but, the Nigerian challenge of Internally Displaced persons shall be our focal environment for practical analysis.

## 0.6 Methodology

The concern of the study is the social and moral implications of the migrant, displacement, and refugee crisis and how to address the crisis through the theological concept of sinful social structures. The research is therefore an interdisciplinary study between Sociology and Theology. It draws insights from Sociology to unpack the theological concept of structural sin and establish its relevance for the moral evaluation of the migration and refugee crisis. We explore the sociological theory of *Critical Realism* as in the works of Daniel K. Finn<sup>7</sup> and other Critical Realist theologians in dialogue with relevant church documents on the subject matter of structural sin to establish the independent causal character of social structures and how they can be sinful. Using the Critical realist theory of *emergence*, we seek to establish that social structures are not moral agents but understood as systems of relations between social positions, they have causative effects on the choices people make through the restrictions and opportunities within the mechanism of social institutions. As such social structures are not only relevant in addressing moral issues but necessary in seeking conversion. The thesis addresses the challenges of migration and refugees from the understanding that social structures can be a causative agent for moral evil. We examine Pope Francis' agenda on Migration and refugees and the church's response to the challenge of Internally Displaced Persons with the principle of sinful social structures.

## 0.7 Chapter Outline

Besides the introductory chapter, the research has six chapters. Chapter one deals with the understanding and development of the concept of Structural sin. The chapter discusses the traditional understanding of sin against its modern understanding. We examine the origin and development of the concept of social/structural sin with the receptibility of the concept in the teachings of the

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<sup>7</sup> Daniel K. Finn, "What is Sinful Social Structure" in *Theological Studies* vol. 77(1) 136-164.

church on sin. The chapter explores the tension between the traditional understanding of sin as an act of the human will and the sinful nature of social structures. The chapter seeks to establish a reconciliation and insists that the tension can be resolved with a good understanding of social structures and how they operate.

Chapter two examines the independent and causative character of social structures from the sociological school of *Critical Realism*. This chapter establishes the agency status of social structures by appealing to the sociological theory of *Emergence* from the school of *Critical Realism*. It shows how structures assume agency status through the mechanisms built into the structures by which persons within the social structures operate.

Chapter three is central to the research. It examines the nature of the migrant crisis and the ethical and theological concerns it generates. The chapter provides a literature review as it examines existing theological responses to the migrant crisis. It examines the limitations of the two major ethical principles of hospitality and human rights in addressing the crisis and establishes the relevance of the principle of sinful social structure as complement to all theological efforts at addressing the crisis.

Chapter four examines the response of Pope Francis to the migrant and refugee's regime through the lens of sinful social structures. This chapter looks at the theological approach of Pope Francis. It discusses his agenda on the migration/refugee regime along the principle of sinful social structures to establish how strong the principle has been employed in the agenda of the pope.

Chapter five applies the concept of structural sin to the challenges of Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria as it discusses the response of the Nigerian church to the crisis. This chapter provides a practical exposition on the role of sinful

social structures in the migration/refugee concern and the necessity to complement the church's advocacy by addressing the concerns of evil structures.

The last chapter provides recommendations and conclusions. This chapter provides basic conclusions emanating from the research. The recommendations are made based on the conclusions. The conclusions are guided by the four-point agenda of Pope Francis: *welcome, protect, promote, and integrate*.

# Chapter One: The Nature, Development and Understanding of Social/Structural Sin

## 1.0 Introduction

The term Sin is the theological construct for moral evil. It is the effort to articulate the mystery of evil and what that represents in our relationship with God.<sup>1</sup> Its authentic meaning can only be found in relationship to the concept of God. As observed by Kenneth Himes, the reality of sin is a mystery that can only be described by employing a variety of metaphorical images and analogies. This is because sin-talk is necessarily God-talk and discussions about God can only be done in metaphorical terms since God is a mystery.<sup>2</sup> Sin is the metaphorical term that describes actions and inactions that negate the understanding of the Good in human relationship with God. It is rooted in human freewill and its capacity to freely choose good. At the centre of sin is the human person. However, the human Will is subjected to so many hinderances and conditions that limit human freedom or at least influence and weaken the Will to always choose good. While these hinderances may not be totally independent by their nature, they can accumulate, grow, and become so fixed and become sources of sin in the lives of individuals whom they condition. This has given birth to the notion of social/structural sin. This chapter examines the nature, development, and operation of the concepts of sin and social/structural sin. The chapter aims at providing a good understanding of the concepts to establish their relevance for moral evaluation of the migration and refugee crisis.

## 1.1 Traditional Understanding of Sin

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*<sup>3</sup> (CCC) defines sin as an offence against God, reason, truth, and right conscience, a failure in genuine love of God and one's neighbour. It is the function of the will of the human person contrary to the eternal law. "Sin sets itself against God's love for us and turns our hearts away from it... it is disobedience, a revolt against God through the will to become 'like gods,' knowing and determining good and evil." It is love of oneself even to the contempt of God (proud self-exaltation) (CCC1850). Sin manifest itself in

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth R. Himes, "Human Failing: The Meanings and Metaphors of Sin," in *Moral Theology: New Directions and Fundamental Issues*, ed. James Keating (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), 146-147.

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth R. Himes, "Human Failing," 146. Himes maintains that understanding sin as a proper religious language provides a corrective to the common error of practical atheism. He cites the example of reducing wrong to only that, that does harm to others whereas sin in religious terms goes beyond that. In religious parlance, things can still be sinful even when they do no observable harm to another person.

<sup>3</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Dublin: Veritas-Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995), no. 1849.



utterance, deed or desire that is contrary to the eternal law of love and thus injures human solidarity. Pope John Paul II affirms that thought in *Reconciliatio et Penitentia* (RP) when he states that sin is a radical break in union with God, oneself and others which can only be healed “through the interior transformation or conversion which bears fruit in a person’s life through acts of penance.”<sup>4</sup> Reflecting on the parable of the Prodigal Son, the Pope further describes sin as the separation from God engineered by the desire to lead one’s own independent existence. This prodigal son represents every human being, bewitched by the temptation to separate themselves from God to lead their own independent existence. This only leads to disappointment as one soon discovers the emptiness of the mirage which had fascinated them leaving them alone, dishonoured, exploited as they try to build a world all for themselves in the depths of their misery, with deep longing to return to communion with God, their Father and creator. (RP no 5). The attitude of the elder brother in the parable equally reveals the selfishness in sin. “Every human being is also this elder brother. Selfishness makes him jealous, hardens his heart, blinds him, and shuts him off from other people and from God. The loving kindness and mercy of the father irritate and enrage him; for him the happiness of the brother, who has been found again, has a bitter taste.” (RP no 6). The late Pontiff asserts that sin is an integral part of the truth about the human person which immediately relates “the human dimension to its divine dimension, where sin is countered by the truth of divine love, which is just, generous and faithful, and which reveals itself above all in forgiveness and redemption.” (RP no 13). The biblical narrative of the first account of sin in Genesis chapter three is presented in such a way that shows how sin constitutes a constant in the human story. The commandment is an integral part of the creation story and scripture interprets history in terms of obedience to or transgression of the will of God.<sup>5</sup> Every human person, therefore, stands in need of conversion, penance, and reconciliation to fully realise themselves. As such Pope John Paul II insists that “to acknowledge one’s sin, indeed-penetrating still more deeply into the consideration of one’s own personhood-to recognize oneself as being a sinner, capable of sin and inclined to commit sin, is the essential first step in returning to God.” (RP no 13)

The emphasis remains that sin is moral evil made possible by the free will of the human person. The root of sin is in the heart of the human being, in their free will, according to the teaching of the lord in Matthew 15: 19-20. However, on a complementary note, in the heart also resides

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<sup>4</sup> John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et Penitentia* [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_02121984\\_reconciliatio-et-paenitentia.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_02121984_reconciliatio-et-paenitentia.html) no 4.

<sup>5</sup> Pontifical Biblical Society, *What is Man?* Trans Fearhus O’Fearghail and Andrian Graffy, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 2019), no 295.

charity, the source of good and pure work, which sin wounds. (CCC 1853). God created a world in a state of journeying towards its ultimate perfection (CCC 310). Angels and all human beings, intelligent and free creatures, must journey towards their ultimate destinies by their own free choice and preferential love (CCC 311). In the course of this journey, they go astray when they turn from God to themselves. It is this turning away from God, our ultimate destiny that constitutes the moral evil called sin. Sin is therefore the result of the wrong use of the free will of human beings, creatures endowed with intelligence, right conscience to love and grow in same love towards the ultimate truth, God. Sin is a rupture of the communion with God (CCC1440). God permits moral evil because he respects the freedom of his creatures, but he is in no way, directly or indirectly, the cause of moral evil (CCC 311). Every human person was created with an innocence that characterises the beauty of God's imprint and dignity. That innocence enables the heart to love, to appreciate goodness, to seek truth, to delight in the right. That innocence teaches the sense of shame and guilt and spurs one on to seek redress for wrong. The feeling of shame testifies to God telling us we have done something opposed to God's goodness in us. The Pontifical Biblical Society instructs that "Scripture does not wish in any way to deny the responsibility of the human person by taking sin to be a fatal consequence of imperfect human nature. If this were the case, there would be neither a precept nor a punishment, which in fact presupposes the real possibility of making a good choice."<sup>6</sup> Innocence is at the base of human conscience- the inner sanctuary where we encounter God on a personal level as he whispers to us with his still, gentle voice. Our hearts get restless and know no peace when we act against the sense of innocence in us. Guilt and shame set in telling us something has gone wrong with our very being- a rupture within us and in our relationship with God and others. It is this rebellion against innocence and conscience that is termed sin.

As off-spring of Adam and Eve, we come into this world with the tendency to sin. This is what is called Original Sin: a condition in human nature that influences us to choose evil rather than good. St. Paul laments about this condition of sin in Romans 7:14-25. He acknowledges how the desire for good lies in his innermost being, but he finds himself doing the evil he does not want to do as opposed to the good he seeks to do. Yet he is quick to acknowledge with gratitude the power of Jesus, who sets us free from the law of sin. In Romans 3:23-25, Paul makes it clear that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, but they are justified by grace

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<sup>6</sup> Pontifical Biblical Society, *What is Man?* No 301. [The path of good opposed to the path of evil is a recurring motif in biblical tradition as formulated at the end of the Torah where the lord invites the people of Israel to choose life and live (Deuteronomy 30: 15-16, 19)].

through faith in Jesus Christ. However, the biblical tradition of the origins does not consider sinfulness as a congenital inheritance transmitted by the “fathers”. This is evident in the appearance of some exemplary figures like Enoch (Genesis 5:24), Noah, (Genesis 6:8-9).and Abraham (Genesis 15:6) in the same history.<sup>7</sup> Each human person is born with a freewill and can choose good against evil. However, it important to note as the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the church stresses, ... “Adam and Eve committed a personal sin, but this sin affected the human nature that they would transmit in a fallen state. It is a sin which will be transmitted by the propagation to all mankind, that is, by the transmission of a human nature deprived of original holiness and justice.”<sup>8</sup>

The Catechism of the Catholic Church further states that, sin can be distinguished according to their object, or according to the virtues they oppose, by excess or defect, or according to the commandments they violate. They can be further classed according to whether they concern God, neighbour, or oneself. They can be divided into spiritual and carnal sins or as sins in thought, word, deed, or omission (CCC 1853). Sins are also evaluated according to their gravity. A distinction is made between mortal sin and venial sin both from the scripture and human experience (CCC 1844). The document asserts importantly, that, “sin creates proclivity to sin... this results in perverse inclination which cloud conscience and corrupt the concrete judgement of good and evil. Thus, sin tends to reproduce itself and reinforce itself, but it cannot destroy the moral sense at its roots” (CCC 1864).<sup>9</sup> This is important for the understanding of the concept of social/structural sin which is discussed later in this work.

Basically, five elements stand out in the traditional understanding of the church on sin:

(1) Sin is an offence against God, others, and self. It is a failure in genuine love of God and other human beings. It therefore has both a vertical dimension and a horizontal dimension where the failure to love and obey God diametrically leads to denial of that love to others. Describing the effect of the First Sin as recorded in Genesis 3, Pope John Paul II states that “the rupture with Yahweh simultaneously breaks the bond of friendship that had united the

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<sup>7</sup> Pontifical Biblical Society, *What is Man?* No 303.

<sup>8</sup> Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, (Ireland: Veritas Publication, 2005), no 115.

<sup>9</sup> As attested to by the Pontifical Biblical Society, the proliferation of evil is part of the narrative of human history in the biblical story of the human condition. See Pontifical Biblical Society, *What is Man?* No 302. (An attempt at understanding the human condition in the tends of proclivity to sin establishes a basis for social/structural sin).

human family.” This is described in the man and the woman pointing an accusing finger at each other and later in Cain hating his brother, Abel and eventually taking his life (RP no 15).

(2) Sin is disobedience against God’s eternal law. “It is the disobedience of a person who, by a free act, does not acknowledge God's sovereignty over his or her life, at least at that particular moment in which he or she transgresses God's law” (RP no 14).

(3) Sin is selfishness engineered by a desire to separate from God and seek self-independence. “Exclusion of God, rupture with God, disobedience to God: Throughout the history of mankind this has been and is, in various forms, sin. It can go as far as a very denial of God and his existence: This is the phenomenon called atheism” (RP no 14).

(4). Sin is the wrong use of freewill. Pope John Paul II maintains that “Clearly sin is a product of man's freedom. But deep within its human reality there are factors at work which place it beyond the merely human, in the border area where man's conscience, will and sensitivity are in contact with the dark forces which, according to St. Paul, are active in the world almost to the point of ruling it.” (RP no 14).<sup>10</sup>

(5) Sin creates proclivity to sin. Pope John Paul II affirms that by sinning the human person refuses to submit to God. As such, his internal balance is destroyed, and wounds of contradictions and conflicts arise within them. Wounded in this way, they almost inevitably cause damage to the fabric of their relationship with others and with the created world. He maintains that “This is an objective law and an objective reality, verified in so many ways in the human psyche and in the spiritual life as well as in society, where it is easy to see the signs and effects of internal disorder.” (RP no 15).

Kenneth Himes argues that Catholic moral thoughts on sin could be summarised in the following way: “we inherit a situation that should not be; we misuse the gift of freedom; our freedom is itself impaired; our internal condition is acted out in our behaviour; our social relationships and structures are also distorted.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The fact of “the dark forces” operating in the world and how much role they play in human sinfulness is often downplayed in moral considerations. Sin is the result of human freedom, but this freedom is often affected by several “dark forces” that need to be considered when dealing with sin and conversion.

<sup>11</sup> Kenneth Himes, “Human Failing,” 147.

## 1.2 Theological Developments on the Concept of Sin

The understanding of sin has assumed different emphasis in the course of history. Three basic strands could be identified in the development of the understanding of sin in theological discourse. They include: 1. The understanding of sin as acts; 2. Sin as a state or condition; 3. Sin as social and structural.

### 1.2.1. The Understanding of Sin as Acts

This is the understanding of sin that dominated moral theology before Vatican II. It grew out of the biblical theology of sin which presents sin in relation to the covenant relationship with God. Himes acknowledges that in the Hebrew scriptures, there are more than fifty words used for sin, but three chief images stand out: the ancient Hebrew – *hattah* (to miss the mark), *peshe* (to rebel), and *awon* (to be twisted, bent).<sup>12</sup> Sin was the breaking of the covenant, a failure to maintain *hesed* (the covenant relationship variously described as ‘love,’ ‘loyalty,’ ‘devotion,’ and ‘mercy.’ While *hattah* refers to failure to live up to the standard of a true relationship by ‘missing the mark,’ *pesha* refers to refusal to recognise the relationship to the lord by being rebellious or breaking the relationship. *Awon* on the other hand refers to a state of being crooked or twisted and emphasises the burden sin places on a person as it cripples one like a physical deformity. As explained by Himes, “these terms demonstrate that the biblical authors viewed sin as a rift or rupture in the relationship with God.”<sup>13</sup> In the New Testament, the understanding of sin as breaking relationship with God is also emphasised. This is evident in the parable of the Prodigal Son who admits that in his sin is the breaking of the bond that unites him to his father, so that he is no longer a son.

Following the understanding of sin as doing acts that break the covenant relationship with God, sin developed as acts that break God’s commandments and laws. In the manualist era (from the 17th to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, moral theology was mainly textbooks designed for priest confessors to be effective ministers in the sacrament of penance. Moralists placed sin into different categories of acts and then numbered occasions penitents violated the grid.<sup>14</sup> Sin against nature developed side by side with the understanding of sin as act. Sexual sins became central in the aftermath of *Humanae Vitae* with sins against the 6th and 9th commandments taking the central stage in moral discourse and the confessional. As observed by Keenan, “apart from weather

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<sup>12</sup> Kenneth Himes, “Human Failings,” 150. (He explains that though none of the words is exclusively religious but being used to describe sin, they tell us something about the semitic understanding).

<sup>13</sup> Kenneth Himes, “Human Failing,” 151.

<sup>14</sup> James F. Keenan, S.J., “Raising Expectations on Sin,” in *Theological Studies* Vol 77 no 1, 2016, 167.

many of the sins confessed concerned these two commandments, they were the sins that penitents were most anxious about, because since the 17th century, all sins against the 6th and 9th commandments were defined as mortal and therefore damnable.”<sup>15</sup> This approach to sin was more self-oriented than other-oriented. It is criticized for its failure to look to the good but focussing singularly on avoiding evil, focussing exclusively on external acts than on the internal life which was supposed to be the primary interest of moral theology. Odon Lottin, a Benedictine friar (188-1965) states that “... by its insistence on avoiding wrong external acts, not only had moral theology lost its purpose, that is, to pursue Christian discipleship, but it lost its deep connection to ascetical and mystical theology... moralists only taught what sins were to be avoided and never proposed the virtuous actions that a true Christian should practice.”<sup>16</sup>

### 1.2.2 Sin as a State or Condition

The understanding of sin as condition grew gradually alongside the manualist modus operandi of strict condemnation of various acts for which penitents were held culpable as manualists tried to find ways to ease the conscience. This was heavily informed by developments in psychology and sociology in the mid-1990s. Social psychologists developed two models for human behaviour: the biological model, and the sociological model. The biological model explains human behaviour from the reaction of human animal organisms as they reconstruct certain elements and sequences of internal events which are then used to explain the external behaviour observed. The sociological model on the other hand sees human behaviour in terms of roles which humans incorporate as a historical creation; roles that are limited by the kind of social institutions in which they are born and mature as adults.<sup>17</sup> With a growing dependence on the developing psychology, manualists progressively found more and more psychological conditions to diminish penitents’ culpability. Long lists of problematic consciences were identified: the false, the doubting, perplexed, scrupulous, and laxed conscience, showing how easily and frequently the average Catholic veered from the true conscience. Several obstacles to human act and nervous conditions that diminished the agent’s moral responsibility were developed. Such obstacles include simple ignorance, concupiscence, fear, and violence as well as vices that have not been checked. Nervous human conditions as identified by the Herbert

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<sup>15</sup> James F. Keenan, S.J., “Raising Expectations on Sin,” 168.

<sup>16</sup> James F. Keenan, S.J., “Raising Expectations on Sin,” 167. Also see Odon Lottin, *Moral Fundamentale* (Tourmai, Belgium, 1954), 23-25.

<sup>17</sup> See Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills, Trans and eds. *Character and Social Structure: The Psychology of Social Institutions* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1954), 1-18. (The two models are not mutually exclusive, but complementary in explaining human character and behaviour.)

Jones include neurasthenia, hysteria, compulsive disorder, melancholia, hypochondria, inferiority complex.<sup>18</sup> With the understanding of sin in this form, emphasis generally shifted to finding grounds that makes the penitent less capable, less responsible, and less mature, bedevilled by either ignorance, or incompetence, or prone to psychological disorder. For scholars in this school of thought, the average lay person was less able to discern and execute morally right conduct and therefore less able to sin. This approach to sin is criticized for its conspiracy to diminish guilt as it excused failures on different conditions of humanity. No one sinned because they could; they sinned because they could not do otherwise.<sup>19</sup> Such understanding of sin has continued to be sustained in many quarters especially in our therapeutic world. As observed by Himes, the tendency is to view behaviour within psychological categories as things that in another time were called sin are now treated as addictions, manias, or understandable neurosis.<sup>20</sup> However, the role the conditions identified play in choice-making which lies at the bottom of our freedom as humans cannot be overemphasised. The concept of social/structural sin developed from considering the role various human situations play in an individual's sin. Giving its centrality to our discussion, sin as social/structural is discussed extensively in the next section below.

### 1.2.3 Sin as Social and Structural

The concept of Structural Sin first gained prominence in the works of liberation theologians who used the term concomitantly with Social Sin.<sup>21</sup> Both concepts have received a lot of attention over the last fifty years yet remain shrouded in ambiguities and complexities. There are no universally accepted definitions, and the ambiguity is such that social sin is sometimes used interchangeably with structural sin.<sup>22</sup> However, both are not entirely the same. Social sin is perceived as the accumulation of individual sins and the social and cultural influences that condition individuals to make wrong choices, thereby causing them to sin. Structural sin (also structures of sin) is considered as evil institutions and practices that give incentives and idealises individual actions to make choices in favour of self-interest and against the common good. Both social sin and structural sin deal with the social nature of sin but not entirely the

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<sup>18</sup> James F. Keenan, S.J., "Raising Expectations on Sin," 166.

<sup>19</sup> James F. Keenan, S.J., "Raising Expectations on Sin," 168.

<sup>20</sup> Kenneth R. Himes, "Human Failing," 145.

<sup>21</sup> Daniel K. Finn, "What is Sinful Social Structure," in *Theological Studies* vol. 77(1) 136-164 at 137. (Liberation theology developed in Latin America in the 1970s with emphasis on liberation from oppressive structures. Some of its major proponents include Bishop Oscar Romero, John Sobrino, and Jose Ignacio Gonzalez Faus.).

<sup>22</sup> Daniel K. Finn, "What is Sinful Social Structure," 137.

same way. Social sin embraces all social influences, including structures that affect individual sin while structural sin limits its focus to specific institutions and practices. According to Kristin Heyer, “in its broadest sense social sin encompasses the unjust structures, distorted consciousness and collective actions and inactions that facilitate injustice and dehumanisation.”<sup>23</sup> As Heyer maintains, theologians differ on the precise scope of social sin ranging from limiting it to the effects or embodiment of personal sin to an expansive sense of sin as primarily social, with personal sin as manifestation of social sin.<sup>24</sup> She cherishes Peter Henriot’s definition which presents social sin as referring generally to “structures that violate human dignity and impose gross inequality; situations that facilitate individual acts of selfishness; and complicity of individuals who fail to take responsibility for evil being done.”<sup>25</sup> Contemporary theologians prefer to treat structural sin as a specie of the larger genus of social sin and advise against using both terms interchangeably.<sup>26</sup> From this understanding comes the term, Sinful Social Structure. This is the understanding that shall guide the usage of the term in this thesis. Two trajectories developed regarding the understanding of social/structural sin: Liberation theology trajectory and the trajectory of the magisterium. Both acknowledge the social and structural nature of sin but approach its understanding with different emphasis. While the liberation trajectory emphasises the independent nature of structures, the magisterium maintains the responsibility of the free will for structures. The two trajectories are discussed below.

### *1. 2. 3.1 Liberation Theology Trajectory on Social/Structural Sin*

The theology of liberation generally presents liberation as salvation from socio-political and concrete historical sociocultural situations, rather than from personal individual sinfulness and guilt. It places emphasis on sin that is basically structural. It is a way of doing theology from the perspective of the poor and stresses the need to appreciate the human condition as situated in history. For Liberation theologians, the role of external factors in sin should be given greater consideration. These theologians argue that Sin and our sins have a history in their effects in the world because Sin is expressed in the categorical world in which we live.<sup>27</sup> This means we

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<sup>23</sup> Kristin E. Heyer, “Social Sin and Immigration: Good Fences makes Bad neighbours,” in *Theological Studies* vol. 71(2) 2010, 413.

<sup>24</sup> Kristin E. Heyer, “Social Sin and Immigration,” 414.

<sup>25</sup> See Kristin Heyer, *Strangers in our Midst: Day Labourers and Just Immigration Reform*, *Political Theology*, 9:4, 425-453, DOI: [10.1558/poth.v9i4.425](https://doi.org/10.1558/poth.v9i4.425) & Peter Henriot, “The Concept of Social Sin,” *Catholic Mind* 71 (October 1973) 40.

<sup>26</sup> Daniel K. Finn, “What is Sinful Social Structure,” 154.

<sup>27</sup> Bernard Brady, *Essential Catholic Social Thoughts*, 2nd ed. (New York, Maryknoll: Orbis books, 2017), 232-33.



must engage in structural analysis of society to understand the forces that condition us and that oppress the poor. Liberation theologians turned to Marxist analysis and dependency theory as tools for interpreting Latin America's place in the global economy and the economic forces oppressing the poor.<sup>28</sup> Liberation theology sought to understand how faith should react to challenges arising from grave violations of social justice in the community and identified the evil structures responsible for this injustice as sinful. As explained by Hans Schwarz, "Liberation theology argues primarily from a contextual angle and endeavours to thematise the contextual experience of sin and grace in different societal situations that, as it claims, result from global capitalistic and materialistic mindset."<sup>29</sup> Ignacio Ellacuria acknowledges that "The theology of liberation encourages people to change specific structures and to seek new ones, because it sees sin in some and grace in others. In the former it sees the negation of God's will and self-giving, while in the later it sees the affirmation and fulfilment of God's will and self-giving."<sup>30</sup> Jose Ignacio Gonzalez Faus complements this view when he states that in structural sin, Latin American Theology recovered the Johannine notion of the sin of the world, "a socio-religious order hostile to God."<sup>31</sup> Faus and many other theologians propose that the best definition for structural sin is to be found in Oscar Romero's Second Pastoral Letter of 1977. There, the late Bishop of El Salvador, now canonised, writes:

The Church has denounced sin for centuries. It has certainly denounced the sin of the individual, and it has denounced sin which prevents relationship between human beings, particularly, at the family level. But now it has reminded us of what has been fundamental from the beginning, of social sin, that is to say, the crystallisation of individual egoisms in permanent structures which maintain this sin and exerts its power over the greater majority.<sup>32</sup>

Discussions on structural sin among liberation theologians basically centre around the views expressed here by Romero. All such discussions call attention to the effect of sinful structures on individuals and insist that it is insufficient to focus on individual subjectivity when dealing with sin. According to James F. Keenan, SJ, there is a convergence of the views of liberation theologians on structural sin in the work of Christina A. Astorga.<sup>33</sup> Astorga states: "An

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<sup>28</sup> Matthew A Shadle, "Culture" in *Moral Agency Within Social Structures and Culture* edited by Daniel K. Finn (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2020.) 54.

<sup>29</sup> Hans Schwarz, *The Human Being: A theological Anthropology* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 254.

<sup>30</sup> Ignacio Ellacuria, "The Historicity of Christian Salvation," in *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, ed. Ignacio Ellacuria and John Sobrino (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), 275-76.

<sup>31</sup> Jose Ignacio Gonzalez Faus, "Sin" in *Mysterium Liberationis* 532-42 at 536. See, also Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 408-49).

<sup>32</sup> Jose Ignacio Gonzalez Faus, "Sin," in *Mysterium Liberationis*, 537.

<sup>33</sup> See James F. Keenan, S.J., "Raising Expectations of Sin," in *Theological Studies*, Vol. 77 no. 1 2016, 165-180 at 179. See also Christen A. Astorga, *Catholic Moral Theology and Social Ethics: A New Method* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2014), 2018.

individualistic theology of sin does not have the standpoint from which to expose the systems and structures that expose evil. This evil is embedded in social, political, economic, and cultural structures and systems that institutionalise oppression, domination, and privilege.”<sup>34</sup> Astorga helps us to reconcile also the seemingly divergent views of personal sins and social sins, when she makes us see that sin begets sin and though sin is rooted in personal acts, it is facilitated and perpetuated by sinful structures and systems.<sup>35</sup> She acknowledges the articulations of liberation theologians who stress “the unconscious dimension of social sin, the more involuntary ideological influences and subconscious dynamics that have impact on personal agency.”<sup>36</sup> This raises a tension to the traditional understanding of sin as a proper act of the individual, the result of wilful wrong choices of free moral agents. Socio-cultural and historical circumstances and structures are not moral agents. How then can they be granted causal powers of independent agency? The tension becomes more complex when examined against the social dimension of theological anthropology and the Catechism of the Church which admits that various elements and circumstances can affect responsibility for sin. Magisterial teaching on the understanding of structural sin has developed from the Church’s response to this tension.

#### 1.2.3.2 *The Magisterium on Social/Structural Sin*

Magisterial teaching on sinful structures resists claims that structures arise independent of the choices of persons within them. Sinful structures are seen and typically described as the result of personal sin, the concrete act of individuals who introduce them.<sup>37</sup> Basically, the Church acknowledges the existence of sinful structures as sinful situations, or collective behaviour of social groups or nations and presents social sin as the result of the accumulation and concentration of many personal sins.

Official magisterial response to the issue of social/structural sin could be argued to have begun with the Apostolic Constitution, *Reconcilatio et Penitentia* of Pope St. John Paul II. The pope admits that sin does have a social dimension. There is ‘communion of sin’ just as there is ‘communion of saints.’ Just as every soul that rises above itself raises the world, so does every soul that loves itself through sin drag down with itself the Church and the world. Every sin has inclusive consequences and repercussions on the entire ecclesial body and the human

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<sup>34</sup> Christine A. Astorga, *Catholic Moral Theology and Social Ethics: A New Method*, 218.

<sup>35</sup> Christine A. Astorga, *Catholic Moral Theology and Social Ethics: A New Method*, 218.

<sup>36</sup> Christine A. Astorga, *Catholic Moral Theology and Social Ethics: A New Method*, 218.

<sup>37</sup> See Daniel K. Finn, “What is Sinful Social Structure” 140. Finn explains that the obvious reason for this position is to prevent those who profit from the sinful structures from exonerating themselves because they did not create the structures.

family. This is one aspect of the social nature of sin.<sup>38</sup> Others include sins that constitute direct attack on one's neighbour, sins against justice in interpersonal relationships, either by individual against the society, or vice versa, sins against the rights of the human person, beginning with the right to life or against other people's freedom, especially, freedom to believe in God and adore him, every sin against the dignity of the human person and against the common good.<sup>39</sup> The Pope further admits that where the class struggle and obstinate confrontation between blocks and nations are concerned, the causes of sin can become so generalised and complex and almost anonymous. Hence, social sin can be spoken of in an analogical sense. Three understandings of social sin are identified in *Reconcilatio et Penitentia*: every sin can undoubtedly be considered as social sin because each individual's actions impact others; some sins by their very matter, either, by commission or omission, constitute a direct attack on one's neighbour; social sin refers to the relationships between the various human communities.<sup>40</sup> Even with this grounding of sin in social anthropology, the Pope emphasises a primary personal concept of sin. He stresses that, while individuals may be conditioned by external factors or habits, "sin, in the proper sense, is always a personal act, since it is an act of freedom on the part of an individual person and not properly of a group or community."<sup>41</sup>

The 1984 and 1986 documents of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF), both affirm the position of *Reconcilatio et Penitentia*. However, they give deeper insight to the understanding of structures in social sin. The 1984 CDF document reacts to certain aspects of Liberation Theology and admits the evil nature of certain structures. The document states: "To be sure, there are structures which are evil, and which cause evil and which we must have the courage to change. Structures, whether they are good or bad, are the result of man's actions and so are consequences more than causes."<sup>42</sup> The document accepts that some evil structures cause evil, but places at the base of such structures the responsibility of individuals.

The second document of 1986 admits the "fixed and fossilized" nature of some institutions and practices that can harm human dignity. It states that such structures can be relatively

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<sup>38</sup> John Paul 11, *Reconcilatio et Penitentia* No.16.

<sup>39</sup> John Paul 11, *Reconcilatio et Penitentia* No.16.

<sup>40</sup> John Paul 11, *Reconcilatio et Penitentia* No.16.

<sup>41</sup> John Paul 11, *Reconcilatio et Penitentia* No.16.

<sup>42</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, "Instructions on Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation'" (August 6, 1984), 4.15, [http://w2.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_19840806\\_theology-liberation\\_en.html](http://w2.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19840806_theology-liberation_en.html)

independent of the human will as well as capable of causing injustice.<sup>43</sup> This advances the understanding of structural sin by its acknowledgement of structures being capable of becoming fixed, and functioning independently of human will, even if relatively.

In *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, John Paul II gives further attention to structural realities and names imperialistic ideologies as capable of having blinding effects yet reemphasises their rootedness in concrete individual acts.<sup>44</sup> He admits that the ideological war between blocs harms the common good and could be difficult to remove.<sup>45</sup> The Pope names ideologies among structures and acknowledges the nonvoluntary dimension of social sin. This remains in conflict with his significant emphasis on personal responsibility.

In *Centesimus Annus*, the Pope admits that the human person is “also conditioned by the social structure in which he lives, by the education he has received and by his environment. These elements can either help or hinder his living in accordance with the truth.”<sup>46</sup> This further gives impetus to the influence sinful structures can have on individual actions. While discussing the culture of death in *Evangelium Vitae*, the Pope gives further expansion on the understanding of social sin and how it affects individual choices. In naming the roots of the culture of death, he identifies the eclipse of the sense of God and man which inevitably leads to a practical materialism, individualism, utilitarianism, and hedonism as well as the darkening of the human conscience both individually and in society, a confusion about good and evil that encourages the culture of death and consolidates structures of sin.<sup>47</sup> He expresses how evil structures can entangle the individual and mitigate subjective responsibility.<sup>48</sup>

From the articulations of Pope John Paul II and CDF, the limitation placed on the freedom of the individual by sinful historical situations, culture and institutions need to be considered when addressing personal responsibility for sin. The pope’s successors have not been too explicit in their reflections on structural sin, but both, Benedict XVI and Pope Francis have made references to the theme in their documents. In *Caritas in Veritate*, Benedict XVI refers to the operation of sin in social structures with reference to economic structures. He refers to “original

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<sup>43</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, “Instruction on Human Freedom and Liberation” (March 22, 1986), 74, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_19860322\\_freedom-liberation\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19860322_freedom-liberation_en.html)

<sup>44</sup> See John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, (December 30, 1987), no. 36-37.

<sup>45</sup> John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 36.

<sup>46</sup> John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, (May 1, 1991), no. 38.

<sup>47</sup> See Charles Curran, *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II* (Washington DC: Georgetown University, 2005), 14-15.

<sup>48</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* (March 25, 1995), no. 12

sin... in the structure of society.”<sup>49</sup> In *Evangelii Gaudium* and *Amoris Laetitia* Pope Francis condemns social and economic inequalities as evil embedded in structures of society, and of the transformation of unjust social structures, respectively.<sup>50</sup> In his most recent encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, the pope talks about the challenge of a single globalized cultural model that exploits and imposes itself on all cultures of the world.<sup>51</sup>

Our review shows a progressive growth in the magisterium’s appreciation of the concept of sinful structures and how it operates. More appreciation needs to be given to the strength of sinful structures in conditioning individual sins. Karl Rahner puts it very well in *Foundations of Christian Faith*, “we are a people who must inevitably exercise our own freedom subjectively in a situation of guilt, and indeed in such a way that this codetermination belongs to our situation permanently and inescapably.”<sup>52</sup> There is also the need to reconcile the liberation theology trajectory and the trajectory of the Magisterium. Efforts have been made in this regard by theologians as they seek further expansion on the understanding of social/structural sin.

#### *1.2.3.3 Theological Thoughts on Reconciling the Trajectories on Social/Structural Sin*

Conor Kelly argues that the magisterium, in accepting social structures as quasi-independent social influence, has come to acknowledge, “if not explicitly to affirm, the conviction of Liberation theologians that structures of sin have their own emergent way of operating in the world that is distinct from the actions of individual moral agent.”<sup>53</sup> It is plausible to agree with him that sinful social structures have some degree of independent social influence on personal sins. Yet the challenge remains concerning the role of freewill in sin.

Some contemporary theologians provide further insights on the concept of social/structural sin from philosophy and the social sciences, namely sociology, and psychology, anthropology, environmental and ethical studies. By so doing, they seek to establish how sinful social

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<sup>49</sup> Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* (June 29, 2009), no. 34. Scholars note that though, Benedict did not expressly embrace the language of structural sin, there is a continuation of JP II’s presentation in his thoughts. See Conor M. Kelly, “The nature and operation of Structural Sin: Additional Insight from Theology and Moral Psychology,” in *Theological Studies* Vol. 80 no. 2 2019, 293-327 at 298.

<sup>50</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (November 24, 2013), no. 59 and *Amoris Laetitia* (March 19, 2019), no. 290. Though none of Pope Francis’ references directly refers to structural sin, he has continued with magisterial acceptance of the operation and influence of social structures with sinful implications.

<sup>51</sup> Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* (Encyclical Letter, October 3, 2020) no. 12.

<sup>52</sup> Karl Rahner, *Foundations of the Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. William Dych (New York: Seabury, 1978), 110.

<sup>53</sup> Conor M. Kelly, “The nature and operation of Structural Sin: Additional Insight from Theology and Moral Psychology” in *Theological Studies* Vol. 80 no. 2, 2019, 293-327 at 299. As he has noted, the magisterium has not addressed what this distinction between the operation of structures of sin and individual moral agent means exactly.

structures operate and how they have independent status yet do not obliterate the freewill. Three theories have emerged from their works: that structures of sin principally influence human action through conscience formation, skewing an individual's perspective of what is right or wrong; that structures of sin preserve moral ignorance by obfuscating the immoral consequences of certain action; that all social sins, including structures of sin, operate much like original sin to create an environment within which the exercise of free will is conditioned.<sup>54</sup> Conor Kelly argues that these three different articulations are not mutually exclusive and the best definition of the phenomenon ought to preserve space for all three insights.<sup>55</sup>

Christina G. McRorie addresses the question of social sin and structural sin from epistemic perspective. Quoting Aquinas' dictum that vice dulls the intellectual sight, she argues that our ability to interpret reality rationally is subject to significant constraints imposed by our social context.<sup>56</sup> She addresses the effect of social and structural sin on the source of moral judgement itself, namely reason. The efforts of scholars to establish the deep connections of moral reasoning with virtue, vice, conscience, and moral perception indirectly raises question about the conditioning of rationality itself. McRorie argues that "if culture inculcates blind spots in our conscience and deforms embodied sensibilities without our knowledge or initial consent, presumably in doing so it likewise deforms our reason—at the very least, disabling its operation by distorting the phenomenon it perceives."<sup>57</sup> She argues further that structures by deforming our moral habits through sheer forces of repeated incentives to act deficiently may equally dim our rational faculties and by accepting that virtue and reason are related and that virtue is itself subject to contingency, we necessarily ought to accept that rationality itself is subject to contingency.<sup>58</sup>

Using the theological trope of "The World" McRorie establishes how reasoning itself as a source of theology is a victim of the dark world after the fall and remains a part of the saeculum till the eschaton. As such, human agency remains perennially vulnerable to distortion.<sup>59</sup> That our power of reasoning is naturally socially embedded, and it is a feature of createdness is itself not a problem. The problem lies in agential porosity leading to sinful ignorance and

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<sup>54</sup> Conor M. Kelly, "The nature and operation of Structural Sin," 298.

<sup>55</sup> Conor M. Kelly, "The nature and operation of Structural Sin:" 298.

<sup>56</sup> Christina G. McRorie, "Moral Reasoning in 'the World'," in *Theological Studies* Vol. 82 no. 2, 2021, 225.

<sup>57</sup> Christina G. McRorie, "Moral Reasoning in 'the World,'" 224.

<sup>58</sup> Christina G. McRorie, "Moral Reasoning in 'the World,'" 224.

<sup>59</sup> Christina G. McRorie, "Moral Reasoning in 'the World,'" 229.

irrationality.<sup>60</sup> Reason is distorted by social and cultural sin for the world is sinful and has left moral agency significantly damaged, including vulnerability to sinful distortions of our rational capacities. However, McRorie maintains that sin is not the final word on the human condition but grace which is always operating in our lives. Hence, she argues that cynicism or hopelessness about the possibility of making moral judgement does not exist. Instead of a capitulation, she calls for a struggle against sinful rational distortion through epistemic humility.<sup>61</sup> This involves listening to the experiences of those who have been affected by distorted rationality at work in theology. McRorie maintains that “in ethics this often means turning to groups not previously enfranchised in official theological productions, on the assumption that this would bring necessary change in the field.”<sup>62</sup>

Studies in Sociology and Anthropology reveal that some sins are social in character and they apply to the collective social behaviours that are the result of accumulation and concentration of many personal sins.<sup>63</sup> As observed by Denis Edwards, although there is a tendency in human beings toward self-interest, there is also an innate tendency towards cooperation, one which is part of our genetic and cultural heritage.<sup>64</sup> “Cooperation is intrinsic to human evolution, to human nature and to human culture. Our earliest human ancestors evolved by cooperating with insiders over against outsiders and this was a successful evolutionary strategy.”<sup>65</sup> Edwards argues that this innate tendency towards making others into outsiders, not just other humans but also the rest of the natural world, is a dimension of what the Christian tradition calls original sin.<sup>66</sup> Edwards’ argument is based on the contemporary works of Michael Tomasello, Martin Nowak and Edward Wilson, who have provided great insights into group selection and evolutionary social tendencies.<sup>67</sup> Identifying group tendency to make others outsiders as a central

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<sup>60</sup> Christina G. McRorie, “Moral Reasoning in ‘the World,’” 235. McRorie maintains that the porosity of our natural rational powers is not something that can be purified and become immune to context in the natural world but in hoping for redemption, we seek the reorientation and proper grounding of rational powers that remain, nonetheless, conditioned.

<sup>61</sup> Christina G. McRorie, “Moral Reasoning in ‘the World,’” 231.

<sup>62</sup> Christina G. McRorie, “Moral Reasoning in ‘the World,’” 231-232. McRorie affirms that the imperative to listen to the experiences of groups previously disenfranchised is shared across a range of feminist, liberationist, and other contextual theologies, in part through the methodological principle of epistemic privilege, which assumes that the inevitable conflicts between their experiences and dominant ways of knowing give marginalized communities a privileged vantage point onto social reality.

<sup>63</sup> Christina G. McRorie, “Moral Reasoning in ‘the World,’” 231-232.

<sup>64</sup> Denis Edwards, “Humans and Other Creatures: creation, Original Grace, and original Sin,” in *Just Sustainability: Technology, Ecology, and Resource Extraction*, eds. Christiana Z. Peppard and Andrea Vicini, SJ (New York: Orbis Books, 2015), 68.

<sup>65</sup> Denis Edwards, “Humans and Other Creatures,” 68.

<sup>66</sup> Denis Edwards, “Humans and Other Creatures,” 68. (Pope Francis’ call for integral ecology admits the existence of this exclusivist tendency that makes both the earth and the most vulnerable “outsiders.”)

<sup>67</sup> Denis Edwards, “Humans and Other Creatures,” 67-68. (Tomasello’s work is in *Evolutionary Anthropology* and through series of comparative experiments he has revealed that human cooperation tends to be inside the

dimension of original sin reveals that sin right from the outset has always had a social dimension. Christian Anthropology admits of the social dimension of individual existence and emphasises that one's dignity is not held in isolation from the dignity of others. The innate tendency to cooperate is considered an unalloyed good in Christian tradition but as observed by Edwards, it would be too simplistic to identify the evolutionary tendency towards self-interest as sin and cooperation with grace. We can cooperate in torture or economic exploitation of the poor and cooperation can easily become irresponsible conformity. On the other hand, self-interest is not necessarily to be associated with evil for it is fundamentally an inherited tendency which directs us towards seeking our own survival and generativity.<sup>68</sup> In Christian theology both other-orientation and self-affirmation can be seen as a fundamental way in which the human being is made in the image of God. However, the emergence of ethical behaviour that extends love, compassion, or help to outsiders is not favoured by evolutionary heritage. The tendency that we inherit is for cooperation and altruistic behaviour towards insiders.<sup>69</sup> Here lies a fundamental cause for exclusivity that negates true and genuine ethics which necessarily must reach beyond insiders and embrace the outsider. Such exclusivist tendency is a ground for social sin that needs to be transformed by a culture of grace.<sup>70</sup>

Kenneth Himes views structural sin from the perspective of historical and cultural disvalue embedded in the pattern of societal organisation that creates collective blindness.<sup>71</sup> Modern understanding of life emphasises the fact of collective existence and the role of society in the life of the individual. Our society and environment play a strong role in shaping our views and attitude to life. The age we live in equally affect our attitude to life. Contemporary views of life are quite different from how life was viewed in earlier times. Some acts that were accepted as right in the past like slavery are today heavily frowned at and condemned as morally wrong. Collective blindness can be adduced as a grave cause for sin. The Church today focuses on her

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group while heinous crimes can be committed against those who are outside the group. For Nowak, a Theoretical Biologist, Group selection functions together with other mechanisms of cooperation, particularly direct reciprocity and indirect reciprocity and argues that groups that cooperate tend to survive, flourish, and reproduce better than their competitors. Wilson, a biologist, identifies this tendency to form groups and defend them against other groups as tribalism and among the 'absolute universals' of human nature. Edwards admits that their work is still recent and still controversial, but it suggests a good background for theology to see an innate tendency in the human being toward cooperation.)

<sup>68</sup> Denis Edwards, "Humans and Other Creatures," 68.

<sup>69</sup> Denis Edwards, "Humans and Other Creatures," 68.

<sup>70</sup> Denis Edwards, "Humans and Other Creatures," 68-69. (Edwards sites Ernst Mayr, *What Evolution Is* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2002), 259, where she suggests that we need something like the teaching of a great philosopher or the preaching of a great prophet to move us to include outsiders within the range of our ethical concerns and actions. Edwards sees this cultural factor in the Christian understanding of God's revelation in Israel, and its culmination in Jesus Christ.)

<sup>71</sup> Kenneth Himes, "Human Failings," 153.



cooperate responsibility as a community of faith. This is done to correct the mistakes of the past when some sins were categorised as mortal and identified with particular acts without duly taking circumstances and the consent of the individual into consideration. This is most evident in sexual morality. Himes maintains that we observe ourselves as immersed in sin, not sins of our choosing but sins in which we are enveloped without realising it. We may not be the ones who created the unjust situation, but we are among those who cooperate and help maintain it even if unwittingly. Viewing sin as collective blindness makes us realise the ways in which our personal sin becomes incarnated in unjust social practices and institutions as well as to the power that these structures, having come into existence, exert upon us as heirs of the sins of those who have gone before us.<sup>72</sup> This, however does not take away individual freedom per se and each should always be able to examine his/her conscience in all matters of morality.

Nancy M. Rourke, writing on Virtue Ecology, observes that our physical interdependencies in creation are interwoven with our social, mental, and spiritual dependencies and that the nature of our createdness is such that we are inextricably embedded within complex webs of interdependencies.<sup>73</sup> Just as a person's environment becomes his or her 'self' as they eat and breathe, so too a moral agent's character is not isolated from the moral character of the societies she inhabits. "All these systems are open: persons absorb and reinforce the virtues of our societies, internalise the values of the surrounding social structures, experience these values within our bodies physically... and in order ways."<sup>74</sup> Rourke argues further that the difference between infused and acquired elements of our moral character becomes less clear when we consider the fact that acquired virtue is possible only because of the infusion of wonder-worthy lives, relationships, species and phenomena in our environment. She further relates this to Catholic tradition and maintains that the border between human agency and God's agency is porous and imprecise because creation and divine agency are conceptualised as open systems.<sup>75</sup> Open systems offer a corrective to Catholic virtue ethics where the individual human person has been the focal unit.<sup>76</sup> Societies have virtues and the virtues of individuals and of societies are mutually causally related. A moral agent is not isolated as the boundaries around them are porous and permeable and they are nested within societies and live out the dynamic of their

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<sup>72</sup> Kenneth Himes "Human Failing," 159.

<sup>73</sup> Nancy M. Rourke, "A Catholic Virtues Ecology," in *Just Sustainability: Technology, Ecology, and Resource Extraction*, eds. Christiana Z. Peppard and Andrea Vicini, SJ (New York: Orbis Books, 2015), 194.

<sup>74</sup> Nancy M. Rourke, "A Catholic Virtues Ecology," 199.

<sup>75</sup> Nancy M. Rourke, "A Catholic Virtues Ecology," 199.

<sup>76</sup> Nancy M. Rourke, "A Catholic Virtues Ecology," 199. (Rourke maintains here that the focus on the individual has been to an extreme forcing some scholars like Daryl Trimiew to accuse virtue ethics of lacking social justice).

internal moral worlds' interaction. This gives great impetus to the social character of sin. There is the need to rethink the nature of causality in moral development in a way that remembers the subtleties and systemic changes that are the result of broad, wide, and even diffuse network of causes.<sup>77</sup> Sinful actions need be properly morally evaluated in the contexts of other fundamental structures and systems at play in the moral agent.

John Sniegocki agrees that there could be a great danger of focusing too much on individual choices at the expense of systematic analysis and collective action. "Overemphasizing individual responsibility can lead to paralysing guilt, reinforce excessive individualism and consumerism... and distract attention from the primary need of building mass movement for structural change."<sup>78</sup> While it remains ever important to acknowledge the role of individual choices in moral evaluation, it is equally crucial to acknowledge that individual control over their choices is constrained, shaped and framed by institutions and political forces that can be remade only through collective actions.<sup>79</sup> Individuals cannot solely be blamed for humanitarian crisis. For social justice to be truly attained there is always the need to see structures and systems within which the individual operates as causative agents and address them.

Contemporary theologians insist that the deep connection between personal and social structural sin can no longer be ignored in addressing moral evil. Individual sins should be understood within their social context. This is evident in the review we have provided above. This brings some reconciliation between the two trajectories of Liberation Theology and the Magisterium. The seeming tension can be addressed by examining the relationship between personal sin and social/structural sin. We examine the nature of the relationship between personal sin and social/ structural the next section.

## 1.4 The Relationship Between Personal Sin and Social/ Structural Sin

The personal character of sin has remained the emphasis in Catholic tradition, coming from a long tradition of confessional practice of acknowledgement of individual serious transgressions and confession of same with the resolve to change in penance and receive absolution.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Nancy M. Rourke, "A Catholic Virtues Ecology," 201. (Arguing from the ecological point of view, Rourke maintains that just as when we account for broad and weak causality, we trace many changes back to the arrival of an invasive species, so a single event can begin unpredictable chain reactions of consequences within the moral character of a human person).

<sup>78</sup> John Sniegocki, "The Political Economy of Sustainability," in *Just Sustainability: Technology, Ecology, and Resource Extraction*, eds. Christiana Z. Peppard and Andrea Vicini, SJ (New York: Orbis Books, 2015), 66.

<sup>79</sup> Michael Maniates, "Individualization: Plant a Tree, buy a Bike, Save the World?" *Global Environmental Politics* Vol. 1, no. 3 (2001) 50.

<sup>80</sup> Brain Lewis, "Social Sin," *Compass* 48, no. 2 (Winter, 2014): 18-21 at 18.

However as observed by Brain Lewis, Biblical tradition presents sin not just as a personal act but as a communal act as well. With great emphasis, the prophets of the Old Testament inveighed against the infidelity of Israel as a nation against Yahweh. Sin is not so much a personal malice but the social act of the corporate unfaithfulness of Israel to the covenant of Yahweh.<sup>81</sup> Paul summarises it when he writes, “Sin and death reigned over all (Romans 5:14).”

The social character of sin is captured by the concept of original sin in the Christian Tradition. Original sin depicts the human condition that remains susceptible to evil influences even after the redemption of Christ. Every individual is born into this world with an inheritance of this sinful and evil conditions due to no fault of theirs. “We all come into this world, as our experience of life testifies, marked, scarred and weighed down by this sinful condition, for which we are not personally responsible and which we hope to surmount by the superabounding grace of Jesus, our Redeemer.”<sup>82</sup> The individual cannot be held responsible for evil condition, but it does not take away their free will and grace is ever available to individuals to choose good instead of evil. Sin remains the personal act of the individual freedom, but society is the bearer of evil structures. Herein lies the intricate relationship between personal sin and social sin. The responsibility of the creation and sustenance of sinful structures rests on personal choices of individuals but the sinful structures exist in society in which individuals live and act. The Catechism of the Catholic Church puts it this way:

Sin makes us accomplices of one another and causes concupiscence, violence, and injustice to reign among us. Sin gives rise to situations and institutions that are contrary to the Divine Goodness. 'Structures of sin' are the expression and effect of personal sins. They lead their victims to do evil in their turn. In an analogous sense they constitute a 'social sin'. (No.1869)

Brian Lewis affirms that personal sin is intimately linked to social sin and the notion of social sin must not lead to underestimating the responsibility of the individuals involved.<sup>83</sup> He gives a vivid explanation of three elements that comes from the teaching of the Church on the relationship between personal and social sin: persons create society; social sin has influence on personal behaviour; individuals have personal moral responsibility for social sin. He argues that the three are linked and operate in a vicious circle. By their personal choices, individuals create patterns of thinking and communicating with others. These become organised into structures, institutions and ultimately systems which constitute the ways individuals act as a

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<sup>81</sup> Brain Lewis, “Social Sin,” 18.

<sup>82</sup> Brain Lewis, “Social Sin,” 18.

<sup>83</sup> Brain Lewis, “Social Sin,”19.

society. Unjust, oppressive, and discriminatory social structures do not occur by accident but are embodiments of a multitude of sinful attitudes, actions, or culpable omissions of a great variety of persons over a long period of time.<sup>84</sup> These unjust structures become internalised by individuals with the passing of time who simply accept them as the way they are and may even become blind to their unjust character and how they affect the common good. Society thus influences and shapes how individuals think, react and act towards others. “This process of internalisation is the reason why, as Pope Saint John Paul II says, structures of sin ‘grow stronger, spread, and become the source of other sins and so influence people’s behaviour’.”<sup>85</sup> The vicious circle is seen in operation. Individual sinful actions create society structures of sin, which in turn influence individuals in society and lead them to further wrongdoing.

Individuals are not automatically morally responsible for sinful societal structures even though those structures arise from personal sin. People become culpable for sinful structures when they fail to make effort to eliminate or limit the negative effects of the sinful structures and/or sustain them consciously for selfish ends. In the words of Pope John Paul II:

Social sin is a case of the very personal sins of those who cause or support evil or who exploit it; of those who are in a position to avoid, eliminate or at least limit certain social evils but who fail to do so out of laziness, fear or the conspiracy of silence, through secret complicity or indifference; of those who take refuge in the supposed impossibility of changing the world and also of those who sidestep the effort and sacrifice required (*Reconciliatio et Penitentia* no, 25).

Both in the Church and in secular society, there is a growing consciousness and acknowledgement of social injustice in various guises- racism, environmental pollution, maltreatment of asylum seekers, economic systems driven by gain other than by need among others. Yet there is a corresponding unwillingness to change the status quo. This, according to Hamilton, is because of the emphasis on individual choice and on material advancement in a competitive society, an outlook that leaves little room for responsibility and even less for social responsibility to those less fortunate in society.<sup>86</sup> Individuals get caught up in the oppressive systems of the society which they may not have created. The individual becomes culpable of personal sin, when they consciously perpetuate or support evil and when they would do nothing to eliminate social evil out of laziness, fear, complacency, or acquiescence. In this way social sin becomes linked to personal sin. Any choice in favour of oppressive policies, or tolerance

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<sup>84</sup> Brain Lewis, “Social Sin,” 20.

<sup>85</sup> Brain Lewis, “Social Sin,” 20.

<sup>86</sup> Brain Lewis, “Social Sin,” 20.

of discriminatory structures of injustice makes the individual personally culpable of structures of sin.

It remains a challenge to individual consciences to challenge, change and reform structures of sin. Lewis suggests four cardinal ways this could be done.<sup>87</sup> (1) Collective prejudice which leads to an entrenched attitude of resistance to change must be recognised and overcome. This is the only way to liberate the oppressors and victims from the forces that led to the imposition and acceptance of the unjust structures. (2) Public opinions expressed in personal words and attitudes against the unjust structures form a great force that can achieve great changes. (3) Constant scrutiny of both secular and Church structures and institutions is needed to ensure that they are not oppressive of individuals or classes of people in the society or community. This helps the early consciousness of the unjust nature of structures and institutions that need to be removed. (4) There is the moral obligation for reparation and reconciliation for social sin as much as personal sin. Public penitential services that involve Church communities could reawaken in individual consciences, consciousness of both individual and social sins and subsequently lead to sincere reconciliation. A general absolution in such services makes it even more effective in achieving the reconciliation.

The vicious circle of personal and social/structural sin should always be kept in view when different social justice questions are examined.

## **2.5 Chapter Conclusion**

We have examined the understanding of sin both in its personal and social sense. Sin remains a very topical issue in moral theology and its understanding has continued to evolve. We have seen how the emphasis has grown from seeing sin as an act to seeing it as a condition. We agree with Kenneth Himes that sin-talk is necessarily God-talk as it is the effort to articulate something of the mystery of evil and what it means for our relationship with God.<sup>88</sup> Sin-talk is a reminder that moral evil shapes our relationship with God. This understanding of sin in terms of our relationship with God takes the understanding of sin to its original roots but still leaves us with the difficulties of how to describe this relationship and how it becomes sinful. Himes maintains that human language is inadequate in describing mysteries- hence the need to rely upon metaphors.<sup>89</sup> The concept of social/structural sin is one of the modern metaphors

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<sup>87</sup> Brain Lewis, "Social Sin," 21.

<sup>88</sup> Kenneth Himes, "Human Failings," 146.

<sup>89</sup> Kenneth Himes, "Human Failings," 147.

employed in seeking an understanding of sin. While it is obvious that the concept is helpful, it is a complex concept that raises questions about the personal character of sin and how sin is a result of individual free will and freedom. We have been able to establish how individual sins have a social character and how webbed into each other both personal sin and social/structural sin are. However, the question still needs to be addressed as to how structure can be sinful although it is not a human agent. This is what we shall explore in the next chapter as we examine the work of Daniel K. Finn as he addresses the question from the Sociological School of *Critical Realism*.

# Chapter Two: Insights from Sociology on the Independent Nature and Operations of Social/Structural Sin

## 2.0 Introduction

The concept of sinful social structure continues to get renewed attention in contemporary theological reflections. This is orchestrated by findings in the different humanities on the effect of social structures on individual behaviour. These studies provide great insights for theological articulations on the understanding of sinful social structure. We find great insights in sociology that are relevant for theological studies. We shall examine the deep connection between sociology and theology to establish the relevance in employing a sociological theory in theological studies. Daniel K. Finn has employed sociological analysis to address the issue of sinful social structure and how it is compatible with theological understanding of sin. In this chapter, the work of Finn shall be examined in detail as we seek deeper insight into the operations of sinful social structures. This is done to establish the agency status of structures as causative for sin.

## 2.1 The Relevance of Sociology to Theology

Sociology and Catholic Social Teaching were born in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century to address the massive changes in Europe precipitated by the Industrial Revolution, the French Revolution, and the American Revolution.<sup>1</sup> However, sociology and theology are two distinct disciplines both in their object and methodology. The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church (CSDC) states clearly that the social doctrine of the church does not belong to the field of ideology but of theology, particularly of moral theology. “It cannot be defined according to socio-economic parameters. It is not an ideological or pragmatic system intended to define and generate economic, political and social relationships, but a category unto itself.”<sup>2</sup> Its essential foundation is in biblical revelation and the traditions of the church, and its objective is to guide people’s

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<sup>1</sup> Vinencio Ballano, “Catholic Social Teaching, Theology, and Sociology: Exploring the Common Ground” in *Religions* 10, 557 (2019), 6-8. doi:10.3390/rel10100557 (www.mdpi.com/journal/religions). Both Sociology and Theology responded to the needs of the society in the tumultuous period of the 19<sup>th</sup> century but while sociology was preoccupied with providing scientific accounts to the social changes, Pope Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum* which officially initiated CST intended to bring the light of the gospel to bear on the massively changing modern world.

<sup>2</sup> Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2005), no72.

behaviour in the light of the gospel teaching regarding human ends and vocation both earthly and transcendental.<sup>3</sup> Though a distinct category of knowledge, “the social doctrine avails itself of contributions from all branches of knowledge, whatever their source, and has an important interdisciplinary dimension. ... It assimilates what the disciplines have to contribute.”<sup>4</sup> The church appreciates all categories of knowledge, especially regarding the nature of the human person in the ever broader, more fluid, and more complex network of human social relationships. It is constantly open to other branches of knowledge because it is aware that a profound understanding of the human person does not come from theology alone without the contributions of many branches of knowledge to which theology itself refers. This makes the social doctrine of the church reliable, concrete, and relevant. It challenges the sciences to grasp the perspectives of meaning, value, and commitment that the church’s social doctrine reveals and to open themselves to a broader horizon.<sup>5</sup> The interdisciplinary nature of the Church’s social teaching establishes a complementary relationship between theology and sociology. This relationship is discussed with varying emphasis by different fields of study. Some emphasize more the value of theology to sociology while for others the reverse is the case. There is however a general agreement on the relevance of each field of study to the other. An examination of the work of Guy Talbot, a theologian, and the work of Vivencio Ballano, a social anthropologist, provide a good insight on the relationship between Theology and sociology from different fields of study.

Guy Talbott sees sociology as intimately connected to theology since both deal with human relationship with fellow human, and human beings’ relationship with God, respectively. He maintains that “The corollary of the fatherhood of God is the doctrine of brotherhood(sic) of humanity.”<sup>6</sup> Theology is intrinsically linked to sociology since theology is the science of human relationship with God and sociology is the science of human relationship with fellow human beings. The relationships are complementary since from the ethical or scientific viewpoint, one’s relationship with one’s father is intimately connected with one’s relationship to one’s siblings. Talbott explains further that holiness towards God presupposes righteousness towards our fellow human beings. One is not at right with God who is not at right with fellow human beings for the one “who walks humbly with God” must also “deal justly” and “love

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<sup>3</sup> See *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no 72-74.

<sup>4</sup> *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no 76.

<sup>5</sup> *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no 78.

<sup>6</sup> E. Guy Talbott, “The Relation Between Theology and Sociology” in *The Biblical World*, 46, no 3 (September 1915): 162, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3142479>.



mercy.”<sup>7</sup> Both the Mosaic code in the Old Testament and Christ’s teaching in the New Testament bear testimony to the intricate relation between fellow human beings that is intrinsically implied in our relationship with God. In the Mosaic code, the commandments that covers the people’s relation with God is of equal importance with those that cover their relationship with one another. In the New Testament, Christ emphasises the love of God and fellow human beings, hence theology and sociology are inseparable in his teaching. The bible (both New and Old Testaments) teaches that the human person is a social/divine being. It is in virtue of their relationship with one another that the human person is religious. By implication, the human person is only a religious being because they are social beings. Apart from one’s fellow human beings, one is a non-religious being.

Christ’s social teaching emphasises righteousness with regards to one’s relation to fellow human beings. This is found largely in the sermon on the mount and the parables of the Kingdom. Christ came to set up a kingdom not only for individual heart nor individual regeneration but social reconstruction as well. The kingdom of God is much sociological as theological. The kingdom of God preached by Jesus is the ideal of human society to be established, a social order in which the relationship between human beings is one of God’s children and hence siblings.<sup>8</sup> Professor Peabody says that “the social ideal of Jesus Christ is to be interpreted only through his religious consciousness. . . . In the purposes of God, the kingdom is already existent, and when his will is done on earth, then his kingdom, which is now spiritual and interior, will be as visible and controlling as it is in heaven.”<sup>9</sup>

Talbott explains further that in The Letter to the Romans, Paul expresses *soteriarity* in terms of religion not science. By so doing he systematically puts forth the doctrine of the human person as a complementarity of sociology and theology. The human person is sacred in order that they may become servants of society. They are not sacred because of their intrinsic worth but solely that they may become servants of Jesus through service to humanity.<sup>10</sup> The sinner is saved to serve, for the service acceptable to Christ is the service of humanity. The great and final test of human character is not that of creed but of deed. We are saved to sanctify humanity

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<sup>7</sup> E. Guy Talbott, “The Relation Between Theology and Sociology,” 162. (Talbott is obviously quoting Micah 6:8 here).

<sup>8</sup> The understanding of human beings as children of God, and hence members of one family, is at the heart of the social doctrine of the church. The principles of common humanity, common good, solidarity, option for the poor and all the other principles of CST find their bearing in the understanding of this social anthropology that sees all human beings as members of God’s family having one common father, God.

<sup>9</sup> E. Guy Talbott, “The Relation Between Theology and Sociology,” 166.

<sup>10</sup> E. Guy Talbott, “The Relation Between Theology and Sociology,” 168.

and bring human society into harmony with God. For Paul, to live in harmony with God, one must live in harmony with fellow humans.<sup>11</sup>

Going by Talbott's argument, theology truly comes alive in its sociological expression since true worship and piety (righteousness) is expressed in social justice as well as productive and progressive human relationships.

Vivencio Ballano has provided an in-depth analysis on the relationship between theology and sociology.<sup>12</sup> He acknowledges that both sociology and theology are sciences but each in a different way. While the formal object of sociology is social relations of individuals in society, the formal object of theology is God. Sociology abstracts from integral experience to focus on its formal object, while theology assumes the whole of this integral experience as it concentrates on its formal object and thus seeks the ultimate explanation of the human plight. Sociology is empirical and secular, theology is speculative and divine. Sociology follows the positivist approach to knowledge which acknowledges a correspondence theory of truth, that there is a single reality independent of human beings and proposes that the methods of the natural sciences should be adopted in research on social questions.<sup>13</sup> Theological approach is of an independence of natural sciences and though proceeds by philosophical articulations is guided by revelation which is of a deeper reality. Despite these differences and distinctions in methods, object, and mode of enquiry, it is a positive stance of Christian theology to accept the mutual accommodation between sociology and theology as feeding and enriching each other. In dealing with the social order, theology is influenced by culture and uses it as a sounding board for its messages. As Ballano opines, "all theology contains, implicitly, sociology and sociological theory of the self and society, as it often raises questions about the social implications of God's law to individuals and social structures."<sup>14</sup> Sociology feeds theology with its empirical analysis and data. This aids theology in making sound moral judgements. As articulated by Ballano, "the empirical verification of sociology of any factual claim of Catholic Social Teaching and its instructional materials on society and human behaviour is necessary to

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<sup>11</sup> E. Guy Talbott, "The Relation Between Theology and Sociology," 169.

<sup>12</sup> Vinencio Ballano, "Catholic Social Teaching, Theology, and Sociology," (Ballano is of the department of Sociology and Anthropology, Polytechnic University of the Philippines. His work is quite contemporary and comprehensive as he explores the problematic of the relationship between the two disciplines and establishes the common ground between them).

<sup>13</sup> Vinencio Ballano, "Catholic Social Teaching, Theology, and Sociology," (Auguste Comte, the father of positivism was responsible for laying the foundation of sociology as a science and he envisioned sociology as the new rational religion of humanity. Such views were vied as antithetical to the Christian principle of solidarity and human dignity and raised suspicion over the overall agenda of sociology among church authorities and Catholic intellectuals).

<sup>14</sup> Vinencio Ballano, "Catholic Social Teaching, Theology, and Sociology,"4.

minimise subjectivism and prevent some empirical claims of CST and moral theology from falling into what Greely calls a superficial ‘pop social science’.”<sup>15</sup> Sociological analysis is to be seen as essential tool in understanding the social context and meaning of theological dogmatic statements.

Theologians after Vatican II have been open to dialogue with proponents of sociology and inquiry into new social action models to relate church and society. As Ballano rightly observes, to acquire sufficient scientific basis on social realities before applying CST’s moral principles, and taking social action to Christianise society, the help from sociology and other social sciences is inevitable.<sup>16</sup> Every social theory in CST requires sociological perspectives since it is also a theory about society and social behaviour. It is true that sociology does not study things of ultimate truth as does theology. However, the isolated data about society and human behaviour, viewed holistically in a determined perspective, are of great service to theology. The sociological data thus presented to theology in that form can be re-integrated at a higher level of the individuals total experience as rooted in relations with God.<sup>17</sup> Ballano maintains that “Theologians are not equipped with scientific tools and methodologies of the empirical sciences, which are necessary to understand the world more realistically and objectively; thus, their claims about society and social behaviour need empirical evaluation of sociology and other social sciences for accuracy.”<sup>18</sup> This is most realistic at the level of the implementation of moral principles. In *Mater et Magister*, Pope John XXIII states:

There are three stages which should normally be followed in the reduction of social principles into practice. First, one reviews the concrete situation; secondly, one forms a judgement on it in the light of these principles; thirdly, one decides what the circumstances can and should be done to implement these principles.<sup>19</sup>

Ballano agrees with John XXIII that these three steps of implementing CST’s moral principle can be summarised in three words: see, judge and act. He insists that the first stage, ‘See,’ which is the observation and assessment of the concrete social situation as accurately as

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<sup>15</sup> Vinencio Ballano, “Catholic Social Teaching, Theology, and Sociology,” 4. (Ballano observes that, the dependence of CST and moral theology on philosophy in achieving its end inadvertently sidesteps the contribution of sociology and other social sciences in providing an empirical account of the social order which is necessary for attaining a sound moral judgement and analysis. Philosophy, as a discipline, lacks the scientific methodologies to test the appropriateness and applicability of its theories in empirical world).

<sup>16</sup> Vinencio Ballano, “Catholic Social Teaching, Theology, and Sociology,” 5.

<sup>17</sup> Vinencio Ballano, “Catholic Social Teaching, Theology, and Sociology,” 5.

<sup>18</sup> Vinencio Ballano, “Catholic Social Teaching, Theology, and Sociology,” 5. (This claim should be properly interpreted in its context. It must not be understood as claiming that theological postulates about society and the human person are unrealistic without approbation from sociology and the other social sciences).

<sup>19</sup> Pope John XXIII, *Mater et Magister*, no.236. [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_enc\\_15051961\\_mater.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater.html)

possible is crucial, since the other two depend on it. An inaccurate assessment of social situation can lead to an inaccurate moral judgement and application of CST's principles and inappropriate plans to Christianise it. Contributions from sociology can guide theologians to attain certainty in the three stages, especially in the crucial first stage, which requires objectivity and scientific accounting of concrete social situations.<sup>20</sup>

The tension between sociology and theology is most often generated by the approach of both disciplines. Theology is prescriptive in approach while sociology is descriptive in analysing the social order. However, if one sees the nuanced complementarity between the two, there is no need for the tension. Theology can avail itself with the empirical assessment (descriptive analysis) from sociology as basis for moral judgment and plans of action to change the order of society using prescriptive moral principles. Sociology is limited in the sense that it cannot make moral judgement on the social order, without losing its scientific character. This is where it needs the prescriptive knowledge of theology. On the other hand, the sufficient understanding of social facts and empirical realities that sociology studies and describes arms theology with the necessary tool for moral and social reforms.<sup>21</sup> Sociology sees behaviour and actions as relative to people's culture and time, but theology makes normative ethical decisions based on perceived objective rules. Theology operates by universal moral truths relevant across all contexts and all people based on divine law and human reasoning. These absolute truths are ordained for the liberation and salvation and ultimate realisation of human destiny. liberation seeks reformation of life and societal systems from ills and all that limit human flourishing. In that regard, theology needs the findings of sociology which gives more reliable description of behaviour and the social order.<sup>22</sup>

Sociology meets theology in the pursuit of the common good. There is an element of the common good in sociological pursuit since sociologists are generally concerned with contributing to greater human flourishing. As CSDC affirms; "According to its primary and broadly accepted sense, the common good indicates the sum total of the social conditions which allow people, either as groups or individuals, to reach their fulfilment more fully and more

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<sup>20</sup> Vinencio Ballano, Catholic Social Teaching, Theology, and Sociology," 5-6.

<sup>21</sup> Vinencio Ballano, Catholic Social Teaching, Theology, and Sociology," 7-8.

<sup>22</sup> Vinencio Ballano, "Catholic Social Teaching, Theology, and Sociology," 9. (It is worth noting here that sociological findings are not absolutes and some of them can always be challenged by other experts in peer review. Yet, as Ballano observes, sociological accounts contain more reliable description than speculations and common-sense knowledge of non-scientists).

easily.”<sup>23</sup> It is the social and community dimension of the moral good.<sup>24</sup> Theology needs sufficient anthropological and sociological knowledge of society and culture to be able to give adequate analysis of what constitutes the common good in various societies. These disciplines operate by an epistemological approach that admits plurality of truths as opposed to theology which operates by absolute truth and principle. Notwithstanding, a nuanced complementarity can be established, since both fields of knowledge share a common goal, which is to comprehend the social system for the betterment of society. This can be achieved without one field of study intending to colonize the other.<sup>25</sup>

We have explored into the relationship between theology and sociology and established that both disciplines are distinct but share a nuanced complementary relationship. Moral principles are absolutes informed by divine law and reason, but their implementation must take cognisance of people’s experience and the nature of social relationships that guide human operations. Sociology and other social sciences that specialise in the study of human relations and behaviour provide data that help the course of theology as it seeks to Christianise the social order of society. CSDC admits that the Church’s moral and social doctrine makes use of the significant contributions of philosophy and the descriptive contributions of the human sciences.<sup>26</sup> Since, however, sociological accounts and theories are not absolutes, they must always be tested against the absolute principles of theology for validation. Not all sociological theories and understanding of human relations may be valid in theological assessments. As relevant as sociology is, theology remains a discipline with a higher object and a wholistic view of humanity and society. Sociological findings may help in the articulations and application of theological principles. However, they do not determine theological principles which are founded on authentic sources of revelation and reason. Any sociological theory that undermines theological anthropological principles may not be helpful to theology. Yet the empirical and experimental data from sociology can serve as great tools in the implementation of the moral principles of theology. This is the understanding that guides our study as we examine some relevant sociological theories in relation to the subject of sinful social structures.

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<sup>23</sup> *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no 164.

<sup>24</sup> *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no 164.

<sup>25</sup> Vinencio Ballano, “Catholic Social Teaching, Theology, and Sociology,” 14. Ballano maintains that Moral theologising begins where “sociologising” ends. Therefore, to achieve its ultimate goal of establishing a just and Christian social order, CST must be more open to the contributions of sociology and other social sciences.

<sup>26</sup> *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 76.

## 2.2. The Sociological Theory of Critical Realism and Social Structures

Critical Realism is an understanding of science that embraces the *transfactual* (not-sense-perceptible) as opposed to empiricism that maintains that only data perceived through the five senses can be considered as real. As opposed to the empirical understanding of science, critical realism presents a general understanding of science as encompassing both natural and social science. Roy Bhaskar, the central figure in the realist philosophy of science, argues that we can learn about “ontological real” things that cannot be perceived by the senses.<sup>27</sup> Based on this understanding, Critical realist sociology presents social structures as systems of human relations among social positions.<sup>28</sup> The critical realist approach is opposed to the individualist and collectivist understanding of social structures and its understanding provides analysis that can be implored in theological analysis without contradiction.<sup>29</sup> Catholic Anthropology emphasises the freedom and freewill of the human person and the exercise of this freedom in community relationship. It is non-collectivistic, non-individualistic, non-deterministic and non-empiricist. Theology can only appreciate insights from sociology (that specialises on the subject matter of society and structure) in as much as those insights and perspectives do not violate the basic tenets of theological anthropology that sees society as organic. Catholic Social Teaching rejects both individualism, that makes structures inert and dependent, and collectivism, that leads to the subordination or neglect of agency. It recognises the influence of structures but refuses to subordinate human freedom to them.<sup>30</sup> The Critical Realist understanding of social structure can thus be accommodated without contradiction by CST.

Critical Realism critiques empiricist philosophy. Empiricists deny any knowledge outside phenomena and view reality solely as cause and effect without any ontological influence. Following the work of David Hume in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, most philosophers of science deny that we can have access to how or why causality works. Roy Bhaskar challenges the empiricist understanding. Bhaskar argues that “scientists in the lab are not (and do not make themselves to be) simply describing an invariant sequence of events, but they are robustly making a claim

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<sup>27</sup> Daniel K. Finn, “What is Sinful Social Structure,” in *Theological Studies* vol. 77(1) 136-164 at 137.

<sup>28</sup> Douglas V. Porpora, “four Concepts of Social Structure,” in *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 19 (1989) 195.

<sup>29</sup> Some individualist sociologists view social structure as patterns of human behaviour while others see them as collective rules and resources that structure behaviour. Both are inadequate because they deny or ignore the independent influence social relationships themselves have while focusing too much on individual choices. The collectivist approach understands social structures as law-like regularities that govern the behaviour of social facts. It ignores, largely, the psychological level of experience and does not take seriously enough the reality of individual agency and freedom. (See Daniel Finn, “What is Sinful Structure,” 145-147).

<sup>30</sup> Daniel Finn, “What is Sinful Structure,” 147.

about how things ‘out there’ in the real world actually operate.”<sup>31</sup> In the critical realist view, empiricist scientific laws are simply the scientist’s summary of the ontologically real causal relationship between physical realities. As such, Bhaskar accuses empiricists of committing the epistemic fallacy: reducing ontologically real causal relations in the world to no more than matters of human knowledge.<sup>32</sup> Relations between real objects go beyond what is perceived by the senses. Using the law of gravity as an example Bhaskar argues that the book does not hit the floor because of the law of gravity, but because of the relation of the book and the earth, and the force of gravity which that relation generates. The relation cannot be perceived by the senses, but it is quite real, a *transfactual* thing that science can study and come to conclusion about.<sup>33</sup> Bhaskar gives further clarification by distinguishing between the empirical, the actual, and the real, each a domain of reality that includes the previous domain. The empirical is the sum total of all events that are perceived (all experiences); the actual is the sum total of everything that occurs (all events, including but not limited to experiences); the real includes not only everything that happens (all events, whether perceived or not) but also the causal forces (i.e., the powers or mechanisms) that bring about those events.<sup>34</sup> From the critical realist point of view, it is foolish to limit science to only the empirical as that alone does not describe either what the scientists are doing or what they understand themselves to be doing.

As observed by Daniel K. Finn, there is no mysticism about speaking of what cannot be observed because, “for critical realists the central task of all science is to begin with our empirical grasp of the actual events... in order to hypothesise about the invisible powers that cause events to occur.”<sup>35</sup> Sociologist Christian Smith argues in the same vein when he states that “... theorizing unobserved causal dynamics is what the best of science actually does and is more important than measuring the strength of association between variables.”<sup>36</sup>

The reality of the *transfactual* established by critical realism establishes a good ground for understanding social structures and how they affect individuals and social groupings. It establishes that there are forces at work in social relations than what is perceived or observed empirically. Sociological data obtained basically by observation of successive events must be viewed along with the other two domains of reality, ‘the actual’ and ‘the real’ for a more

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<sup>31</sup> Daniel Finn, “What is Sinful Structure,” 148.

<sup>32</sup> Roy Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 2008), 36-40.

<sup>33</sup> Roy Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science*, 36-40.

<sup>34</sup> Roy Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science*, 56-576.

<sup>35</sup> Daniel Finn, “What is Sinful Structure,” 149.

<sup>36</sup> Christian Smith, *What is a person? Rethinking Humanity, Social life, and the Moral Good from the Person Up* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 96.

reliable hypothesis and conclusion. Daniel K. Finn uses the reality of the *transfactual* and critical theory of emergence to argue for the causal powers and independent reality of social structures. This establishes how a social structure can be sinful.

### 2.2.1 The Principle of Emergence and Structural Sin: The Work of Daniel K. Finn

The Principle of Emergence seeks to establish the independent nature of sociological realities after they have evolved. It is explored to establish the independent nature of sinful structures as causative of sin. “Emergence occurs when two or more ‘lower level’ elements combine to form a ‘higher level’ element that has different characteristics.”<sup>37</sup> Using water, protons and neutrons, the human mind, and stars, Finn argues that Emergence rejects reductionism because an emergent reality could not have been anticipated from even a thorough description of its constituents as separate entities. Once the emergent reality is understood, one element of thorough description of one part could include that parts capacity to generate the emergent thing when combined with other element under the right set of relations and condition, but it is mistaken to think that an emergent property can be explained by the characteristics of its parts.<sup>38</sup> This is so because reality itself is stratified with each level having independent characteristics and capacities unique to it. The most popular example to explain this is water. Water is composed and emerged from hydrogen and oxygen, but the characteristics of water are quite different from either of the constituent parts. While water puts out fire, hydrogen, and oxygen feed on it. Finn argues that the capacity of water to quench fire is ‘an emergent property’ which in more general terms can be defined as property not possessed by any of the constituent parts individually and would not be possessed by the full set of parts in the absence of the structuring set of relations between them.<sup>39</sup>

The phenomenon of emergence occurs in all spheres of existence, be they sense-perceptible like water, or *transfactual* like the mind and social structure. Finn argues that:

Social structures emerge from the actions of individuals and require the participation of individuals for their continued existence. But structures have an independent existence and

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<sup>37</sup> Daniel Finn, “What is Sinful Structure,” 149- 150.

<sup>38</sup> Daniel Finn, “What is Sinful Structure,” 150-151. (Reductionists might claim that a good explanation of the properties of the ‘higher level element can be obtained by recourse only to the ‘lower level’ constituent parts. But sociologists of the emergent school as argued by Finn see this as mistaken, because such a structuring set of conditions and relations among constituent parts is exactly what an emergent thing is.

<sup>39</sup> Daniel Finn, “What is Sinful Structure,” 149-50



independent causal effects in the lives of those individuals, often at odds with the intentions of those who consciously initiated the creation of the structures in the first place.<sup>40</sup>

Social structures exist at the level of the distinctly social, constituted by interactive relationship. They are ontologically real and exist at a level other than individual persons or group of persons and above individual personal lives.<sup>41</sup> Being distinct and above individual and personal lives, social structures possess and have causal powers in the lives of individuals from whom they emerged. Emergent sociologists explain that social structures have causal impact in the lives of individuals who operate within them through the restrictions, *enablements*, and incentives the structures present to the individuals. Structures are not conscious agents themselves but emerge from the conscious activities of individuals. However, having emerged, they have an independent causal impact because conscious human persons make decisions in the light of the restrictions, *enablements*, and incentives that are presented by the structures.<sup>42</sup> It is important to stress that the restrictions, *enablements*, and incentives do not operate in a deterministic way. Rather, their influences are mediated to people by shaping the situation in which they find themselves. Persons operating within the social structure still retain the freedom to act against the restrictions, *enablements*, and incentives, but that freedom is exercised within constraints that make some choices more costly than others. To avoid the more costly options, individuals are more inclined most often to make decisions that avoid significant costs and provide significant benefits.<sup>43</sup>

We have established that social structures have causal impact on the decisions of human agents operating within them. This impact can be morally good or morally bad. This is where the element of sinful structures come in. Finn captures it very well when he explains:

Social structures are not conscious agents and so they cannot sin in any literal sense. But since they have causal effect through the choices made by persons within them, they can be described as sinful when the restrictions, *enablements*, and incentives those people encounter encourage morally evil actions.<sup>44</sup>

Individual actions as they relate with others create patterns of behaviour that become norms. The pattern of behaviour created assumes an independent status distinct from individual actions

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<sup>40</sup> Daniel Finn, "What is Sinful Structure," 151.

<sup>41</sup> As Finn is quick to observe, the fact that social structures exist at a higher level than individual persons, does not entail the former with any greater explanatory importance or moral significance. (See Daniel Finn, "What is Sinful Structure," 151.

<sup>42</sup> Daniel Finn, "What is Sinful Structure," 151.

<sup>43</sup> As Finn explains, individuals most often just 'go along' and sustain the existing social structure by their compliance with the restrictions and *enablements* which they perceive as incentives. (See Daniel Finn, "What is Sinful Structure" 153).

<sup>44</sup> Daniel Finn, "What is Sinful Structure," 154-156.

that create it. The independent mode of behaviour affects the thinking and behaviour of people operating within the system of relationship (social structure). It affects their choices within the social structure. If the restrictions, incentives and *enablements* within the social structure are positive, then theologically it is a social condition of grace enabling people to make choices for morally good acts. On the other hand, if the pattern is such that the conditions created is such that make it more likely for people to make choices for morally evil actions, then it is a sinful structure that needs to be addressed to facilitate conversion in the individuals within the social structure. Finn relates this understanding to the theological concept of original sin. Addressing sinful social structures is necessary for seeking conversion from personal sins.

### 2.2.2 Original Sin and Sinful Social Structure

Original sin provides a theological construal of the causal impact of social structures on human freedom. Just like original sin that is sin only analogically, so is the sin that can exist in social structure for we are not personally guilty for any sin committed by others in the past. Pope Benedict XVI acknowledges the presence of original sin in social conditions and the structures of society.<sup>45</sup> Finn examines six characteristics of original sin that apply to the ways in which social structures can be sinful.<sup>46</sup>

- (I) Environmental influence: One dimension of original sin is the influence of our environment upon us. Joseph H. McKenna maintains that “much of moral evil is mediated to us by the historical situation into which we are born.”<sup>47</sup> Finn agrees with McKenna and maintains that both personal disposition and environment are entailed in original sin. “The freedom and integrity of our decisions, already restricted by our individual sinfulness, is further compromised by the decisions of others, at times in ways that make their influence, for all practical purposes, inescapable.”<sup>48</sup>
- (II) Tendency and Inclination: there is the tendency and inclination to sin in human nature. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) asserts that “man has a wounded nature inclined to evil.”<sup>49</sup> “Human nature has not been totally corrupted: it is wounded in the natural powers proper to it; subject to ignorance, suffering, and

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<sup>45</sup> Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, no. 34.

<sup>46</sup> Daniel Finn, “What is Sinful Structure,” 155-158.

<sup>47</sup> Joseph H. McKenna, “Original Sin and the Tractability of Evil,” *New Theological Review* 10(1997) 78-88 at 82.

<sup>48</sup> See Daniel Finn, “What is Sinful Structure,” 155.

<sup>49</sup> See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* no 407

the dominion of death; inclined to evil that is called concupiscence.”<sup>50</sup> Finn explains that the same individual who is characterised by this inclination to evil is also capable, with the help of God’s grace of choosing good. This gives insight into the understanding of sin within sinful structure for no sinful structure is only sinful. The element of good always exist side by side with element of evil within the social structure. He cites the sinful structures of Nazi Germany and Augusto Pinochet’s Chile, and he explains that though both brought extermination and death to many, yet they encouraged fortitude and temperance, valued fine music and art, and endorsed a form of religious faith respectively.<sup>51</sup>

- (III) Objective occasions of guilt: Citing Karl Rahner, Finn explains that “we are a people who must inevitably exercise our own freedom subjectively in a situation which is co-determined by objective occasions of guilt, and in such a way that this codetermination belongs to our situation permanently and inescapably.”<sup>52</sup> Using market dynamics we realise that when one buys a product, they may inevitably be participating in a codetermined objective social situations of injustice, exploitation, or even age-long commercial policy. Rahner admits that the question as to where the person’s personal responsibility in taking advantage of such situation co-determined by guilt ends or begins is obscure.<sup>53</sup> As Finn asserts, Rahner clearly expresses his awareness of the moral ambiguity of free choices within the social structure of the market, where others who produce what we consume are often treated unjustly.
- (IV) The element of inertia: Finn argues that “under the influence of original sin, one’s sinful acts occur with a sense that part of one’s ‘self’ is engaged here.” Expatriating on Rahner’s understanding of concupiscence and the effect of original sin, as ‘inertia,’ Finn maintains that the inability to act with one’s entire self in a given decision precludes the whole self from being engaged whether the decision is for good or for evil.<sup>54</sup> This understanding corresponds to the critical realist view that the social positions people occupy in a social structure affect their decisions as they may find themselves making decisions that conflict decisions they would otherwise

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<sup>50</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no 407.

<sup>51</sup> Daniel Finn, “What is Sinful Structure,” 156.

<sup>52</sup> Daniel Finn, “What is Sinful Structure,” 156. (Also see Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea Christianity*, trans. William Dych (New York: Seabury, 1978), 110).

<sup>53</sup> Daniel Finn, “What is Sinful Structure,” 156.

<sup>54</sup> Daniel Finn, “What is Sinful Structure,” 157.

make in other different social positions. Every day, people face fundamental conflicts of conscience when the social structures within which they operate create situations that make them make compromising decisions against their moral convictions. Finn cites an example of a virtuous mayor of a small Latin American city who may have to decide whether to accept a \$50,000 bribe from a drug cartel that simultaneously threatens to kidnap the mayor's child if the bribe is declined.<sup>55</sup> The mayor in this example faces an inertia, an inability to act with his entire self.

- (V) Objective condition of sin. We are personally affected by every sinful decision made under the condition of original sin. This shapes us further and creates an objective condition. "Sin determines the human being in a definite way: he has not only sinned but he himself is a sinner. A part of the change in us caused by original sin is a distortion of our understanding of ourselves and the world as liberation theologians have long stressed."<sup>56</sup> Given Critical realist sociologists understanding of the social world as ontologically real and thus objective, the world often appears to us who are born into it as natural, like flora, fauna, and terrain of the earth around us.<sup>57</sup> But the world is being shaped always by various systems of social interactions and every sinful decision made under the condition of original sin is creating an objective condition of sin.
- (VI) Human choice and environmental influence. There is complexity in the situation of human freedom under original sin which makes it overbearingly difficult to distinguish between human choice and the influence of one's environment. As McKenna observes, so long as the social environment affects human nature positively or negatively, it is difficult to determine what is 'innate' about human evil and what is environmentally contracted.<sup>58</sup> What is central is the fact of agency. Critical realist makes us understand that agency always occurs within the causal influence of social structure. "Social structures cannot exist without the choices of free agents whose actions reproduce or alter it. No agency without structure, no structure without agency. It is like a vicious circle when the social structure is sinful.

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<sup>55</sup> Daniel Finn, "What is Sinful Structure," 157.

<sup>56</sup> Daniel Finn, "What is Sinful Structure," 157. (Also see Karl Rahner, *The content of faith: the Best of Karl Rahner's Theological Writings*, ed. Karl Lehmann and Albert Raffelt; trans and ed. Harvey D. Egan (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 531).

<sup>57</sup> Daniel Finn, "What is Sinful Structure," 157.

<sup>58</sup> McKenna, "Original Sin and the Tractability of Evil," 86.

### 2.2.3 Conclusive Synopsis of Daniel K. Finn's Thoughts

The following highlights basic conclusions from Finn's work reviewed above.

- (I) Critical Realist understanding of social structures as systems of human relations among social positions, and the postulation that the relation, so described, is *transfactual*, is compatible with theological commitment of Catholic Social Thoughts.
- (II) Social structures include both big multinational economic establishments and political institutions, and smaller organisations like universities, police departments, social security systems, parishes, and clubs.
- (III) Social structures are not conscious agents but emerge from the actions of individuals and require the participation of individuals for their continuous existence. However, once the structures have emerged, they assume an independent existence and have causal powers over those operating within them.
- (IV) Social structures have causal powers on individuals operating within them through the restrictions, *enablements*, and incentives provided to the individuals who operate within them.
- (V) The causal powers operate through individual agency but not in a deterministic way. Finn's articulation does not endanger Christian conviction about human freedom. The individual still retains the freedom to choose, though constrained by the restrictions, *enablements*, and incentives within the structure.
- (VI) The causal powers within the social structure can encourage morally good choices or morally evil choices. When they are such that encourage morally evil choices, then they are rightly called sinful structures.<sup>59</sup>
- (VII) In a sinful structure, options are most often lacking as individuals are forced to operate by a defined system even against their choice. This is most common in market systems where those with the fewest options suffer the most. "In each case of sinful structure, some of the restrictions, *enablements*, and incentives facing persons in social positions penalise rightful actions and encourage life-diminishing choices."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> It may be worth noting here that the emphasis may have been on the causal powers of social structures, but Finn admits the role of culture in shaping people's attitude and actions.

<sup>60</sup> Daniel Finn, "What is Sinful Structure," 161.

(VIII) Magisterial description of structural evil and critical sociological description of how structures have causal powers can be reconciled by relating the operations of social structures to the theological understanding of original sin. The sinfulness of social structures parallels “original sinfulness.”<sup>61</sup>

The understanding of how social structures have causal powers may not be exhaustive on moral powers of structures and the element of sin in social structures. It however opens us to the necessity of engaging frank conversations about the morality of the restrictions, entanglements, and incentives facing people holding different social positions within our institutions.<sup>62</sup>

#### 2.2.4 Critical Reflections on Finn’s Thoughts on Sinful Social Structures

Daniel K. Finn’s articulation on social structures with the insights from the sociological theory of Emergence is quite illuminating. Apart from being compatible with magisterial teachings, it explains how structures can be sinful and have causative effect without taking away the notion of individual freedom. The sociological understanding of structures as systems of human relations within social groups is quite apt. It establishes how through the norms of the group the system does cause people to act in particular ways that may vary were they acting under a different circumstance. This stresses the importance of constantly examining structures to ensure they are the type that would aid people to make positive moral choices to act in the interest of the common good rather than against it. Conversion should always be sort for both individuals and structures for both have effect on each other. Bernard Lonergan states that the threefold conversion of intellectual, moral, and religious conversions is interdependent on each other because all development is dialectical. “Inversely, because the development is dialectical, intellectual conversion is through the correction of errors, moral conversion is through repentance for sins, religious conversion is abandonment of false gods, rejecting a limited concern for what is ultimate.”<sup>63</sup> He states further that “While this threefold dialectical structure is invariant, still the error to be corrected, the sin to be repented, the false good to be abandoned are historical variables. The appearance that deceives, the bias that corrupts, the idol that seduces, all are protean. They vary from one person to another, from place to place, from class

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<sup>61</sup> Daniel Finn, “What is Sinful Structure,” 159.

<sup>62</sup> Finn admits that theological anthropologists and fundamental theologians can provide a more thorough analysis on the presence of original sin in social structures. His description of critical realist understanding of social structures has been brief and incomplete and he has not clearly identified which particular social structures are sinful. However as preliminary as his thoughts may be, they serve our purpose largely in establishing the causative nature of social structures.

<sup>63</sup> Robert M. Doran and John D. Dadosky eds. *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 393.

to class, from generation to generation, from age to age. To eliminate any given false appearance, any given bias, any given idol, for the most part results in the emergence of another, for the problem resides not in the particular shape or form of error or sin or idol, but in the horizon that will keep on generating error, sin, idols, until it undergoes the radical reconstruction and conversion.”<sup>64</sup> The horizon mentioned by Lonergan is social circumstances surrounding individuals as they act upon society and are being acted upon. For conversion to be authentic and wholesome, there is always the need to radically address the social circumstances that individuals face every day in their lives. As Finn rightly observes, the restrictions, *enablements* and incentives people face in social positions in social structures either make destructive choices more likely or restrain sinful personal instincts and encourage generous and life-affirming choices.<sup>65</sup> Hence, there is the need to constantly ensure that the restrictions, *enablements*, and incentive be well structured to enhance positive moral choices. There are varieties of sinful social structures. “In nations where government corruption is taken for granted, office holders find it easy to accept bribes or extort payments and face few restrictions in doing so. In police departments where an unspoken racism prevails, officers stop and harass people of colour with disproportionate frequency... In firms where profit is assumed to be the only goal of the organisation, decisions... are made with no more respect for human dignity of employees than the law requires. In a church where the canonical pastor has unlimited authority over parish matters, an autocratic pastor can arrive on the scene and undo in a month the pastoral effectiveness of the parish that took decades to build.”<sup>66</sup>

The insight from the operations of social structures and the understanding of original sin is quite commendable. It situates the deep sociological analysis in theological understanding. Vivencio Ballano agrees with Finn that sociological, empirical, conceptual clarification and illustration provide Catholic Social Teaching (CST) with insight on how people commit sin not only individually but also socially and collectively through social relations. For Ballano, “CST seems to be too broad in describing the nature of social sin and structural sin, which can be misunderstood and misapplied by ordinary Catholics.”<sup>67</sup> He argues that there is need for empirical assessment of the specific culture where the teaching on social and structural sin is to be applied. This is needed because CST only provides general prescriptions on how

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<sup>64</sup> Robert M. Doran and John D. Dadosky eds. *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: Method in Theology*, 393.

<sup>65</sup> Daniel Finn, “What is Sinful Structure,” 162.

<sup>66</sup> Daniel Finn, “What is Sinful Structure,” 162.

<sup>67</sup> Vinencio Ballano, “Catholic Social Teaching, Theology, and Sociology: Exploring the Common Ground,” 11. (Also see Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church no. 118 and 119 already cited in the preceding chapter.)

Christians should deal with the social order. Sociology can clarify the dynamics of social and structural sins as rooted in individual sins.<sup>68</sup> Ballano maintains that there is no dichotomy between agency and structure, nor individual and society since agency constitutes the social structure or groupings of people in society, while social structure affects the behaviour of individuals. Agency and society are mutually influencing each other.<sup>69</sup> The individual sins of people can collectively constitute structural sin and the social norms thus created either formally or informally, cause individuals to act in certain sinful ways in their relationship with others.

Ballano introduces an important element not adequately discussed in Finn's work: the element of culture. Mathew A. Shadle has an important chapter on culture in the *Primer on Critical Realism for Christian Ethics*.<sup>70</sup> Like social structures, critical realist sociology presents culture as ontologically real; distinct from the ideas, knowledge, and values present in individual minds at any given time, even though it has causal impact only through the actions of those individuals.<sup>71</sup> As illustrated by Margaret Acher, the ideas or knowledge in book repositories of knowledge and ideas of a community library make up part of the cultural system of that community even if no one is thinking of them because they are nonetheless available for use at any given time.<sup>72</sup> Shadle explains that though this may be a strange claim, especially for theologians, since culture is often understood as the shared meaning communicated through words and action, yet, like structure, culture emerges from the actions of people and exists at a 'higher' level. "The cultural system exerts causal impact on human interactions, but it exercises this causal power only through the restrictions and opportunities it provides to persons employing this or that part of the resources. Culture is always mediated through agency"<sup>73</sup> Shadle also notes that the critical realism approach distinguishes culture and structure but recognises that the two mutually condition each other. He maintains that the distinction should not be taken to suggest a radical independence of the material (structural) and ideational (cultural) aspects of social life. Both culture and structure are so mutually conditioning that the proper distinction between the two systems and their mechanism is necessary for understanding the relationship between them. This is why For critical realism, cultural analysis can never be

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<sup>68</sup> Vinencio Ballano, "Catholic Social Teaching, Theology, and Sociology: Exploring the Common Ground," 11.

<sup>69</sup> Vinencio Ballano, "Catholic Social Teaching, Theology, and Sociology: Exploring the Common Ground," 12.

<sup>70</sup> Matthew A Shadle, "Culture" in *Moral Agency Within Social Structures and Culture* ed. Daniel K. Finn (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2020), 43-57.

<sup>71</sup> Matthew A Shadle, "Culture," 49.

<sup>72</sup> See Matthew A Shadle, "Culture," 49.

<sup>73</sup> Matthew A Shadle, "Culture," 49.



separated from sociological analysis of social structures.<sup>74</sup> As Shadle explains, “the cultural system conditions agents by making available to them certain ideas but not others, and yet agents can shape the cultural system by generating new ideas and knowledge through their interactions with one another.”<sup>75</sup> The mutual relationship between cultural systems and social structural system is quite helpful in understanding how both ideas and practices can have causal impact on agency behaviour. In dealing with sinful social structure, the role of culture, the ideas and knowledge resource available to individuals in each society need always to be evaluated to see if the restrictions and opportunities they provide are more likely to make people make choices for moral evil. Critical realism aid theology in the critique of unjust cultural systems and practices. With the emphasis that social structure and culture operate through distinct but similar mechanism, a clearer understanding of the dynamics of the distinct but complementary elements of social structure and culture at work in structural sin is made available. Referring to Latin American Liberation theology and Black Liberation Theology, Shadle insists that critical realism proves useful for theologians in examining the relationships between the economic system, culture, and gender, and providing an analysis of racism and its effects which clarify the relationship between its cultural and structural elements.<sup>76</sup> These distinctions are helpful in naming the “sin” in unjust systems, be they structural or cultural.

Conor M. Kelly acknowledges and commends Finn’s work and suggests that structural sin be treated as a species of the larger genus of social sin, which refers more broadly to all types of social influences that induce individual sins.<sup>77</sup> This distinction between social sin and structural sin becomes important when one tries to emphasise the distinction between aggregate sins and the effect they have on agency. Though, this distinction is not overtly emphasised in Finn’s work, Kelly acknowledges that Finn suggests a similar distinction between social sin and sinful social structure.<sup>78</sup> Kelly admits that Finn’s employment of the idea of Emergence to explain the overlap between individual and structural sin is quite apt and helps to establish the causative nature of social structures. Both the Magisterium and Liberation Theology have a convergence on social structures as entirely new realities which can and do have influence in their own right. Finn’s work explains how this works using the theory of Emergence. Kelly further acknowledges that Finn’s work is a ground-breaking insight into the understanding of the

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<sup>74</sup> Matthew A Shadle, “Culture,” 50.

<sup>75</sup> Matthew A Shadle, “Culture,” 55.

<sup>76</sup> Matthew A Shadle, “Culture,” 53-54.

<sup>77</sup> Conor M. Kelly, “The Nature and Operation of Structural Sin: Additional Insights from Theology and Moral Psychology,” in *Theological Studies*, Vol. 80 (2) 294-295.

<sup>78</sup> Conor M. Kelly, “The Nature and Operation of Structural Sin,” 294. (See foot note 5)

independent nature of social structure and how they exert an independent, but not deterministic causal influence on agency. However, he argues that as compelling as Finn's account may be, it is still asserted at a general level, presuming more than demonstrating the influence of sinful social structures.<sup>79</sup> He argues that Finn's account does not give specificity in the current theological account of the sin in structures of sin. Kelly suggests a further analysis that adds further details to Finn's account which offers a plausible explanation for why restrictions, *enablements*, and incentives would actually have a morally significant effect on individual agents.

Building on Finn's work, Kelly proposes a redefinition which "envisions a structure of sin as an institution or collective practice that either socially idealises or economically incentivises actions seeking exclusive self-interest(s) at the expense of the common good."<sup>80</sup> Kelly's redefinition is so all embracing. It finds roots in the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF) definition of structure as "sets of institutions and practice."<sup>81</sup> The term "practice" is hugely important in the understanding of structure in social relationship. It brings to fore the place of culture in social relationship and aids the understanding of how structure can have causative effect on the people within the social relationship. As Kelly observes, there is a value in defining structures with reference to both institutions and practices since "a description of structures with reference to institutions alone would fail to fully capture the causal power of specific social groups."<sup>82</sup> The description of the sin in sinful structure "as actions seeking exclusive self-interest(s) at the expense of the common good" reveals more the nature of structural sin. Sin as we have explained in this research is essentially 'selfishness.' Kelly explains further that "the sinfulness in structural sin is not in self-interest per se, but in the particular form of self-interest that is opposed to the common good."<sup>83</sup> This is quite important in understanding the social nature of the sin in sinful social structure. *Gaudium et Spes* no. 26 describes the common good as "the sum of those conditions of life which allows social groups and their individual members relatively and ready access to their own fulfilment." This stresses the social nature of the common good. The sin in sinful social structure is in the promotion of self-interest at the expense of the common good. Such sin constitutes in institution's

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<sup>79</sup> Conor M. Kelly, "The Nature and Operation of Structural Sin," 300.

<sup>80</sup> Conor M. Kelly, "The Nature and Operation of Structural Sin," 301. The redefinition given by Kelly is quite embracing and definitive and is well explained in his work. See pages 301-313.

<sup>81</sup> See CDF document, "Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation" no 74. (Though not all sociologists use the theory of emergence to explain the reality of independent and causative nature of social structure, the theory remains a valid one that has been employed on the subject matter of structural sin.

<sup>82</sup> Conor M. Kelly, "The Nature and Operation of Structural Sin," 303-304.

<sup>83</sup> Conor M. Kelly, "The Nature and Operation of Structural Sin," 310.

operational mechanisms and practices that act against the flourishing of social groups and individual members of the groups.

Kelly argues that the real justification for the revised definition is its theological consistency. This is because “the reference to actions serving self-interest(s) at the expense of the common good maintains the link between structural sin and personal sin while also emphasising the social consequences of those sinful acts.”<sup>84</sup> This helps, among other things, to show the incompatibility of sinful social structure with the will of God. It offers solace to those oppressed by systematic injustices and prompts repentant actions in those who are complicit and benefit from the sinful structures.<sup>85</sup> Kelly uses the revised definition as a foundation for using insights from moral psychology to explain how structures have independent causes on individual action.<sup>86</sup>

## 2.3 Chapter Conclusion

All contemporary thoughts on sinful social structure acknowledge that deep insights are needed on the subject, because of the moral responsibility agents have to challenge structures of sin. Connor Kelly affirms that “the general consensus is that structural sin ought to be countered with personal conversion so that individual agents resist the negative values associated with sinful structures and social transformation so that there are fewer sinful structures to warp people’s moral values and incentivise harmful actions.”<sup>87</sup> The relationship between personal sin and structural sin demands this twofold project. Given the inertia in human beings, achieving these projects could be difficult as personal change is difficult and more so, social change. However, it is a necessary task in the social transformation agenda of the church as it seeks to build God’s kingdom of true justice and peace on earth. *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* (RP) calls for an attitude of contradiction to structural sin in “love of neighbour,” a moral responsibility that included everything from “justice in interpersonal relationships” to preserving “the rights of the human person” and ensuring “the common good and its exigencies in relation to the whole spectrum of the rights and duties of citizens” (RP 16). In *Sollicitudo Rei*

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<sup>84</sup> Conor M. Kelly, “The Nature and Operation of Structural Sin,” 313. (Kelly stresses that this is a significant factor with the temptations to secularise the concept of structural sin so that it can be employed readily as a tool of social analysis in pluralistic society).

<sup>85</sup> Conor M. Kelly, “The Nature and Operation of Structural Sin,” 313.

<sup>86</sup> Conor M. Kelly, “The Nature and Operation of Structural Sin,” 313-325. (Kelly’s insights from moral psychology gives valuable import to how structural sin operates in, and on individuals. His thoughts further complement Finn’s work. He relates its thoughts to the challenge of environmental degradation. Its details may be out of the scope of this work).

<sup>87</sup> Conor M. Kelly, “The Nature and Operation of Structural Sin,” 313.

*Socialis (SRS)*, Pope John Paul II insists that structures of sin are only conquered—presupposing the help of divine grace—by diametrically opposed attitude: a commitment to the good of one’s neighbour with the readiness, in the gospel sense, to ‘lose oneself’ for the sake of the other instead of exploiting him” (*SRS* 38). The late pontiff presents the virtue of solidarity, (a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good), as essential tool in the moral conversion from structural sin. This makes it essential that any treatment of all issues of social concerns necessarily must take on board the role of sinful social structures, because not only is it linked to personal sins, but it affects the common good, which is the victim of selfishness in structural sin. Social/structural sin is indeed a necessary theological tool in addressing the social concerns of migration/refugees and displacement. The place of sinful social structure in the migrant and refugee crisis shall be examined in the following chapters.

# Chapter Three: Sinful Social Structures and Theological Response to the Challenges and Concerns of Migration, Displacement and Refugees

## 3.0 Introduction

This chapter examines the complex nature of modern migration and its huge humanitarian concern. It explores the moral and ethical challenges emanating from the migration/refugee regime and their implication for theology. The chapter reviews the church's intervention and advocacy in the migration/refugee crisis to establish the relevance of addressing the crisis through the lens of sinful social structures.

## 3.1 The Nature of the Migration and Refugee Crisis

Migration is one of the most contentious social issues generating various and complex ethical questions in our contemporary world. It is a worldwide phenomenon that is integrally related to the dynamics of the process of globalisation. It does not therefore admit simple solutions because it is part of a process that involves not only the movement of ideas and products but of people.<sup>1</sup> Latest report from the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) reveals that the world is witnessing the highest levels of displacement on record. UNHCR reveals that an unprecedented 89.3 million people around the world have been forced from their homes by conflict and persecution. Among them are 27.1 million refugees, 53.2 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), and 4.6 million asylum seekers. Over half of the world's refugees are under the age of 18. There are also millions of stateless people, who have been denied a nationality and access to basic rights such as education, healthcare, employment, and freedom of movement. 1 out of every 88 persons in the world has been forced to flee.<sup>2</sup> Though, it is a huge global issue, many seem removed from the plight and agony of the victims of the crisis. Migration embraces many diverse and complex realities with ever evolving and divergent debates on terminologies. There is hardly a simple consensus or definition. This is due to the expanding terminologies employed as we grapple with unhelpful

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<sup>1</sup> See "Preface" in *A Promised land, A Perilous Journey*, eds. Daniel G. Groody and Gioacchino Campres (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), xx- xxi.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/en-ie/figures-at-a-glance.html> (Accessed on 15th June 2023). Earlier in 2004, the United Nations' world Economic and Social Survey had affirmed that one out of every thirty-five persons on earth was a migrant, and the world Bank has rightly called migration one of the determining factors of the twenty-first century.

compartmentalization and categorization of those understood as migrants and refugees. This compartmentalization is based on the various causes of migration, the status as well as the perception of host communities and organizations who work for the concerns of migrants/refugees. These days, we distinguish between voluntary and involuntary migration; forced migration; asylum seekers, stateless persons, legal immigrants and illegal immigrants and undocumented people; Internally Displaced Persons; among others.<sup>3</sup> This, alone, shows the complexity and magnitude of the social, political, and ethical crisis generated by the concern of migrants in the contemporary world. There are however some traditional and international understanding and perceptions that are generally accepted as basic definitions for key terminologies relating to migration.

### 3.1.1 Clarification of Terminologies on Migration and Refugee

Migrants are generally considered as people, who move, either voluntarily or involuntarily, from one region to another, from their original country to another country, with the intent of settling there and seeking a better life.<sup>4</sup> Migration is either voluntary for a better livelihood or forced and involuntary. Technically, it is considered forced migration, when people are taken by force or trafficked to serve as slaves or domestic workers in foreign countries; and involuntary, when migrants are fleeing from violence or persecution in their home countries. Generally, however, all involuntary migrations are considered forced migration as opposed to voluntary migration. The 1951 convention relating to the Status of Refugees (migrants in foreign lands) defines a refugee as “any person who owing to a well- founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of her/his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail herself/himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of her/his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”<sup>5</sup> As embracing as this definition may be, it is almost insufficient in addressing the status of refugees in contemporary times. This is because the migrant crisis has grown in various dimensions since the United Nations Convention was promulgated. Migration is no longer a European problem as it was after the World War II. It is now a global concern.

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<sup>3</sup> Mark Raper SJ and Amaya Valcarcel, *Christian Perspectives on Development Issues: Refugees and Forcibly Displaced People* (Dublin: Trocaire, Veritas, CAFOD, SCIAF, 2000), 19.

<sup>4</sup> Bernard V. Brady, *Essential Catholic Social Thought*, 2nd ed. (New York: Orbis Books, 2017), 236.

<sup>5</sup> See United Nation Convention on Refugees, p. 1951, p6. <https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/4ca34be29.pdf>

Today, it is very complex determining who gains official refugee status. A person who is automatically recognised as a refugee in Africa may be no more than an asylum seeker in Europe as the 1951 Refugee Convention continues to be interpreted more restrictively in the Western countries, while Africa and Latin America on the other hand, give a broader understanding that is more suitable to contemporary conditions.<sup>6</sup> This is understandable because Africa, Latin America, and Lately, Asian countries, face the major brunt of migrant crisis today.

There is a special group of migrant/refugees whose situation is generating huge concerns in modern migration crisis, namely, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). This special group of migrants/refugees are understood by the United Nations as “persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.”<sup>7</sup> The United Nations attention only got drawn to the concerns of internal displacement as late as 1992. IDPs are amongst the most vulnerable population in the world. They have no legal status under international law because upon displacement, they remain within their national borders and therefore, hardly receive the assistance and protection afforded refugees.<sup>8</sup> Nigeria plays host to a huge number of these group of refugees.<sup>9</sup>

### 3.1.2 Causes of Migration

The major causes of forced migration are human rights violations, poverty, and conflicts. Most of these are found in Africa and developing countries. Many of the human rights violations occur in situations of armed conflicts, and most of these conflicts have root causes in poverty and the battle for resources. Yet, while conflicts have a local dimension, many of their causes

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<sup>6</sup> Mark Raper SJ and Amaya Valcarcel, *Christian Perspectives on Development Issues*, 18-19. An asylum seeker is a person who wants to be recognised as a refugee by the government of the country he or she wants to enter. The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in her 1996 convention governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa includes her definition of refugees, any persons compelled to leave their country owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination, or events seriously disturbing public order in either parts or the whole of his/her country of origin or nationality.

<sup>7</sup> United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, 2001, 1. <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/idps/43ce1cff2/guiding-principles-internal-displacement.html> (Accessed 20th October 2020).

<sup>8</sup> David Hollenbach, “Introduction: Human Rights as Ethical Framework for Advocacy” in *Refugee Rights: Ethics, Advocacy, and Africa*, ed. David Hollenbach, SJ (Washington, D.C. Georgetown University Press, 2018), 2.

<sup>9</sup> The situation of IDPs in Nigeria is discussed in detail in chapter five of the thesis to establish the strong role sinful social structures play in the migration/refugee crisis.

are global in origin. This is evidenced in the unequivocal foreign access to local resources, external support for undemocratic governments and, the huge international trade in arms that fuel the crisis.<sup>10</sup> While political negotiations and economic advancements are sought through different trade treaties and policies, the millions who bear the brunt of the intricacies of these transactions, and who are forced to seek livelihood in other shores are only greeted with more hostilities and humiliations.

### 3.2 Ethical and Theological Concerns of the Migrants and Refugee Crisis

Peter C. Phan observes that behind the cold numbers of staggering statistics that characterise the contemporary global phenomenon of migration, “lie human faces struck by tragedies of immense proportions, with loss of land and homes, family separation, physical sufferings, rape, sexual violence, psychological damage, lack of opportunities for education, uncertain future, and death itself.”<sup>11</sup> Phan further argues that migration is a perennial concern for the church as “church” and not simply as a social organisation dedicated to the promotion of the welfare of all.<sup>12</sup> The migrant crisis has ethical concerns. As we have observed, the crisis is multifaceted dealing with reasons of why people migrate in the first place, the right to migrate, the situation in their traditional home, the means of migration, their status regarding the way they are treated in their new and host countries as well as the mode of integration for a new life. Further ethical questions arise from the duties of the nation states to protect the welfare of their citizens, and yet, be accommodating to migrants; and the question of global and retributive justice demanding that richer states, who may have contributed directly or indirectly to the causes of migration, open their doors to those fleeing from the effects of the situation they have aided in creating. The universal nature of land and human solidarity as well as the human rights of all human beings to basic conditions of living and fulfilment, all find expression in the migrant crisis. Such social and ethical concerns indeed warrant an ethical and theological reflection. For Christians, the dilemma created by the migrant crisis is more burdensome. Soerens and Yang paint a vivid picture of this dilemma as Christians battle to sort out through prevailing rhetoric to understand how we can reflect God’s justice as well as his love and compassion in

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<sup>10</sup> Mark Raper SJ and Amaya Valcarcel, *Christian Perspectives on Development Issues*, 20.

<sup>11</sup> Peter C. Phan, “Deus Migrator-God the Migrant: Migration of theology and theology of Migration,” in *Theological Studies*, 2016 vol. 77, no. 4, 846.

<sup>12</sup> Peter C. Phan, “Deus Migrator-God the Migrant: Migration of theology and theology of Migration,” 847. (Phan proposes a migration theology with “migration” used adjectively to describe the nature and method of theology).



designing immigration policies, and in the ways we relate individually to immigrants and refugees in our communities.<sup>13</sup> They argue that “On first glance at the issue, we recognise that immigrants are people made in God’s image who should be treated with respect; at the same time, we believe that God has instituted the government and the laws that it puts into place for a reason, and that as Christians we are generally bound to submit to the rule of law. Many are left conflicted, unsure of what our faith requires of us on this pressing issue.”<sup>14</sup>

By its very nature, migration is a difficult experience with a lot of physical, psychological, and emotional challenges. Cardinal Rodriguez describes this as a kind of mourning.<sup>15</sup> Migrants feel a deep mourning when leaving their country of birth. They face the huge pain of leaving friends and family. Migration means the disintegration of migrants’ emotional world as well as the weakening, if not the disappearance of a support system. The migrant mourns the inability to use his native language and the difficult and traumatic experience of readjusting to a foreign country, where another language is spoken. This is because ideas, thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and knowledge are communicated through the medium of a shared language and culture. Added to these is the psychological trauma of leaving one’s culture and familiar geographical location and, sometimes, even prestigious status, to embrace a new way of living and new cultural coordinates. Exposure to various forms of health problems including depression all add up to the crises migrants are confronted with. These all threaten the dignity of migrants and call for serious global and ethical concern. The traumatic experience is worse when migration or displacement is forced or involuntary owing to conflict or poverty. Coupled with the injury to mental and spiritual wellbeing, and the threat to human dignity of migrants, the migration crisis also calls to question moral issues of solidarity, subsidiarity, justice, care for the vulnerable and the common good. This places the crisis within the purview of theology. A serious reflection on the theological dimensions of immigration and migration is needed to go beyond inflammatory debates and to consider in a deeper way what it means to be human before God and what it means to live together as a human community.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Matthew Soerens and Jenny Hwang Yang, *Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion, and Truth in the Immigration Debate* (USA: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 13. The authors’ reflections are basically about immigrants in the United States but the picture they present represent the global concerns of immigration crisis.

<sup>14</sup> Matthew Soerens and Jenny Hwang Yang, *Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion, and Truth in the Immigration Debate*, 13.

<sup>15</sup> Oscar Andres Cardinal Rodriguez, “Forward: A Witness to Hope: Migration and Human Solidarity” in *A Promised land, A Perilous Journey*, eds. Daniel G. Groody and Gioacchino Campres (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014), xii-xiv.

<sup>16</sup> See “Preface” in *A Promised land, A Perilous Journey*, eds. Daniel G. Groody and Gioacchino Campres (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014), xxi.

### 3.3 Theological and Ethical Responses to the Migrants, Refugee and Displacement Crisis

As observed by Soerens and Yang, there is no easy resolve to the dilemma Christians face when dealing with the migrant crisis.<sup>17</sup> However, great advances have been made as the Christian faith responds to the crisis. As Orobator observes, Christian advocacy and relief services predate the international refugee regime and have a firm foundation in scripture and theology. “Both ethics and practice draw upon the ‘memory of exile’ encapsulated in the Jewish religious tradition and the archetypal forced migration of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus to Egypt, which combine to keep the community called Church attuned to the plight of refugees.”<sup>18</sup> Biblical and Christian tradition give evidence in the history of Israel, and in Christ’s life and teaching, that migration and refugee concerns are part of the Christian life. With such a rich foundation, a rich theology and moral response have continued to grow as the church makes huge contributions to the migration regime. While refugees are dispersed and forced to flee from their homes, the church seeks and builds, using its instrument of hospitality which is at the heart of her mission to the world. Her response is guided by a quality welcome to the stranger as a messenger of God.<sup>19</sup> Most treaties on the ethics of migration emphasize the duty of the host country and the local church to welcome the strangers and migrants into their communities.<sup>20</sup> Theological intervention has revolved mostly round the virtues of hospitality and solidarity as well as the inherent rights and dignity of the migrants as children of God. Peter C. Phan maintains that “The virtue of hospitality has received the lion share of scholarly attention... given the sacred duty of hospitality in ancient societies and biblical history.”<sup>21</sup> This is evident both from the magisterium and from the articulations of theologians.

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<sup>17</sup> Matthew Soerens and Jenny Hwang Yang, *Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion, and Truth in the Immigration Debate*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 13. The authors’ reflections are basically about immigrants in the United States but the picture they present represent the global concerns of the migration crisis.

<sup>18</sup> Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, “Key Ethical Issues in the Practice and Policies of Refugee-serving NGOs and Churches,” in *Refugee Rights: Ethics, Advocacy, and Africa*, ed. David Hollenbach, SJ (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2008), 225-226.

<sup>19</sup> Mark Raper SJ and Amaya Valcarcel, *Christian Perspectives on Development Issues*, 67.

<sup>20</sup> See Peter C. Phan, “Always Remember Where You Came from: An Ethics of Migrant Memory,” in *Living With(out) Borders: Catholic Theological Ethics on the Migrations of Peoples*, eds. Agnes M. Brazal and Maria Teresa Davila (New York, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2016) 174. (His work focuses on the ethics of the migrants themselves).

<sup>21</sup> Peter C. Phan, “Always Remember Where You Came from, 174.

### 3.3.1 The magisterium and The Migrants and Displacement Challenge

Pope Pius XII's *Exsul Familia* provides the fundamental magisterial thoughts on migration and refugees.<sup>22</sup> Three key theological foundations are provided by *Exsul Familia*. (1) The emigration of the Holy Family of Nazareth provides a biblical and theological justification that migration is natural. (2) There is a Christological import that shows Jesus as sharing in the pains of all who are forced to flee from their home. (3) Creation is exulted as a gift from God, and hence, a universal gift to all. Magisterial intervention in the migration challenge has continued to be drawn from the articulations of *Exsul Familia*.<sup>23</sup> Apart from denouncing the migrant crisis as the result of global injustice and exploitation, John XXIII affirms the rights of political refugees to a land where they can provide a future for themselves and their dependents. He publicly approves and commends every undertaking founded on the principle of human solidarity, or Christian charity which aims at making the migration of persons from one's country to another less painful.<sup>24</sup>

With Paul VI and Vatican II, social justice became the core of the Church's teaching. "The usual themes of spiritual assistance, the administration of sacraments and the preaching in the migrant's language as safeguard against apostasy, and the duty of both rich and poorly populated countries toward accepting people from overpopulated areas became of secondary importance to the question of international justice."<sup>25</sup> This has shifted the emphasis of the church in addressing the migrant crisis. We see great evidence of this in *Gaudium et Spes* no. 66, where the document states: "Justice and equity likewise require that the mobility, which is necessary in a developing economy, be regulated in such a way as to keep the lives of individuals and their families from becoming insecure and precarious." The document goes further to insist on the need to culturally integrate immigrants into their host countries, give them equal opportunities to earn a decent living and, be properly accommodated and catered

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<sup>22</sup> Pius XII, *Exsul Familia* (Apostolic Constitution, 1952) <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius12/p12exsul.htm> (See particularly, the introductory paragraph and the first title of the publication). The document responded to the migration challenge in Europe after the second World War.

<sup>23</sup> The predecessors of Pius XII before John XXIII all responded to the migration challenge, emphasising the thoughts of *Exsul Familia*.

<sup>24</sup> John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, no 224.

<sup>25</sup> Ezio Marchetto, C.S. "The Catholic Church and the Phenomenon of Migration: An Overview," 15. <https://cmsny.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Marchetto-The-Catholic-Church-and-the-Phenomenon-of-Migration.pdf>

for along with their families.<sup>26</sup> Paul VI instituted the Pontifical Commission for Migrants and Tourism, charged with the task to coordinate the pastoral care of people on the move, which include not just migrants and refugees but, nomads, tourists, pilgrims among others.<sup>27</sup> He equally called for a statute in defence of the rights of migrants. In his Apostolic Letter, *Octogesima Adveniens*, the Pope states that it is urgently necessary for people to go beyond a narrow nationalist attitude in their regard and to give migrant workers “a charter which will assure them the right to emigrate, favour their integration, facilitate their professional advancement and give them access to decent housing where if such is the case, their families can join them.”<sup>28</sup>

John Paul II wrote and gave several messages on migration and dwelt heavily on the political and social concerns of migrants. He examined the issue mostly from the point of view of integral development and the dignity of the human person, insisting that the person remains the primary and fundamental way of the church.<sup>29</sup> He declares, concerning the pains and humiliating conditions of migrants, that faced with the phenomenon, “the church continues to proclaim that the principle to follow in this, as in other fields, is not that of allowing economic, social, political factors to prevail over man, but, on the contrary, for the dignity of the human person to be put above everything else, and the rest to be conditioned by it.”<sup>30</sup> The Pope identified the refugee crisis as the greatest of human tragedies of our time and calls the suffering of refugees a “shameful wound of our time”, and “a wound which typifies and reveals the imbalance and conflicts of the modern world.”<sup>31</sup>

Benedict XVI carried on the same concern of his predecessors on the challenge of the migrant regime. In his encyclical, *Caritas in veritate* (CV), the pope acknowledges the complex nature of modern migration and addresses the moral questions associated with migration. For the pontiff, migration is a striking phenomenon because of the sheer numbers of people involved, the social, economic, political, cultural, and religious problems it raises, and the dramatic challenges it poses to nations and the international community.<sup>32</sup> The Late Pope maintains that

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<sup>26</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* no. 66. [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html)

<sup>27</sup> Ezio Marchetto, C.S. “The Catholic Church and the Phenomenon of Migration: An Overview,” 16.

<sup>28</sup> Paul VI *Octogesimo Advenia*, Par 413.

<sup>29</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis* no. 14.

<sup>30</sup> John Paul II, Address to Workers in Monterrey, January 31, 1979.

<sup>31</sup> John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 24. (Also see the Pope’s address to refugees at Morongo Camp, the Philippines, February 1981).

<sup>32</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, no. 62. [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20090629\\_caritas-in-veritate.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html)

No country can address today's problems of migration by itself. He enthuses that “we are facing a social phenomenon of epoch-making proportions that requires bold, forward-looking policies of international cooperation if it is to be handled effectively. Such policies should set out from close collaboration between the migrants' countries of origin and their countries of destination; it should be accompanied by adequate international norms able to coordinate different legislative systems with a view to safeguarding the needs and rights of individual migrants and their families, and at the same time, those of the host countries.” (CV 62). He acknowledges the burden of suffering, the dislocation and the aspirations that accompany the modern migratory flow and affirms that the phenomenon is difficult to manage. The pope maintains that despite the difficulties, foreign workers make a significant contribution to the economic development of the host country through their labour, besides that which they make to their country of origin through the money they send home. As such, “these labourers cannot be considered as a commodity or a mere workforce. They must not, therefore, be treated like any other factor of production. Every migrant is a human person who, as such, possesses fundamental, inalienable rights that must be respected by everyone and in every circumstance.” (CV62).

Pope Francis has built on the thoughts of his predecessors and advanced magisterial intervention on the migrants’ regime. Confronted with a very complex regime, his approach has been multidimensional and very radical, embracing other social concerns like environmental exploitation, human trafficking, just sustainability, integral development, homelessness, global exploitation, and social justice. He ties the migrant crisis to other social issues and treats them all as having a bearing on one another.<sup>33</sup> His recommended response to the migration regime is beautifully summarised in the pope’s message for the 105th World Day of Migrants and Refugees. He declares:

... our response to the challenges posed by contemporary migration can be summed up in four verbs: welcome, protect, promote, and integrate. Yet these verbs do not apply only to migrants and refugees. They describe the Church’s mission to all those living in the existential peripheries, who need to be welcomed, protected, promoted, and integrated. If we put those four verbs into practice, we will help build the city of God and man. We will promote the

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<sup>33</sup> See Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R., “Forward,” in *Pope Francis: A Stranger and You Welcomed Me: A Call to Mercy and Solidarity with Migrants and Refugees*, ed. Robert Ellsberg (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2018,) xiii. The cardinal captures the thoughts of pope Francis on migration metaphorically as a modern passion drama.

integral human development of all people. We will also help the world community to come closer to the goals of sustainable development that it has set for itself and that, lacking such an approach, will prove difficult to achieve.<sup>34</sup>

The pope therefore sees the migrant crisis as one that concerns us all and calls for solidarity so we can all be redeemed. In his message for the 106<sup>th</sup> World Day of Migrants and Refugees, the Pope reemphasizes the Christological understanding of migration as he insists that “In each of these people, forced to flee to safety, Jesus is present as he was at the time of Herod.”<sup>35</sup> In the same address, the pope adds six more pairs of verbs to his four cardinal proposed response of *welcome, protect, promote, integrate*. The new pairs of verbs are: “to know in order to understand,” “to be close in order to serve,” “to listen to be reconciled,” “to share in order to grow,” “to be involved in order to promote,” “to cooperate in order to build.” These are meant to foster practical pastoral actions towards the refugee crisis.<sup>36</sup>

Based on the three theological tripods provided by *Exsul Familial* the magisterium has built great moral thoughts on migration. The thoughts have been progressive. It condemns any exploitation of the condition of migrants. While emphasising the rights and dignity of migrants and the need to use the goods of the earth for the common good of all, the magisterium has equally called attention to moral concerns of the causes of forced migration, namely conflicts and poverty. It has denounced indiscriminate exploitation of resources and exploitive economic systems that exploit poor economies for the benefit of bigger economies. It has condemned reckless arms trade that continue to fuel crisis in migrants home countries. While maintaining the need for Christian hospitality to the stranger, the magisterium acknowledges the complex nature of migration, especially in contemporary times. It therefore calls for collaboration between home countries of migrants and host countries, guided by well-defined norms and policies that will be beneficial to all. It maintains that migration is inevitable because of the globalised nature of contemporary times and is beneficial to both host countries and home countries of migrants if properly handled.

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<sup>34</sup> Pope Francis, Message for the 105<sup>th</sup> World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 2019. [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco\\_20190527\\_world-migrants-day-2019.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20190527_world-migrants-day-2019.html)

<sup>35</sup> Pope Francis’ Message for 106<sup>th</sup> World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 2. [http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco\\_20200513\\_world-migrants-day-2020.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20200513_world-migrants-day-2020.html)

<sup>36</sup> Pope Francis’ Message for 106<sup>th</sup> World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 2-5.

### 3.3.2 Theologians and The Migration and Displacement Crisis

The works of Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, David Hollenbach, Deogratias M. Rwezaura, Silvano Tomasi, Kristin E. Heyer, Binaifer Nowrojee, Susan Martin, Nancy Pineda-Madrid, Bernard Brady, and Matthew Soerens and Jenny Hwang Yang provide a good review on the key thoughts of theologians on the migration, displacement, and refugee Crisis and how a Christian ought to respond. Orobator presents three partly overlapping and partly antithetical angles from which responses to migrant crisis take their roots: (1) Forced Migration as a political problem; (2) forced migration as a human rights problem; (3) forced migration as a problem of charity.<sup>37</sup> He further indicates that these various angles, though with different points of emphasis, represent essentially, complementary approaches to forced migration that are more effective when integrated and coordinated.<sup>38</sup> He insists that ethical responsibilities towards forced migrants demand the formulation of an effective framework for advocacy. This is needed so as not to exploit the crisis for selfish motives. He suggests a wholistic approach that takes into cognisance objective needs and subjective voices. An effective systematic and systemic response that would seek to address complex problems of poverty, conflict, human rights violations, poor governance, or lack of employment as deeper causes of forced migration is an imperative.<sup>39</sup>

Hollenbach has published and edited volumes of work on migration and displaced persons. Basically, he addresses the issue from human rights concerns and political justice as regarding policies and laws on the status and treatment given to refugees and displaced persons.<sup>40</sup> While acknowledging the principles of common humanity and the universality of land which justifies a borderless global world, Hollenbach admits the need for the nation state. He there calls for a review of values and norms to strike a balance between commitments to citizens and migrants and refugees. Norms and values must serve to respect people's cultural ties and aid them for sufficient economic sustenance in their own countries. He insists that neither the moral duties

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<sup>37</sup> Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, "Key Ethical Issues in the Practices of Policies of Refugee- serving NGOs and Churches," in *Refugee Rights: Ethics, Advocacy, and Africa*, ed. David Hollenbach SJ (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2008), 226-229.

<sup>38</sup> Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, "Key Ethical Issues in the Practices of Policies of Refugee- serving NGOs and Churches," 230.

<sup>39</sup> Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator, "Justice for the Displaced: The Challenge of a Christian Understanding," in *Driven from Home: Protecting the Rights of Forced Migrants* ed. David Hollenbach, SJ (Washington, D.C. Georgetown University Press, 2010), 37-54.

<sup>40</sup> David Hollenbach, SJ "A Future Without Borders: Reimagining the Nation State and the Church," in *Living With(out) Borders: Catholic Theological Ethics on the Migrations of Peoples*, eds. Agnes M. Brazal and Maria Teresa Davila (New York, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2016), 223-235.

to citizens nor the ones to potential migrants and those who have already crossed the border to one's country are absolutes. Neither does one trump the other.<sup>41</sup>

Rwezaura reflects on the African cultural practices of hospitality and solidarity and recommends that those virtues should guide major policies on migration and displacement.<sup>42</sup> Rwezaura maintains that in African cultural practice, hospitality and solidarity go hand in hand. Guests (especially those who decide to stay longer) are not only welcomed as guests but are made to join the productive activities (like farming) of their host. This wisdom blends hospitality with proactive solidarity that leads to productivity and dignified living and when extended at the communal level to the forcibly displaced, becomes an integrating virtue that helps alleviate their suffering and attend to their needs.<sup>43</sup>

Tomasi stresses how Integral Humanism in Catholic Social Teaching provides a unifying ground for the link between movement of persons, state rights, and international order. Reviewing and articulating the thoughts of various popes, he stresses the need for a humane world order that addresses various political and economic structures and treats the dignity of the human person as a fundamental principle in dealing with challenges of displacement and refugees.<sup>44</sup>

Kristin Heyer identifies inhospitality to immigrants as a social sin and presents kinship and subversive hospitality as the hallmark of Christian immigration ethics.<sup>45</sup> She insists that a wholistic understanding of structures as both consequential and causative in nature has a significant bearing on the topic of receptivity to an ethics of hospitality. The socioeconomic, legal, and political structures that lead to undocumented immigration are connected to the ideological blinders that obstruct hospitality to immigrants.<sup>46</sup>

Binaifer Nowrojee, Susan Martin, Nancy Pineda-Madrid, address the challenge of migration and refugees from the gender angle. They examine the vulnerable state of women in the

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<sup>41</sup> David Hollenbach, SJ "A Future Without Borders," 229.

<sup>42</sup> Deogratias M. Rwezaura SJ "Hospitality and Solidarity: Virtues Integral to Humane Refugee Policy," in *Living With(out) Borders: Catholic Theological Ethics on the Migrations of Peoples* eds. Agnes M. Brazal and Maria Teresa Davila (New York, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2016), 154-161.

<sup>43</sup> Deogratias M. Rwezaura SJ "Hospitality and Solidarity," 155.

<sup>44</sup> Silvano Tomasi, "Human Rights as Framework for Advocacy on Behalf of the Displaced: The Approach of the Catholic Church," in *Driven from Home: Protecting the Rights of Forced Migrants* ed. David Hollenbach, SJ (Washington, D.C. Georgetown University Press, 2010) 55-69.

<sup>45</sup> Kristin E. Heyer, "Social Sin and Immigration: Good Fences Make Bad Neighbours," in *Theological Studies* Vol. 71, no 2, 400-436.

<sup>46</sup> Kristin E. Heyer, "Social Sin and Immigration," 425. (Kristine Heyer's article is quite central to this research and has been reviewed in detail in section 3.4.3 of this chapter).



migrant/refugee regime and call for actions both to address the remote and peculiar causes of women migration (which often are swallowed in the general causes of migration) and the plight of migrant and refugee women. Nowrojee calls attention to the plight of women refugees who are constantly victims of sexual and domestic violence. She argues that “in many cases, refugees and displaced women flee conflict after being terrorised by rape and other sexual violence and physical abuse. Although they seek refuge to escape these dangers, many are subjected to similar abuses as refugees.”<sup>47</sup> She calls on the United Nations and the international communities to pay more attention to the plight of women refugees by ensuring that laws against rape and sexual violence as well as refugee asylum laws are strengthened and enforced to protect women in this vulnerable state.

Suzan Martins observes that until the 1980s, analysis on forced migration focused very little on gender issues. However, with increasing recognition of the large number and proportion of female refugees, displaced persons, and trafficking victims and the changing role women, no longer can half of the world’s forced migrants be ignored. Martins acknowledges that despite attention being given to the gender issue in contemporary migration regime, cultural relativism remains a strong ethical concern. “The ethical issue is the extent to which international actors should respect or challenge traditional notions of female roles and relationships in the recognition of refugees as well as in the effort to protect the rights of refugee and displaced women.”<sup>48</sup> She argues that though in theory, the international community has come down firmly on the side of gender equality, in practice the gap between rhetoric and reality for women and girls is still very large. She therefore raises the need for concerted advocacy to break down the barriers to achieving justice and rights for women who have been forced to migrate.<sup>49</sup>

Nancy Pineda-Madrid addresses the concern of sex trafficking and femicide in the US-Mexico border. She argues that female purity carries a high value in Latino culture and laments that “notwithstanding that sex trafficking is horrific in every instance; the highly volatile context of the border region amplifies its horrors. In this region, with its sociopolitical and economic vicissitudes, the poor, and especially women, find their vulnerabilities

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<sup>47</sup> Binaifer Nowrojee, “Sexual Violence, Gender Roles, and Displacement,” in *Refugee Rights: Ethics, Advocacy, and Africa*, ed. David Hollenbach SJ (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2008), 125-136 at 125. (Her work addresses mostly the plight African migrant and refugee women).

<sup>48</sup> Susan Martin “Justice, Women’s Rights, and Forced Migration, in *Refugee Rights: Ethics, Advocacy, and Africa*, David Hollenbach SJ ed., (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2008), 137-160 at 137.

<sup>49</sup> Susan Martin “Justice, Women’s Rights, and Forced Migration, 156-157.

exacerbated.”<sup>50</sup> Pineda-Madrid discusses the myth of a young woman from the so-called “woman from the third world” who over the passage of time has to personify the meaning of human disposability: one who eventually evolves into the state of worthlessness. She calls on all to see the broken body Christ in the bodies of the victims of sex trafficking and feminicide. This because they suffer because of their shared historical reality and collective vulnerability. “The bodies of many women who are assassinated carry a political message, namely, that they are too insignificant to be seen by the state, their bodies dumped like garbage outside the city limits, referred to by some as the residue of an absent state.”<sup>51</sup>

Bernard Brady outlines five principles which have emerged over the years from the rich traditions of the Church’s teaching with regards to migration.<sup>52</sup> They include: (1) persons have the right to find economic, political, and social opportunities to live a dignified life in their homeland; (2) persons have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families for all goods of the earth belong to all people; (3) sovereign nations have the right to control their borders, but not when such control is exerted merely for the purpose of acquiring additional wealth; (4) refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection by the global community as they flee from wars and persecution; (5) the inherent human dignity and human rights of all migrants should be respected, regardless of their status, be they documented or undocumented.

Matthew Soerens and Jenny Hwang Yang identify a plethora of Christian ways to respond to the immigration issues. These include (1) payers, (2) interaction, (3) charity, (4) advocacy and (5) addressing root causes of migration.<sup>53</sup> In prayers we bring the suffering of migrants and the whole concern of migration before God. We can pray for policies that honour God and reflect justice. This is important as we can do nothing on our own. by interaction, we get to know and understand the pains and situation of migrants and immigrants. They cease to be stereotypes and become complex persons like every other human being and we realise that immigration policies become less about statistics and more about human faces and laws that have dramatic effects on families we know. Interaction can be achieved by volunteering to serve immigrants through different organisations. Through charity, churches and Christian ministries could assist in providing practical assistance and social services that the government cannot provide for

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<sup>50</sup> Nancy Pineda-Madrid, “Sex Trafficking and Feminicide Along the Border: Re-Membering Our Daughters,” in *Living With(out) Borders: Catholic Theological Ethics on the Migrations of Peoples* eds. Agnes M. Brazal and Maria Teresa Davila (New York, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2016), 81-90 at 83.

<sup>51</sup> Nancy Pineda-Madrid, “Sex Trafficking and Feminicide Along the Border,” 88.

<sup>52</sup> Bernard V. Brady, *Essential Catholic Social Thought*, 2nd ed. (New York, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2017), 238. (The Concept of Social/Structural sin is clearly missing from the list).

<sup>53</sup> Matthew Soerens and Jenny Hwang Yang, *Welcoming the Stranger*, 116-184.

immigrants. This can be achieved when individuals and charity organisations partner with the church to invest their resources to serve the subclass in our communities. In advocacy, we become the voice of the voiceless, standing in the gap to present the realities of injustice around the world to those in positions of influence who can change the situation. Given the traumatic nature of migration, the root causes of migration need to be addressed so people can live with dignity in their homes. We need to be sensitive to the situations of conflicts, poverty and environmental degradation around the world that are forcing people out of their homes to seek shelter and life elsewhere. Soerens and Yang insists that we all have a role in the unfortunate situation by our life's style and support for various policies that affect global politics and economy.<sup>54</sup>

### 3.4 The Relevance of Sinful Social Structures in the Migrants/Refugee Phenomenon.

Our review shows that the issue of migration has been addressed from various theological and ethical perspectives but not sufficiently from the perspective of Sinful social structure. Most of the thoughts have revolved around Christian hospitality and rights – human and legal. With the acceptance that migration is quite complex and linked to other humanitarian crisis like conflicts, poverty, economic exploitation, cultural and gender discrimination, and environmental degradation, it is obvious that more attention needs to be given to the role of sinful social structures in the migration and refugee crisis. Even a careful look at the intricacies surrounding handling the issue from both hospitality and rights perspectives suggest the strong need to pay more attention to the role of sinful social structures.

#### 3.4.1 The limitation of the Hospitality Approach

Hospitality is both essential to the Christian virtue of Charity and our understanding of the human person as a social being. As social beings we are instruments of actualisation for each other. In receiving and embracing others we live out our shared life. Our life makes meaning only when it is shared with others and open to receiving from others. By our nature, we are limited as individuals, but with unique giftings, hence the emphasis of Catholic Social Teaching on solidarity and shared humanity. Kristin Heyer explains that in relation to migration, Christine Relational Ethics embraces a social anthropology that departs from the atomistic

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<sup>54</sup> Matthew Soerens and Jenny Hwang Yang, *Welcoming the Stranger*, 184-185.

monad or *homo economicus* prevalent in some exploitative approaches to migration policy.<sup>55</sup> Catholic social anthropology emphasises the innate value of hospitality as a core aspect of human existence. By being hospitable to others, we profit from their unique giftings and endow them with ours. The cross-pollination of cultures and values that occur when different societies embrace others generate a higher breed of culture and civilisation. This is quite visible in the migration phenomenon. The quality of public service in many countries of the world today is enhanced by professionals and skilled workers from different parts of the globe. However, as Mona Siddiqui observes, there are etiquettes and contours that surround the practice of Hospitality which question the reality of it being realistically unconditional. The term defies a universal definition, and it is multi-layered and evokes theological and philosophical perspectives. When hospitality is taken from its private context and explored in its public context that deals with how self-identified sociality welcomes strangers, immigrants, and refugees into one's own country or territory, a deeper question of what it means to welcome someone as stranger or guest emerges.<sup>56</sup> This is because as Derrida opines, hospitality is culture itself and not simply one ethics amongst others. "It is about crossing boundaries, including the boundaries between self and other, private, and public. Hospitality stands for culture, deconstruction, a radical alternative to current European politics and treatment of its "others": ethnic minorities, immigrants, refugees, and visitors."<sup>57</sup> In an increasingly globalised world characterised by war, colonialism, and decolonisation, economic and political revolution and devastating occurrences of famine, ethnic cleansing, and great power machinations, there is indeed rising ethical questions linked to unconditional hospitality or borderless hospitality which calls for an unqualified welcome of the "other" who has neither been invited nor expected. Great questions arise as to whether a place can exist where unconditional hospitality can be practically exercised or whether such idea of hospitality represents a genuine utopia.<sup>58</sup> When linked to migration and border controls, the tension, as we have observed, arises between the protection of citizens and the need to welcome migrants as members of the human family in vulnerable situations: the distinction between the moral person and the legal person. As

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<sup>55</sup> Kristin E. Heyer, "Migration, Social Responsibility, and Moral Imagination: Resources from Christian Ethics" in *Christianity and the Law of Migration* edited by Silas W. Allard, Kristin E. Heyer & Raj Nadella (London and New York: Routledge, 2022), 238.

<sup>56</sup> Mona Siddiqui, "Divine Welcome: The Ethics of Hospitality in Islam and Christianity" [Siddiqui • Divine welcome • ABC 2020.pdf](#) 2-3.

<sup>57</sup> See Mona Siddiqui, *Hospitality and Islam: Welcoming in God's Name*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015), 5.

<sup>58</sup> Mona Siddiqui, *Hospitality and Islam: Welcoming in God's Name*, 5-7. (Siddiqui examines the thoughts of Levinas, Derrida, Said, among others to expose the complexities that attend to hospitality when viewed from its political and sociological contents).

Siddiqui observes, as a moral person, the individual has absolute value, and this value is unconditional because they are an end in themselves. As for the legal person on the other hand, there is no absolute value since membership of a legal community is conditional. Siddiqui agrees with Paul Cobben that “it is apparent that a world without boundaries is not necessarily workable or desirable.”<sup>59</sup> Besides, the quality of hospitality accorded migrants and refugees is of concern as well.<sup>60</sup> Kristin Heyer observes that the subversive hospitality invited by a migrant God demands both a reorientation of operative frameworks and concrete praxis of kinship with migrant and displaced persons.<sup>61</sup> All this makes it obvious that Christian hospitality alone is not adequate in addressing the migrant/refugee challenge. The issues that question unconditional hospitality need to be addressed. This includes issues of the welfare and protection of citizens, the fear of terrorism and cultural eclipse, the limitation of resources in host countries, political and legal frameworks, policies of integration among others. These issues are webbed in the structure of society. To make hospitality meaningful and not mere utopia, the migrant/refugee regime needs to be addressed through the concept of sinful social structure.

### 3.4.2 The Limitation of the Human Rights Approach

Concerning the human right approach, Graziano Battistella opines that “the effectiveness of human rights in ensuring protection for migrants seems very limited first for reasons of general nature, such as the difficulty to provide real protection for social, economic, and natural rights; the preoccupation for the protection of individual rights without challenging systems that originate abuse; the ideological use of human rights to maintain advantages in trading and commerce relations; and the recurrent impression that the human rights system protects those who are already protected, rather than the real victims.”<sup>62</sup> Other impediments to the human rights approach include, the difficulty for victims to accede to the human rights protection system and problems surrounding the implementation of human rights standards as there is a yawning gap between international principles and performance at the local front. Even when

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<sup>59</sup> Mona Siddiqui, *Hospitality and Islam: Welcoming in God’s Name*, 7. (Hospitality without boundaries where every individual is recognised as a moral person and welcomed unconditionally all over the world is hardly practicable).

<sup>60</sup> See Robert Cardinal Sarah, *The Day is Now Far Spent* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2019,) 245. (The Cardinal argues that a welcome offered to migrants without a proper plan for integration could be criminal).

<sup>61</sup> Kristin Heyer, “Reframing Displacement and Membership: Ethics of Migration,” in *Theological Studies*, no 73, 2012, 206.

<sup>62</sup> Graziano Battistella, “Migration and human Dignity: from Policies of Exclusion to Policies Based on Human Rights,” in *A Promised land, A Perilous Journey*, eds. Daniel G. Groody and Gioacchino Campres (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014), 183.

migrants can have recourse to principles of international law and appeal to labour conventions, or international humanitarian law protecting foreigners, migrants' protection is still inadequate because certain categories of migrants are not sufficiently protected by law.<sup>63</sup> Considering all the challenges with the human rights approach against the ethics of inclusion emphasised by the church, Battistella maintains that ultimately, an ethics of inclusion leads towards overcoming the individualism on which the human rights approach is founded because in the Christian worldview the relationship with others comes first.<sup>64</sup>

The human rights approach is rich but its intricacies as we have discussed need to be addressed to make it effective for migrants. Those intricacies all arise from systems of relations by which nations and individuals relate to migrants and refugees. These systems of relations constitute social structures that are sinful in nature, hence the necessity to examine the migrant/refugee challenge with the theme of sinful social structures.

### 3.4.3 The Need for The Approach of Sinful Social Structure

The migration crisis revolves round systems of relationships and raises questions of human dignity, our common humanity and solidarity as well as the common good. These form the root/basis for social sin. As such, an appropriate theological response to the issues of migration/refugees, necessarily, must involve the theme of social/structural sin. We see the concerns of evil structures raised by various popes, but none has directly addressed the migration crisis with the theme of sinful social structure. Not many theologians have addressed the issue from that perspective either. Kristine Heyer's works provide great insights as she addresses the crisis from the angle of social sin. Though her focus is the immigration concern in the United States and her work is centred on the larger genus of social sin, yet the content addresses major issues of sinful social structures that relate universally to the challenges of migration/refugees. Our thesis seeks to build further on Heyer's thoughts and other theologians as it examines the migration, refugee, and displacement concerns with the theological principle of sinful social structures.

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<sup>63</sup> See Graziano Battistella, "Migration and human Dignity: from Policies of Exclusion to Policies Based on Human Rights," 183-184. (Battistella cites the situation of domestic workers and migrants with undocumented status who are unprotected by law. The case Internally Displaced Persons could be considered here too as they are not protected by international refugee laws.)

<sup>64</sup> Graziano Battistella, "Migration and human Dignity: from Policies of Exclusion to Policies Based on Human Rights," 189-190. (Earlier on page 185, Battistella explains that Migrants, like the *homo sacer* in the old Roman law, have nothing but only their naked lives and cannot be counted by the protection of the nation. Human rights may be founded on the naked life, on the idea that first comes membership of the human family, but their exercise depends on being subjects of a state, members of a nation, a legal resident in its territory).

Sin is always discussed with conversion and repentance. That is the approach we are using to discuss the place of sinful structures in the migration and refugee crisis. As Daniel G. Groody emphasises, there is a fundamental need for a “passing over” in the migration crisis which calls for conversion in the perception and treatment of migrants and refugees.<sup>65</sup> Groody emphasises the need for conversion in the language we use to categorise migrants. He qualifies this as passing over from migrant to person which “involves the restructuring and reordering of society according to the God of life, the dignity of the human person, and the common good. With this conversion, a new world order emerges where the needs of the poor take priority over the wants of the rich, the freedom of the dominated takes priority over the liberty of the powerful, the participation of the marginalised group takes priority over the preservation of an order which excludes them. Groody maintains that “No matter how we articulate our position about migration, the argument themselves point the need to conversion in our relationships.”<sup>66</sup> Other aspects of conversion in relationship regarding migration identified by Groody include Passing over from injustice to justice, from otherness to neighbourliness, from nationalism to the reign of God and from death to life. Groody’s articulation spells out the need for reordering of societal systems of relationship to reflect the divine order for the dignity of everyone especially the most vulnerable and oppressed who are the victims of the unjust and disordered structures.

The agency-structure relationship remains relevant in all moral analysis on social issues. This is because in all spheres of life, people always enter a pre-existent social condition as they relate and interact. Ontologically real elements of opportunities and restrictions are automatically at work as people enter into different systems of social relationships. David Cloutier’s observation of climate change as having a scale, complexity and time frames that surpass ordinary modes of individual and social problem-solving, is equally quite true of the migration and refugee crisis.<sup>67</sup> Like climate change, the moral challenge of migration requires an effective combination of structural analysis and personal moral agency. Sinful structures, as we have observed, affect people’s attitude and behaviour negatively as they make choices to avoid greater costs and achieve greater benefits. There are structures that have been created over time which affect the way people relate to migrants and refugees. There are pre-existing social structures that facilitate and sustain migration as well as the way refugees are regarded

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<sup>65</sup> Daniel Groody, “Passing Over: Migration as Conversion” in *International Review Mission* Vol. 104, No.1, April 2015, 46-60.

<sup>66</sup> Daniel Groody, “Passing Over: Migration as Conversion,” 52.

<sup>67</sup> David Cloutier, “Critical Realism and Climate Change” in *Moral Agency within Social Structures and Culture: A Primer on Critical Realism for Christian Ethics*, ed. Daniel K. Finn (Washington: Georgetown Press, 2020), 59.

and treated, and how refugees regard and react to their situation. These include racism, class distinction, extortion and deprivation of vulnerable people in society, oppressive market systems, man-made poverty, and unlimited materialism. These among others lead to displacement and continuous struggles of the victims to migrate to supposedly greener pastures. They also account for the undignified ways migrants are treated as well as the continuous resistance to change dehumanising and oppressive policies regarding migration and migrants. As Daniel G. Groody observes, the disordered current reality results in the dehumanisation of migrants and points to the fragmented state of relationships as well as highlights the importance of the Christian faith that struggles to get them right.<sup>68</sup>

Christian Heyer stands out among theologians who have thrown light on the relationship between sinful social structures and the migrant/refugee crisis. Heyer relates the issue of social sin to the migration experience in the United States.<sup>69</sup> Her work centres principally on nondocumented immigrants in the United States but could be applied to all categories of migrants and refugees at different levels. Establishing a strong link between personal sin and social sin, Heyer shows how the injustices embedded in the economic, social, and political fabrics and systems of the society perpetuate harmful practices and perceptions about migrants. This becomes clear when sin is understood as a state or condition as against act or transgression. Heyer agrees with Peter Henriot that “The social situation of original sin essentially constitutes a state that facilitates individual sinfulness.”<sup>70</sup> She uses Gregory Baum’s four levels of the operation of structure on agency to establish the place of social sin in the moral evaluation of migration. Baum’s four levels of social sin includes: (1) unjust institutions and dehumanising trends built into various institutions that embody people’s collective life; (2) operative cultural and religious ideologies or symbolic systems fostered by society that legitimate unjust situations and intensify harm; (3) the level of false consciousness or blindness created by these institutions or ideologies that convince people that their actions are good and lead to collective destructive action; (4) collective decisions made by distorted consciousness that increases injustice and intensifies dehumanising trends.<sup>71</sup> Using the four levels listed above Heyer

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<sup>68</sup> Daniel Groody, “Passing Over: Migration as Conversion,” 52.

<sup>69</sup> Kristin E. Heyer, “Social Sin and Immigration: Good Fences Make Bad Neighbors,” in *Theological Studies* Vol. 71, no 2, 410-436. Heyers treats the concept of social sin in its broadest sense as encompassing the unjust structures, distorted consciousness, and collective actions and inaction that facilitate injustice and dehumanise.

<sup>70</sup> Kristin E. Heyer, “Social Sin and Immigration,” 414.

<sup>71</sup> Gregory Baum, *Religion and Alienation: A Theological Reading of Sociology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), 200-203. Also See Kristin E. Heyer, “Social Sin and Immigration: Good Fences Make Bad Neighbours,” in *Theological Studies* Vol. 71, no 2, 426. Heyer includes Peter Henriot’s complicity of silent acquiescence in Baum’s level three.



establishes how various unjust social relations make citizens distance themselves from the pains of migrants and make it difficult for even Catholics to accept the Catholic Migration ethics.

Beginning with level 1 of Baum's multi-layered understanding of social sin, Heyer establishes that unjust political, economic, legal and boarder policies are causes of illegal immigration. This leads to ideological and cultural frame works by which citizens distance themselves from migrants and perceive them in bad light. At the second layer, religious symbols are also culprit as the emphasis on individual penitence hides the sin in collective operations. These all lead to blindness and acquiescence and to further collective actions that further create injustice and sinful operations. It is important to note that the four levels are intricately connected as one level affects another. Critical realism's emphasis on the causative powers of restrictions and opportunities come to play here. Unjust institutions enable privileged persons in social relations to exploit the disadvantaged ones even as the restrictions built within the system are causes for desperate actions that lead to illegal migration. Heyer affirms this when she identifies the following among factors propelling undocumented migration: impact of faulty immigration system with discrepancy between labour needs and legal avenues for work in certain sectors; outmoded family visa caps; focus on symptoms rather than the causes of migration; ill-founded institutionalised concerns for security rather than for human rights or family unity in U.S. immigration laws, engineered by the primacy of deterrence; institutionalised national economic interests in an uneven free trade agreements; apparent commodification trends in the asymmetry of southwestern boarder fortification while maintaining negligible surveillance of containers entering U.S. ports along with the free flow of capital; further commodification in a proposed "point systems" that give impetus to the workplace raid practices that reduce family members to an economic unit, and the development of highly organised and profitable human trafficking network.<sup>72</sup> With the above scenario, Heyer rightly agrees with Mark O'Keefe that "the injustices and dehumanising trends within these structural relationships indicate that inherent value of certain persons and some values that are essential to authentic human development have been hidden, masked, or skewed in society."<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Kristin E. Heyer, "Social Sin and Immigration," 427.

<sup>73</sup> Kristin E. Heyer, "Social Sin and Immigration," 147. Also see Mark O'Keefe, O.S.B., "Social Sin and Fundamental Option," in *Christian Freedom: Essays by Faculty of the Saint Meinrad School of Theology*, ed. Clayton N. Jefford (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 137.

As earlier observed, Heyer's analysis of the effects of unjust political, economic, and social institutions on nonregistered immigrants is relevant to all other categories of migrants globally. The free trade economic system orchestrated by unmitigated capitalism and communism continues to create wide discrepancies between advanced and underdeveloped countries. Pope John Paul II in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* says: "It is important to note therefore that a world which is divided into blocs, sustained by rigid ideologies, and in which instead of interdependence and solidarity different forms of imperialism hold sway, can only be a world subject to structures of sin. The sum total of the negative factors working against a true awareness of the universal common good, and the need to further it, gives the impression of creating, in persons and institutions, an obstacle which is difficult to overcome."<sup>74</sup> One can conclude that the Pope suggests that the dominant ideologies of liberal capitalism and Marxist collectivism blind their participants from recognising the faults in their own systems. These ideologies rule the world and blind people from the injustices and undignified treatment of the underprivileged in political, social, and economic relationships. Refugees and migrants belong to the underprivileged in this equation. Pope John Paul II equally challenges the mechanisms within economic and political systems such as the all-consuming desire for profit and, on the other, the thirst for power, with the intention of imposing one's will upon others. In order to characterize better each of these attitudes, one can add the expression: "at any price." In other words, we are faced with the absolutizing of human attitudes with all its possible consequences.<sup>75</sup> Trade negotiations are so guided by policies that maximise profit at the expense of poor countries who are most often placed in disadvantaged positions. They are forced to devalue their currencies and implement various economic policies that only further impoverish their citizens while multinational companies owned by the big economies exploit their resources with great degradation of their land. This is most true of most African countries that account for over seventy percent of the world's migrants today. These economic trends are backed up with political relationship and legal treaties and ties that keep the poorer nations at disadvantage. With their native home undeveloped, the natural trend is to seek greener pastures in the so-called big economies only to be greeted with bottle necks and regarded as intruders. The system that allows legal migration is filled with retapes and designed in such a way as to

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<sup>74</sup> John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* 36. [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_30121987\\_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html)

<sup>75</sup> John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* 36.

harvest the most resourceful from the poor nations thereby impoverishing them further. Such unjust systems of relationship are indeed fundamental to the migration crisis.

The understanding of structural sins as institutional realities that create an unjust distribution of wealth, power and recognition shows how migrants and refugees are at the margin of society where their well-being or even life is in danger. In *Evangelium Vitae*, 23-24, John Paul II further shows how much power culture exerts on agency. He insists that by obfuscating conscience, structures of sin are consolidated.<sup>76</sup> The Pope insists in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, that structures of sin impede full human development. “Man receives from God his essential dignity and with it the capacity to transcend every social order so as to move towards truth and goodness. But he is also conditioned by the social structure in which he lives, by the education he has received and by his environment. These elements can either help or hinder his living in accordance with the truth. The decisions which create a human environment can give rise to specific structures of sin which impede the full realisation of those who are in any way oppressed by them.”<sup>77</sup> The political and social conditions migrants/refugees are confronted with prevent them from the enabling environment and opportunities to fully realise themselves when it deprives them of opportunities of jobs and good pay or even befitting shelters as well as separates them from their families.

The unjust institutions embody the collective life of both citizens of the advanced economies and poorer economies. While citizens of the advanced economies develop a superior attitude and sense of entitlement to the exploited wealth of other nations and consider noncitizens as “parasites,” those of the poorer nations operate with a dependency attitude towards the big economies. This leads to operative ideologies that legitimate the unjust situations and intensify further harm. Regarding this at the level two of Baum’s level categorisation, Heyer shows how this relates to the migration crisis. She argues that the cultural forces that perpetuate myths about immigrants and consistently elevate elements of economic and security concerns above moral ones may wield significant influence on the way individuals treat migrants.<sup>78</sup> Indices such as cultural assumptions, tax bracket, party loyalty seem to take precedence over religious or moral formation on social issues. All those, coupled with political campaigns to perpetually

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<sup>76</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* 23-24. [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_25031995\\_evangelium-vitae.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae.html)

<sup>77</sup> John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 38. ([https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_01051991\\_centesimus-annus.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html))

<sup>78</sup> Kristin E. Heyer, “Social Sin and Immigration,” 412. (She states that increasingly within our communities, legal Social and cultural borders become fault lines that jeopardizes common welfare.)

use immigrants as scapegoat and divert attentions from needed policy reforms deafen citizen-disciples to gospel values of hospitality and justice. Heyer identifies how gradually attention has shifted from humanitarian concerns and the complicity of the US government in migratory flow to national security. Such rhetoric and policies, she insists are in tandem with growing tendencies to prioritise isolationist and illusory understanding of national self-interest over collaboration.<sup>79</sup> Challenging the hard border policies of the then President Trump, Heyer observes how “mechanisms that instil fear in receiving communities and erode the human rights of migrants reflect broader tendencies to approach migration in terms of crisis management, with populist leaders capitalising on anxieties related to the global economy and cultural shifts in recent years.” This isolationist approach that promotes national self-interest at the expense of collaboration and humanitarian concerns is operational globally. A good example would be the decision by the United Kingdom (UK) government to send asylum seekers and refugees in the UK to Rwanda. The decision was said to be based on a new migration and economic development partnership between the UK and Rwanda. Under the new arrangement, anyone entering the UK illegally, as well as those who have arrived illegally since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022 may now be relocated to Rwanda. It is claimed by the UK prime minister that Rwanda will have the capacity to resettle tens of thousands of people in years ahead. The arrangement also includes the transfer of asylum seekers whose claims are not being considered by the UK to Rwanda, which will process their claims and settle or remove (as appropriate) individuals after their claim is decided. All these arrangements are being made without consideration of their effects on the migrants themselves and their rights, or their future effects in Rwanda and neighbouring African countries. Here, we have refugees and asylum seekers being returned to the conflict zones they are fleeing from without their consent. The largest nationality groups affected seem to be Afghans, Iranians and Sudanese with Sudanese refugees reportedly representing more than a third of those being sent to Rwanda. Despite the arrangement being racist, unlawful, and discriminatory, as well as being incompatible with international human rights practices and commitment to refugees, the UK parliament passed the motion and was set to implement it. It took the intervention of the European Union Commission on Migration and Refugees to put a hold on the policy. The refugees and migrants in question are being treated as commodities for political negotiation for the selfish benefit of the UK government and its citizens (and Rwandan government officials who signed the MOU)

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<sup>79</sup> Kristin E. Heyer, “Migration, Social Responsibility, and Moral Imagination: Resources from Christian Ethics,” 231.

without any moral consideration to the welfare of the migrants. Both parties are blinded by the economic and political benefits which the MOU hope to bring to their respective governments. Obligations for legal, social, and cultural borders as observed by Heyer, constitute structures that jeopardise common welfare. Under such circumstances, the presence of God in the reality of the migrants and refugees can easily be lost to popular legal, economic, and social framework.<sup>80</sup>

Heyer stresses further that media portrayals of immigrants as free-loaders or purveyors of disease, the widespread conception of migrants as threatening the rule of law, social cohesion, and the nation's economic health have all contributed to shaping the attitude of people towards migrants. "Amid a climate of anti-immigrant sentiment, buzzwords such as 'national security' and 'illegal alien' can serve as idols to conceal a sinful reality and provoke demonization."<sup>81</sup> There is unfortunate prevailing interpretative frame that focuses on casting immigrants (especially unauthorised ones) as wilful law breakers. The issue of immigration law and public policy constitute the most divisive in the immigration debate.<sup>82</sup> The interpretative frame characterises the immigration debate and engineers the framing of permissive immigration policies as posing threats to national security. This instils fears of anarchy among citizens and blinds them to the true picture of immigrants' pains and the injustices they suffer.<sup>83</sup> Pope Francis affirms this in *Fratelli Tutti* when he says, "migrants are not seen as entitled like others to participate in the life of society, and it is forgotten that they possess the same intrinsic dignity as any person. Hence, they ought to be 'agents in their own redemption.' No one will ever openly deny that they are human beings, yet in practice, by our decisions and the way we treat them, we can show that we consider them less worthy, less important, less human."<sup>84</sup> The Pope insists that this way of thinking and acting are antithetical and unacceptable especially for Christians "since it sets certain political preferences above deep convictions of our faith: the

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<sup>80</sup> Kristin E. Heyer, "Social Sin and Immigration," 412-413.

<sup>81</sup> Kristin E. Heyer, "Social Sin and Immigration," 428.

<sup>82</sup> Daniel G. Groody, "Crossing the Divide: Foundations of a Theology of Migration and Refugees," in *Theological Studies*, Vol. 70 2009, 654. (Groody argues that the problem with this perspective is that it makes no distinction between various kinds of laws and assumes equal binding force for all laws).

<sup>83</sup> See Kristin Heyer, "Reframing Displacement and Membership: Ethics of Migration," in *Theological Studies*, no 73, 2012, 190-194. She insists that reductive rhetoric and an immigration paradigm that focuses on instrumentalist expediency, national security and economic efficiency masks and facilitates the mistreatment of immigrants who are victims of various forms of manipulation and exploitation.

<sup>84</sup> Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* no 39.

inalienable dignity of each human person regardless of origin, race or religion, and the supreme law of fraternal love.”<sup>85</sup>

Other sinful structures that Heyer identifies as affecting people’s attitude and behaviour toward migrants include consumerist ideology shaping the willingness of citizens to underpay or mistreat undocumented persons either directly or, through indirect demand for expensive goods and services; the scotosis or blindness produced by ideologically anchored structures of injustice which lulls U.S. Catholics, among others into equating “law-abiding” with “Just” or into apathetic acquiescence. She cites the example of how priority given to possessions and capital over persons may aggravate to large scale hardness of heart. She insists that internalised fear, tribalism, or callous greed can directly lead to silent acquiescence or indolence and internalised ideologies and distorted consciousness can also lead to collective unjust decisions and actions. She rightly submits that “whether in the form of nationalism, expediency, or profit, social inducements to personal sin in the immigration context abound.”<sup>86</sup>

Against the ideological and material sinful structures that affect migrants negatively, Heyer calls for conversion to a pastoral action that is guided by solidarity.<sup>87</sup> Admitting the importance of structures to moral constructs, the U.S. and Mexican bishops note that “part of the process of conversion of mind and heart deals with confronting attitudes of cultural superiority, indifference, and racism; accepting migrants not as foreboding aliens, terrorists or economic threats, but persons with dignity and rights, revealing the presence of Christ; and recognising migrants as bearers of deep cultural values and rich faith traditions.”<sup>88</sup> As observed by Heyer, such nonvoluntary dimensions are directly related to structural reforms, for policy change grows out of moral and public transformation. This is so because, as both liberation theologians and the magisterium maintain, a change of mind must be precipitated by a change of heart.<sup>89</sup> In essence, a moral reorientation engineered by true encounter with migrants and refugees is needed for a positive conceptualisation of the policies and practices with which they are regarded and treated. She further recommends the Christian relational anthropology which serves as a counternarrative of shared humanity with implication for a justice-oriented immigration ethics. This relational ethics is committed to universal human rights, shared

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<sup>85</sup> Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tuti* no 39.

<sup>86</sup> Kristin E. Heyer, “Social Sin and Immigration,” 409.

<sup>87</sup> Kristin E. Heyer, “Social Sin and Immigration,” 433. (Heyer insists that this is the development of conscious practices that help to cultivate kingship, a virtue fundamental to the Catholic ethic regarding migration and reception.)

<sup>88</sup> Kristin E. Heyer, “Social Sin and Immigration,” 430.

<sup>89</sup> Kristin E. Heyer, “Social Sin and Immigration,” 430-31.

responsibility for the effects of structural injustice, and helps illuminate complex causes of migration and the responsibility of receiving communities.<sup>90</sup> There is the need for the Ethics of Migration to frame just and sustainable immigration and integration policies that could check against permanent exclusion of any group of migrants and ensure social cohesion and global equality. This can only be possible when the operative paradigm that foster exclusion and inequality in the guise of instrumental exigencies is reviewed and corrected.

Sinful structures play a great role in the migrant and refugee crisis. Christine Heyer clearly establishes the relationship between social/structural sin and the migration challenge. Heyer shows that social sin has both voluntary and nonvoluntary dimensions and insists that “social sin serves as a conceptual key to unveiling the socioeconomic, legal, and political structures that contribute to undocumented immigration, as well as understanding the ideological blinders that foster resistance to an ethic of hospitality and to immigrants themselves.”<sup>91</sup> Her work reconciles the Liberation theology trajectory with magisterium trajectory on sinful structures and establishes a balanced nuance that shows how the emphasis on personal responsibility helps each person to be accountable and experience conversion. The emphasis on objective sinfulness in social culture, on the other hand, establishes the need for social transformation which all must be committed to. This is what necessitates policy change. Social sin demands both individual conversion and social transformation. Both are linked to each other. Pope John Paul II’s allusion to a ‘communion of sins’ makes this very clear. Just as every soul that rises above itself, raises the world, “Consequently one can speak of a communion of sin, whereby a soul that lowers itself through sin drags down with itself the church and, in some way, the whole world... With greater or lesser violence, with greater or lesser harm, every sin has repercussions on the entire ecclesial body and the whole human family.”<sup>92</sup> We share in the general sin of the world either directly or analogically and are called to seek transformation of sinful structures and cultures as much as we are called to individual conversion. Commenting on the lord’s prayer, St. Cyprian says, “our prayer is public and for all... we pray not for a single person but the whole people, because we are one.”<sup>93</sup> We say, ‘our father’ not ‘my father;’ ‘give us our daily bread’ and not ‘give me my daily bread;’ ‘lead us not into temptation but deliver

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<sup>90</sup> Kristin E. Heyer, “Migration, Social Responsibility, and Moral Imagination: Resources from Christian Ethics,” 238.

<sup>91</sup> Kristin E. Heyer, “Social Sin and Immigration,” 413.

<sup>92</sup> John Paul II, *Reconciliation and Penance*, 15. [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_02121984\\_reconciliatio-et-paenitentia.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_02121984_reconciliatio-et-paenitentia.html)

<sup>93</sup> See the treatise of St Cyprian on the Lord’s Prayer (no 8-9) provided in the Divine Office of Readings for Monday, week 11.

us from evil' and not 'lead me not into temptation but deliver me from evil.' There is precondition of sin in sinful structure that is nonvoluntary and objective. There is collective responsibility to identify this objective sin and to seek for its transformation. This transformation becomes possible when everyone realises how they contribute to the sinful structure actively or passively and open themselves to individual conversion. That way, we all work together for the enthronement of positive structures and ideologies that enhance the dignity of all. This is needed in addressing the moral challenge of migration and refugees.

Conversion and transformation regarding social structural sin in the migration crisis need two basic responses. (1) Besides pastoral care and political advocacy which the church has been providing, there is the need to through word and symbols identify subjective participation in structures and ideologies that perpetuate injustice and dehumanise migrants. This comes in conscientisation to heal the collective imagination so as to foster absolute values of solidarity as against absolutizing lesser goods like nationalism and internal security or even profit. (2) Conscientisation should entail experiential strategies to uncover persons' passive support for attitude and institutions that help maintain structural injustice. Sin is both by commission and omission, action and inaction. Passivity and silent acquiescence and various unjust subjective actions have built a collective psyche that consciously and/or unconsciously perpetuate and sustain unjust structures and ideologies behind the ill-treatment of migrants and refugees. There is need for both subjective acknowledgment and repentance as well as collective contrition which comes from identifying the sin in unjust ideologies and structures. Pope John Paul II alludes to the need to go beyond subjective repentance when he says: "But penance also means changing one's life in harmony with the change of heart, and in this sense doing penance is completed by bringing forth fruits worthy of penance: It is one's whole existence that becomes penitential, that is to say, directed toward a continuous striving for what is better."<sup>94</sup> Repentance becomes complete when it is geared towards striving for what is better. This entails the change of attitude of selfishness to pursue higher values of the common good. Critical realism's emphasis on the role of opportunities and restrictions within social structures becomes relevant here. The opportunities and restrictions provided by immigration policies and practices need to be examined. Most often than not, the opportunities and legal restrictions blind citizens to the sin of injustice and inhuman treatment migrants are subjected to. When citizens are made to believe that building of walls across borders are for their protection and social security, they most often would throw their weight behind boarder restrictions. The dehumanising treatments

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<sup>94</sup> John Pau II, *Reconciliation and Penance*, no. 4.



migrants receive at the borders are hidden as well as the remote causes of migration and how remotely, they are subjectively and collectively responsible for the migration crisis.

The major causes of non-voluntary migration are conflicts and poverty. These have remote causes. Conflicts are fuelled by different ideological and social structures such as racism, tribalism, ethnicism and religious fundamentalism. Other factors include the struggle for cultural supremacy, political dominance and struggles over economic resources. Poverty comes mostly from disenfranchisement, deprivation, and lack of opportunities for self-development as well as unfair distribution of commonwealth. Both conflict and poverty are intricately connected as each can lead to the other. They are both webbed into systems of social relations between social groups and are results of social structures. In addressing the challenges of migration and refugees, it is imperative to examine the factors causing war and poverty as well as sustaining them. Such factors we have identified as the political, economic, and social structures and ideologies that govern human transactions and relationship. The opportunities and restrictions the structures provide aid and abet conflict and poverty. The unjust elements in these structures and ideologies must be named and identified as sinful with a willingness to change individual and collective attitudes that the structures and ideologies foster. This gives authenticity to all moral condemnation of the unjust treatment and inhumane conditions of migrants and refugees and create the platform for true repentance and transformation.

### 3.5 Chapter Conclusion

We have established the relevance of sinful social structure in addressing the concerns of migration/refugees. It is fundamental to the other core principles by which the concern is addressed from the theological and ethical points of view. This is because it addresses the effectiveness of those principles and seek to make them practicable. The organisation of society within which the virtues of hospitality, human rights and other virtues are practised is essential to how those principles are exercised. Kristin Heyer and others have clearly demonstrated that when the understanding and organisational principles in a sociality encourages intolerance and inhospitality to migrants and refugees, the concern of social/structural sin arises. There is a need for a deeper evaluation of the foundations of migration theology to foster genuine institutional conversion.<sup>95</sup> As relevant as the concept of social/structural sin may be to the migration/ refugee crisis, it is not very prevalent in theological discourse. The reason for this

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<sup>95</sup> See Daniel G. Groody, "Crossing the Divide: Foundations of a Theology of Migration and Refugees," in *Theological Studies*, Vol. 70 2009, 638-667.

could be the origin of the concept and how it has been received by the church. Originating from liberation theology and influenced by Marxist philosophy, the concept comes across on face-value as being ad variant with the traditional understanding of sin as originating from the freewill. There is the need for a proper understanding of the concept to establish how it does not contradict but affirm significant elements of Catholic anthropology with renewed emphasis. As we have established, Great advancement has been made in the recent decade in unpacking the concept from relevant fields of study. From the field of sociology, we established the independent nature of social structures and how structures can be causative agent for sin through the opportunities and restrictions built into the system of social relationships.<sup>96</sup> More emphasis needs to be placed on the relevance of sinful structures in the migration and refugee crises. It is with that understanding that we examine Pope Francis' intervention in the migrant crisis in the next chapter.

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<sup>96</sup> See Daniel Groody, "Passing Over: Migration as Conversion" in *International Review Mission* Vol. 104, No.1, April 2015, 46-60.

# Chapter Four: Pope Francis and the Role of Sinful Social Structures in the Migration, Refugees and Displacement Crisis

## 4.0 Introduction

This chapter examines Pope Francis's approach to social issues with reference to his robust intervention in the migration regime. It explores into the elements of the theme of sinful social structures in the thoughts of the pontiff. Given the relevance and depth of the role sinful social structures play in the migration and refugee crisis, we seek to examine how much of the theme has been explored in the intervention of the Pope.

## 4.1 Pope Francis' Theological Approach and Social Agenda

Pope Francis is generally regarded as a less systematic thinker than his predecessors. Tracy Rowland opines that not much has been written about the pope's attitude to the practice of theology as an intellectual discipline because Pope Francis' accent is on social problems, not ideas, *praxis* rather than *Theoria*.

<sup>1</sup>Ross Douthat observes that unlike the academic-minded Benedict XVI, who defended popular piety against liberal critiques, "Francis embodies a certain style of populist Catholicism – one that is suspicious of academic faith in any form. He seems to have affinity for the kind of Catholic culture in which mass attendance might be spotty but the local saint's processions are packed – a style of faith that is fervent and supernaturalist but not particularly doctrinal." <sup>2</sup> Tracy observes that it is the suggestion of several papal commentators and academics that the pope has sympathy for People's Theology, a version of liberation theology from Latin America. Juan Carlos Scannone, a leading commentator on liberation theology and on Pope Francis, insists that Pope Francis does not only practice people's theology but has extracted his favourite four principles from a nineteenth century Argentinian dictator, Juan Manuel de Rosas, sent to another Argentinian caudillo, Fracundo Quiroga, in 1834. The four principles include: time is greater than space, unity prevails over conflict, reality is more important than ideas, and the whole is greater than the parts.<sup>3</sup> It is however more widely acclaimed that the Pope's ideas were

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<sup>1</sup> Tracy Rowland, *Catholic Theology*, (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2012), 192.

<sup>2</sup> Tracy Rowland, 192.

<sup>3</sup> Tracy Rowland, 192.

rather influenced by Romano Guardini, a twenty century Italian-born and German-raised philosopher and theologian, whom Pope Francis studied for his uncompleted doctoral degree.<sup>4</sup> Guardini's thoughts and writings are said to have made huge contributions to some central documents of Vatican II and to have had significant influence on the thoughts of Pope Francis' predecessors, John Paul II and Benedict XVI as well as Francis himself. Pope Francis quotes Guardini directly in *Evangelium Gaudium* no 224 as he discusses the four principles in detail. The discussion on Pope Francis' four principles is presented under the heading: The Common Good and Peace in Society in *Evangelium Gaudium*.<sup>5</sup> The principles are presented as derived from the pillars of the social doctrine of the church and are fundamental to the realisation of peace and harmony in society. They are meant to pursue the values of the dignity of the human person and the common good. The Pope insists that progress in building a people in peace, justice and fraternity depends on these four principles. He believes that their application can be a genuine path to peace within each nation and in the entire world.<sup>6</sup> A summary of each of the principles is provided below.

1. Time is greater than space: The Pope identifies the preference of spaces to time and processes as the faults in socio-political activity. He insists that "Giving priority to space means madly attempting to keep everything together in the present, trying to possess all the spaces of power and of self-assertion; it is to crystallize processes and presume to hold them back."<sup>7</sup> Giving priority to time on the other hand, means being concerned about initiating processes rather than possessing spaces. Since time refers broadly to the fullness of the horizon constantly opening before us, it is greater than individual moment which depicts limitation as an expression of closure.<sup>8</sup> The Holy Father concludes that time governs spaces, illumines them and makes them links in a constantly expanding chain, with no possibility of return, and what we need is to give priority to actions which generate new processes in society and engage other persons and groups who can develop them to the point where they bear fruit in significant

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<sup>4</sup> Daniel Amiri, *Romano Guardini: A Brief Introduction to the Theology of Pope Francis*, 2019.  
<https://wherepeteris.com/romano-guardini-a-brief-introduction-to-the-theology-of-pope-francis/>

<sup>5</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelium Gaudium*, no 217-237.  
[https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html)

<sup>6</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelium Gaudium*, no 221.

<sup>7</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelium Gaudium*, no 223.

<sup>8</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelium Gaudium*, no 222.

historical events. This ought to be done without anxiety, but with clear convictions and tenacity.<sup>9</sup>

2. Unity prevails over conflict: Pope Francis maintains that the best way to deal with conflict is the willingness to face it head on, to resolve it, and to make it a link in the chain of a new process. “In this way it becomes possible to build communion amid disagreement, but this can only be achieved by those great persons who are willing to go beyond the surface of the conflict and to see others in their deepest dignity.”<sup>10</sup> The Holy Father states that this principle is drawn from the gospel, which reminds us that Christ has made all things one in himself and the sign of this unity and reconciliation in him is peace.<sup>11</sup>
3. Realities are more important than ideas: Realities have concrete existence, whereas ideas are worked, hence there must be continuous dialogue between the two, so that ideas are not detached from realities.<sup>12</sup> The Holy Father calls for the rejection of various forms of ideological frameworks that mask realities such as “angelic forms of purity, dictatorships of relativism, empty rhetoric, objectives more ideal than real, brands of ahistorical fundamentalism, ethical systems bereft of kindness, intellectual discourse bereft of wisdom.”<sup>13</sup> He insists that ideas are empty when detached from realities, for realities are what calls for action. The reality of the incarnation testifies that the word, continuously taking flesh anew, is essential to evangelisation. “It helps us to see that the Church’s history is a history of salvation, to be mindful of those saints who inculcated the Gospel in the life of our peoples and to reap the fruits of the Church’s rich bimillennial tradition, without pretending to come up with a system of thought detached from this treasury, as if we wanted to reinvent the Gospel.”<sup>14</sup> This third principle impels humanity to put the word into practice by performing works of justice and charity so as to make the word fruitful. The Pope cautions that not to put the word into practice and make it a reality, is to build on sand, to remain in the realm of pure ideas and to end up in a lifeless and unfruitful self-centredness and Gnosticism.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelium Gaudium*, no 223.

<sup>10</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelium Gaudium*, no 228.

<sup>11</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelium Gaudium*, no 229.

<sup>12</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelium Gaudium*, no 231.

<sup>13</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelium Gaudium*, no 231.

<sup>14</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelium Gaudium*, no 233.

<sup>15</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelium Gaudium*, no 233.

4. The Whole is greater than the part: As articulated by the Pope, the whole is not only greater than the part, but also than the sum of its parts.<sup>16</sup> The innate tension between globalisation and localisation needs to be overcome by paying more attention to the global in order to avoid banality. Attention must equally be given to the local, for that keeps our feet on the ground.<sup>17</sup> As such the two opposing extremes of either being caught up in an abstract, globalised universe, or turning into a museum of local folklore, incapable of being challenged by novelty or appreciating the beauty which God bestows beyond our borders, are avoided.<sup>18</sup> The model recommended by Pope Francis is “the polyhedron, which reflects the convergence of all its parts, each of which preserves its distinctiveness. Pastoral and political activity alike seek to gather in this polyhedron the best of each.”<sup>19</sup> The Pope’s polyhedron is “the convergence of peoples who, within the universal order, maintain their own individuality; it is the sum total of persons within a society which pursues the common good, which truly has a place for everyone.”<sup>20</sup> He insists that there is no need to be overly obsessed with limited and particular questions, but we constantly have to broaden our horizons and see the greater good which will benefit us all. “The global need not stifle, nor the particular prove barren.”<sup>21</sup>

As Rowland has observed, “a common thread running through each of these principles is the tendency to give priority to praxis over theory.”<sup>22</sup> From the summary given above, it suffices to establish that the pope has more interest in the social conditions of people than dogmatic analysis. He believes in looking at issues from a broad perspective, taking particular circumstances into consideration, not being guided by a closed set of rules. As quoted in *Amoris Laetitia*, the principles of natural law should not be seen as a priori but as taking concrete meaning in particular circumstances.<sup>23</sup> By the four principles the Pope could be said to have set up a structural framework for addressing social issues, one in which the objective only finds true meaning in the subjective.

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<sup>16</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelium Gaudium*, no 235.

<sup>17</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelium Gaudium*, no 234.

<sup>18</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelium Gaudium*, no 234.

<sup>19</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelium Gaudium*, no 236.

<sup>20</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelium Gaudium*, no 236.

<sup>21</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelium Gaudium*, no 235.

<sup>22</sup> Tracy Rowland, 192.

<sup>23</sup> Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no.305. (Natural law is presented by the pope as a source of objective inspiration for deeply personal process of making decision.)

Pope Francis equally addresses social issues with a deep concern for the poor and vulnerable. Professor Loris Zanatta of the University of Bologna, as quoted by Rowland, opines that “Pope Francis believes that poverty bestows upon people a moral superiority... the deposit of faith is to be found preserved among the poor living in ‘inner city neighbourhoods’”<sup>24</sup> The Pope’s social agenda seems to be driven by four social principles of common humanity and common vulnerability, common good and human dignity. We are all poor and dependent on one another. This should move us to appreciate the conditions of the most deprived and vulnerable. These include victims of unjust structures of society: women and children (including the unborn), the aged, forced migrants, victims of war, the trafficked and victims of slavery in various forms. Women are singularly singled out as the worst victims of societal structure. The Pope puts it very clearly:

... the organization of societies worldwide is still far from reflecting clearly that women possess the same dignity and identical rights as men. We say one thing with words, but our decisions and reality tell another story. Indeed, “doubly poor are those women who endure situations of exclusion, mistreatment and violence, since they are frequently less able to defend their rights.”<sup>25</sup>

This is very significant as indeed historical conditions, cultural practices and ideological constructs have been very discriminatory against women making them very vulnerable. Linda Hogan, one of the leading scholars on vulnerability ethics, observes, “the church, too, has had more than its share of crisis as a result of its particular forms of institutionalised violence... against children and women, reinforced by an endemic sexism and homophobia, and supported by codes of silence that mistakenly conflate loyalty and integrity.”<sup>26</sup> Giving a good analysis of the ethics of vulnerability, Hogan insists that, given the disruption to our fragile moral consensus that has reigned in the post-war period, an ethics grounded in vulnerability provides answer to the moral challenges in our contemporary world of immense social challenges.<sup>27</sup> Hogan notes that though the ideals of fundamental rights rooted in common dignity and equality of all have continued to dominate the public thoughts of society in the post-war era, economic fundamentalism has continued to create social injustice that impoverishes many to the benefit of a few. This has continued to lead to agitations that have generated continued

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<sup>24</sup> Tracy Rowland, 193.

<sup>25</sup> Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* no 23.

([https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20201003\\_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html))

<sup>26</sup> Linda Hogan, “Vulnerability: An Ethic for a Divided World” in *building Bridges in Sarajevo: The Plenary Papers from CTEWC 2018*, Kristin E. Heyer, James Keenan, SJ & Andrea Vicini, SJ Eds. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2019) 217.

<sup>27</sup> Linda Hogan, “Vulnerability: An Ethic for a Divided World,” 216-220.

violence and conflicts all over the world leading to further dehumanisation of many affected by these unfortunate trends. In the face of the tension, the ideal is sometimes sacrificed for, or displaced by, local or tribal interests, especially in times of instability when individuals and communities experience a heightened sense of vulnerability. This vulnerability is usually associated with fear and violence and often becomes a catalyst for politics of extremism and exclusion that demarcates the boundaries of community in opposition to other, comparably vulnerable individuals and groups.<sup>28</sup> Hogan proposes that this experience of vulnerability and loss can become the creative ground on which a new sense of political community can be established.<sup>29</sup> She envisions a global political community based on our shared vulnerability. Since human beings share an ontology that is grounded in vulnerability and mutual dependency, admitting these elements, and letting them become hallmarks of political and ethical constructs could provide the grounds for the hope of a shared future in our divided world.<sup>30</sup>

Pope Francis' social teaching largely revolves around the ethics of vulnerability as proposed by Linda Hogan. As he addresses different social issues that exploit the vulnerable members of the human family, the Pope insists that we use our vulnerable situations as a ground for reaching out to all and treating them as part of ourselves. This is most evident in *Fratelli Tuti*. In this encyclical on fraternity and social friendship, the pope emphasises our common bond and duty to each other especially the vulnerable. Reflecting on the parable of "The Good Samaritan" The Pontiff admonishes that: "Today we have a great opportunity to express our innate sense of fraternity, to be Good Samaritans who bear the pain of other people's troubles rather than fomenting greater hatred and resentment. Like the chance traveller in the parable, we need only have a pure and simple desire to be a people, a community, constant and tireless in the effort to include, integrate and lift up the fallen. We may often find ourselves succumbing to the mentality of the violent, the blindly ambitious, those who spread mistrust and lies. Others may continue to view politics or the economy as an arena for their own power plays. For our part, let us foster what is good and place ourselves at its service."<sup>31</sup> The Pope insists that our vulnerability should neither foster fear, a sense of inadequacy, disunity, mistrust, or despair.

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<sup>28</sup> Linda Hogan, "Vulnerability: An Ethic for a Divided World" in *building Bridges in Sarajevo: The Plenary Papers from CTEWC 2018*, 218.

<sup>29</sup> Linda Hogan, "Vulnerability: An Ethic for a Divided World" in *building Bridges in Sarajevo: The Plenary Papers from CTEWC 2018*, 2018-2019.

<sup>30</sup> Linda Hogan, "Vulnerability: An Ethic for a Divided World" in *building Bridges in Sarajevo: The Plenary Papers from CTEWC 2018*, 2019-220.

<sup>31</sup> Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tuti* no 77.



Rather we are called to embrace the world as it is and by doing so discover all the goodness that God has planted in human hearts.<sup>32</sup> “Difficulties that seem overwhelming are opportunities for growth, not excuses for a glum resignation that can lead only to acquiescence... The Samaritan discovered an innkeeper who would care for the man; we too are called to unite as a family that is stronger than the sum of small individual members. For the whole is greater than the part, but it is also greater than the sum of its parts. Let us renounce the pettiness and resentment of useless in-fighting and constant confrontation. Let us stop feeling sorry for ourselves and acknowledge our crimes, our apathy, our lies. Reparation and reconciliation will give us new life and set us all free from fear.”<sup>33</sup> This summarises the Pope’s mantra for social ethics. For him, the pains of any individual and of every community are all evidence of our common humanity and must be seen as affecting our common existence. He reflects on how the global Covid-19 pandemic has exposed our vulnerability and uncovered those false superfluous certainties around which we constructed our daily life affairs, revealing the ineluctable and blessed awareness that we are part of one another.<sup>34</sup> He insists that “we fed ourselves on dreams of splendour and grandeur, and ended up consuming distraction, insularity and solitude. We gorged ourselves on networking and lost the taste of fraternity. We looked for quick and safe results, only to find ourselves overwhelmed by impatience and anxiety. Prisoners of a virtual reality, we lost the taste and flavour of the truly real. The pain, uncertainty and fear, and the realization of our own limitations, brought on by the pandemic have only made it all the more urgent that we rethink our styles of life, our relationships, the organization of our societies and, above all, the meaning of our existence.”<sup>35</sup> His insistence on the recognition of our common vulnerability and dependence on each other dominates his social agenda. “All of us have a responsibility for the wounded, those of our own people and all the peoples of the earth. Let us care for the needs of every man and woman, young and old, with the same fraternal spirit of care and closeness that marked the Good Samaritan.”<sup>36</sup> Christ is to be found in the vulnerable and the poor. Christians are to see Christ himself in the abandoned and excluded and transcend all barriers to reach out to them. In doing that their hearts become capable of identifying with others without worrying about where they were born or come from.

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<sup>32</sup> Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* no 78.

<sup>33</sup> Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* no 32. We see the pope stressing two of his four cardinal ethical principles, the whole is greater than the part and reality is more important than ideas.

<sup>34</sup> Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* no 32.

<sup>35</sup> Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* no 33. The pope stresses the danger of extolling lofty ideologies over concrete realities.

<sup>36</sup> Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* no 79.

In the process, we come to experience others as our ‘own flesh’ (*Is* 58:7).<sup>37</sup> Pope Francis decries liberal approaches to reality that ignore the factor of human weakness and envisage a world that follows a determined order and capable by itself of ensuring flourishing.<sup>38</sup>

As can be seen from the preceding analysis, Pope Francis’ approach to theology and social ethics is guided by the ethics of vulnerability and his four basic principles. He has not been as interested in doctrinal analysis nor ideological articulations. He has dedicated himself to addressing practical social realities and how much they affect the poor and impoverish humanity. It is therefore not strange that the plight of migrants and refugees has been a huge concern for his pontificate. We examine his intervention in the migration/refugee crisis in the next session.

## 4.2 Pope Francis and the Migrant and Refugee Regime

Pope Francis has addressed the issue of migration and refugees with this ethics of vulnerability, using his four basic principles and linking it to other social issues. He emphasises the danger our neglect of the pains of migrants poses to our common humanity and collective dignity. The Pope inherited a rich tradition of the Church’s concern for migration as well as a migration regime that has become increasingly multidimensional, complex, and heavily global in nature. From Pius XII’s *Exsul Familia* through Popes John XXII, Paul VI, John Paul II to his immediate successor, Benedict XVI, migration has received great and growing attention.<sup>39</sup>

With such a rich heritage and given his background as a Jesuit from Latin America, Pope Francis has tackled the migrant regime headlong right from the outset of his pontificate. Confronted with a very complex regime, his approach has been multidimensional and very radical, embracing other social concerns like environmental exploitation, poverty, family disintegration, human trafficking, just sustainability, integral development, homelessness, global exploitation, and social justice.<sup>40</sup> He refuses to treat the migration and refugee saga as an isolated social issue, but insists the crisis reveals our common vulnerability that can only be addressed by the acceptance of our common humanity and solidarity with one another. Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R, writing a forward to a collection of the Pope’s addresses, homilies and commentaries on migration, identifies the migration crisis as “a modern passion play

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<sup>37</sup> Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* no 84 & 85.

<sup>38</sup> Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* no 167.

<sup>39</sup> See the review of magisterial response to the migration challenge in chapter two.

<sup>40</sup> See Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no 46.

whose actors are refugees and migrants, the church and world” and goes on to say that, “Pope Francis points out just what is at stake for each of the three groups. Refugees and migrants risk losing their lives. The rest of us could lose our souls.”<sup>41</sup> The Pope therefore sees the migrant crisis as one that concerns us all and calls for solidarity so we can all be redeemed.

The very first trip Pope Francis made outside Rome after his election as Pope was to the Italian island of Lampedusa, a major point of entry for refugees making their way to Europe. During the mass, he celebrated there to commemorate the thousands who have perished along the way in the Mediterranean Sea, he delivered a homily that clearly defines his thoughts about the migrant regime. The title of the homily, “Where is your brother?” captures it all. Referring to how Adam lost his bearing after the Fall, and the question posed to Cain after he killed Abel, the Pope addresses the global indifference that has engulfed the world. “‘The other’ is no longer a brother or a sister to be loved, but simply someone who disturbs my life and my comfort.”<sup>42</sup> He decries the culture of comfort, which makes us think only of ourselves, and makes us insensitive to the cries of others, and presents the global indifference that grows because of this insensitivity as responsible for the way migrants and refugees are treated. He identifies migrants and refugees as our brothers and sisters who are escaping difficult situations and seeking for a better life, but instead find death because often they fail to find understanding, acceptance, and solidarity from us. “In this globalized world, we have fallen into globalized indifference. We have become used to the suffering of others: it doesn’t affect me; it doesn’t concern me; it’s none of my business!”<sup>43</sup> The Pope decries this attitude of irresponsibility towards others and calls for solidarity in weeping for the plights of refugees. He pleads pardon for those who are complacent, closed amid comforts that have deadened their hearts; and for those who by their decisions on the global level have created situations that lead to these tragedies.<sup>44</sup>

Along with solidarity is the dignity of the human person, which the Pope presents as the basis for our association with migrants. The dignity and rights of migrants need to be safeguarded in

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<sup>41</sup> Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R, “Foreward,” in *Pope Francis: A Stranger and You Welcomed Me: A Call to Mercy and Solidarity with Migrants and Refugees*, ed. Robert Ellsberg (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2018), xiii.

<sup>42</sup> Pope Francis, *Homily at the Island of Lampedusa*, July 8, 2013. ([https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130708\\_omelia-lampedusa.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130708_omelia-lampedusa.html)).

<sup>43</sup> Pope Francis, *Homily at the Island of Lampedusa*. (The thoughts expressed in this homily have been greatly expanded in the pope’s encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, especially in chapters one and two.)

<sup>44</sup> Pope Francis, *Homily at the Island of Lampedusa*.

the world that is fixated by money culture. He emphasises the Christological theme in *Exsul Familia* so succinctly when he identifies the flesh of refugees with the flesh of Christ.<sup>45</sup> Refugees reflect the face of Christ. They share the flesh of Christ hence their common dignity and communion with all humanity redeemed by Christ. The Pope, therefore, condemns the building of walls across borders and instead encourages the building of ‘bridges.’ In April 2016, the Pope in responding to a question of open borders between countries of the Schengen Agreement had this to say: “...building walls is not a solution... it resolves nothing. We must build bridges. But bridges are built intelligently, with dialogue, with integration. That is why I can understand a certain apprehension. But for a country to close its borders resolves nothing, because in the long run it harms its own people.”<sup>46</sup> Earlier on, reacting to the then presidential campaign of Donald Trump to build a wall along the USA and Mexican border, the Pope categorically declared: “A person who thinks only of building walls, wherever it may be, and not of building bridges, is not a Christian. This is not the gospel.”<sup>47</sup> Against such an attitude, the Pope says, is an attitude which respects the dignity of each person as the true Christian way. In *Gaudate et Exultate*, the Pope says: If I encounter a person sleeping outdoors on the cold night, I can view him or her as annoyance, an idler, an obstacle in my path, a troubling sight, a problem for politicians to sort out, or even a piece of refuse cluttering a public space. Or I can respond with faith and charity and see in this person a human being with dignity identical to my own, a creature infinitely loved by the father, an image of God, a brother or sister redeemed by Christ. That is what it is to be a Christian.<sup>48</sup> For the pope, holiness cannot be understood apart from this lively recognition of the dignity of each human being.

The articulation of Pope Francis on migration can adequately be summed up in his twenty-point agenda on the issue which he himself declares are summarised in four key verbs: *welcome, protect, promote, and integrate*.<sup>49</sup> |He ties up the migrant crisis to peace and development, and insists that tackling the challenge requires a strategy that combines the four

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<sup>45</sup> Pope Francis, *Homily at the Island of Lampedusa*.

<sup>46</sup> Donal Dorr, *The Pope Francis Agenda: His Teaching on Family, Protection of Life, Justice, Ecology, Women & the Church* (Dublin: Veritas Publication, 2018,) 85.

<sup>47</sup> Donal Dorr, *The Pope Francis Agenda*, 84.

<sup>48</sup> Pope Francis, *Gaudate et Exultate*, no 98.

<sup>49</sup> The details of the twenty-point agenda and the proposed global impact are available in the Document-Towards the Global Compacts on Migrants and Refugees, 2018, released by the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Vatican Dicastery for Integral Development. The Section was established by Pope Francis in 2017.

actions. A good summary of the four-point action is given in the Pope's message for the 51<sup>st</sup> World Day of Peace, 2018, no 4-5.

“Welcoming” calls for expanding legal pathways for entry and demands balancing the concerns of national security with concerns for fundamental rights. “Protecting” has to do with our duty to recognise and defend the dignity of migrants and refugees and prevent them from being exploited. Here, the Pope emphasises, the vulnerability of women and children. “Promoting” entails supporting the integral human development of migrants and refugees, ensuring access to basic facilities like education for the children and the young so they can realise their potentials. “Integrating” has to do with allowing refugees and migrants to participate fully in the life of the host societies. This leads to mutual enrichment and fruitful cooperation in service of the integral development of the local community. Based on these four action points, the Holy Father recommended two global Compacts to the United Nations: one, for safe, orderly and regular migration, and the other for refugees. He hopes that these compacts will provide a framework for policy proposals and practical measures that will help peace building processes and avoid global cynicism and indifference. He requests that they be inspired by compassion, foresight, and courage.

In all, the Pope recognises the fear of insecurity and the limitedness of resources but insists that these must be considered with the principles of the universality of land for the common good, and the dignity of the human person. In his 2019 message for World Day of Migrants and Refugees, he declares that it is not just about refugees but the state of our existence and the need to re-evaluate our values and Christian calling. It may be worthwhile to quote him directly here:

...it is not only the cause of migrants that is at stake; it is not just about them, but about all of us, and about the present and future of the human family. Migrants, especially those who are most vulnerable, help us to read the “the signs of the times.” Through them, the Lord is calling us to conversion, to be set free from exclusivity, indifference and the throw-away culture. Through them, the Lord invites us to embrace fully the Christian life and contribute, each according to his or her proper vocation, to the building up of a world that is more in accord with God's plan.<sup>50</sup>

The Holy Father says it all in this quote. The world needs to stop seeing migrants and refugees as problems, but as a reality that involves all of humanity and has the potential for global good if approached rightly.

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<sup>50</sup> Pope Francis, Message for the 105<sup>th</sup> World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 2019.

Pope Francis has given great attention to the humanitarian crisis of migration and refugees. His pontificate has advanced the thoughts of the Church on the matter. The dominant principles of his theological articulations have been prominent in his thoughts. He has decried unhelpful rhetoric and self-serving politicking and calls for the appreciation of our common vulnerability in dealing with the crisis. In the next session, we shall examine how much space the Pope has given to the role of sinful social structures in his intervention in the migration/refugee crisis.

### 4.3 The Role of Sinful Structures in Pope Francis' Intervention in the Migrant Crisis

One relevant aspect of Pope Francis' intervention in the migrant regime is the role sinful structures play in the crisis. A careful reading of the Pope's interventions reveals that he identifies some sinful structures that must be addressed in dealing with the crisis of migration and refugees. This is quite central to our study. A critical look at Pope Francis's four-point agenda suggests that the pope is proposing the advancement of a positive structural framework. This serves as countercultural to the sinful ideological and attitudinal structures by which migrants, refugees, and displaced persons are recognized and treated in the contemporary world. It may be worthwhile to examine the Pope's understanding of social/structural sin before examining how he relates the concept to the migration crisis.

#### 4.3.1 Pope Francis' Thoughts on Social/Structural Sin

The theme of sinful social structure does not receive in-depth discuss in the social documents of Pope Francis. Yet the Pope addresses and challenges systems of human relations that dehumanise and denigrate the human person. His four principles for moral evaluation reveal structures the pope considers sinful. Ideologies and attitudes that negate these principles are sinful by their very nature as they advance subjective values above objective realities. Regarding time and space, the Pope laments and condemns a structure that extols space above time where life and realities are reduced to the immediate. This forecloses the initiation of processes and seeks to possess it instead. The Pope is concerned that contemporary men and women are not really concerned about generating processes of people-building, but driven by the desire to obtain immediate results which yield easy, quick short-term political gains, but do not enhance human fullness. He insists that the criterion set forth by his mentor, Romano Guardini be the measurement and quotes him directly, "The only measure for properly evaluating an age is to ask to what extent it fosters the development and attainment of a full

and authentically meaningful human existence, in accordance with the peculiar character and the capacities of that age.”<sup>51</sup>

The Pope’s second principle, “unity prevails over conflict” insists that a system that celebrates conflicts, gets engrossed in it and institutionalises it or promotes indifference to it is sinful. He calls on people to transcend themselves and embrace the way of unity- the way that seeks for peace.<sup>52</sup> For the Pope, “the message of peace is not about a negotiated settlement but rather the conviction that the unity brought by the Spirit can harmonize every diversity. It overcomes every conflict by creating a new and promising synthesis.”<sup>53</sup>

On the principle, “realities are more important than ideas” the holy father maintains that It is dangerous to dwell in the realm of words alone, of images and rhetoric and calls for a rejection of the various means of masking reality: angelic forms of purity, dictatorships of relativism, empty rhetoric, objectives more ideal than real, brands of ahistorical fundamentalism, ethical systems bereft of kindness, intellectual discourse bereft of wisdom. Such means only creates nominalism. This is because “ideas disconnected from realities give rise to ineffectual forms of idealism and nominalism, capable at most of classifying and defining, but certainly not calling to action. What calls us to action are realities illuminated by reason.”<sup>54</sup>

The innate tension that exists between globalisation and localisation becomes sinful when people slip into any of the extremes rather than constantly broadening their horizons to see the greater good which will benefit all. A system that evades or uproots people from their native and cultural ties or on the other hand celebrate local cultures as absolutes that is totally independent is sinful. The Pope admonishes that we can work on a small scale, in our own neighbourhood, but with a larger perspective. The global need not stifle, nor the particular prove barren. The whole ought to be considered as greater than the part.<sup>55</sup>

Pope Francis’s understanding of social/structural sin revolves around the principles discussed above. The four of them taken together reflect the Pope’s idea of how social flourishing structures ought to be. With the Pope’s social teaching revolving round the poor, he treats social structural sin as any structure, ideologically or attitudinal that discriminates or negates care for the poor. With his strong emphasis on the principle of solidarity built on social anthropology,

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<sup>51</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no 224.

<sup>52</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 227.

<sup>53</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 231-232.

<sup>54</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 230.

<sup>55</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 234-235.

any system or mode of operation, or thinking that impoverishes and makes conditions worse for the poor is considered sinful. This comes out very strongly in the second chapter of *Evangelii Gaudium* where the pope negates the various systems of exclusion and social and economic structures that downgrade values in favour of profit.<sup>56</sup> “If every action has its consequences, an evil embedded in the structures of society has a constant potential for disintegration and death. It is evil crystallised in unjust social structures, which cannot be the basis of hope for the future.”<sup>57</sup> Such structures are condemned by the pope because fundamentally, they alienate people and create indifference that makes solidarity impossible.<sup>58</sup>

In *Laudato Si* The pope expresses the supremacy of humane social relationship in terms of human ecology and integral ecology and identifies the lack of genuine relationship between humans and the earth as sinful. Key sinful structures in Francis’ social thoughts include globalization of indifference, throw-away culture, overdriven individualism against the culture of the common good, the culture of building walls rather than bridges in human relationship. These various sinful ideologies, practices, and culture are named and challenged in *Fratelli Tutti*. The first chapter of the encyclical names these sinful ideologies and practices as “Dark Clouds over a Closed World.”<sup>59</sup> These include selfish nationalism, globalism, deconstructionism, colonisation of culture, extremism and polarisation as tools of politics, throwaway culture and utilitarianism, reductive anthropology, discriminatory standards of judgement, culture of walls, globalised indifference, culture of cash, populist politics and liberal economics. The Pope treats these ideologies and practices as factors of the social challenges of the contemporary world. The four moral principles with which the Pope addresses moral and social issues are at the foundations of the Pope’s condemnation of these ideologies and practices that constitute the major moral challenges of the contemporary world.

#### 4.3.2 Social sinful Structure in Pope Francis’ intervention in the Migration Challenge

In his homily at Lampedusa, cited above, the pope shows the concerns of social structures to social issues as he condemns global structures that cause migration.<sup>60</sup> By this, he addresses the root causes of migration and other social issues and calls for a change of attitude and formation of humane structures. He relates this to the migrant crisis in his address to the Pontifical Council

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<sup>56</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, nos. 52-59.

<sup>57</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no 59.

<sup>58</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 196.

<sup>59</sup> See Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, chapter one.

<sup>60</sup> See Pope Francis, *Homily at the Island of Lampedusa*, July 8, 2013.



for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People in 2013. He says: “Christian Compassion- ‘suffering with,’ compassion- is first of all in the commitment to learning about the events that force people to leave their homelands, and, where necessary, to give voice to those who cannot manage to make their cry of distress and oppression heard.”<sup>61</sup> Outstanding among the social challenges identified by Pope Francis in *Fratelli Tutti* is the issue of migration. Human progress and advancement can only be achieved by a humane system of human relation that inspires personal conversion. This is most necessary in addressing the migrant and refugee crisis. Pope Francis acknowledges this. He condemns populist political regimes and liberal economic systems that operate to prevent the influx of migrants at all costs and argue for the propriety of limiting aid to poor countries, so that they can hit rock bottom and so be forced to take austerity measures.<sup>62</sup> The Pope maintains that such stance and practice put the lives of a multitude of migrants at stake. This is so because “many migrants have fled from war, persecution, and natural catastrophes. Others, rightly, are seeking opportunities for themselves and their families. They dream of a better future, and they want to create the conditions for achieving it.”<sup>63</sup> The situation is made worse for some of the migrants who fall victims to unscrupulous drug traffickers who exploit their vulnerable state. The Pope insists that migrations will play a pivotal role in the future of our world and condemns the present loss of that sense of responsibility for our brothers and sisters on which every civil society is based. He calls on European countries, aided by its great cultural and religious heritage to defend the centrality of the human person and to find the right balance between its twofold moral responsibility to protect the rights of its citizens and to assure assistance and acceptance to migrants.<sup>64</sup> The Pope acknowledges the natural instinct of self-defence that make some persons hesitant and fearful with regard to migrants but insists that individuals and people are only fruitful if they are able to develop a creative openness to others. He asks everyone to move beyond these primal reactions. “There is a problem when doubts and fears condition our way of thinking and acting to the point of making us intolerant, closed and perhaps even – without realising it – racist. In this way, fear deprives us of the desire and the ability to encounter the other.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Pope Francis, “No one is a Stranger,” (Address to the plenary of the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Care of migrants in itinerant People, May 24, 2013).

<sup>62</sup> Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* no 37.

<sup>63</sup> Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* no 37.

<sup>64</sup> Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* no 40.

<sup>65</sup> Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* no 41.

Against fear, indifference and closed identity, Pope Francis recommends an attitude of cultural transcendence and universal accommodation of all based on our shared humanity. Like the Samaritan in ‘the parable of the good Samaritan,’ “we cannot be indifferent to suffering; we cannot allow anyone to go through life as an outcast. Instead, we should feel indignant, challenged to emerge from our comfortable isolation and to be changed by our contact with human suffering. That is the meaning of dignity.”<sup>66</sup>

#### 4.4 Chapter Conclusion

We have seen that Pope Francis has paid great attention to the migration/refugee crisis. Beginning from Lampedusa, he has continually intervened in the crisis. His concern has been how the crisis questions our dignity, solidarity and common humanity. He emphasises the global nature of the crisis and insists that we are all involved in one way or the other. Pope Francis’ articulations admit the need to address the migrant/refugee crisis from the standpoint of social/ structural sin. As we have noted, the language of sinful social structure is not very prevalent in the Pope’s intervention. However, he is quite concerned about global social structures and how they affect the vulnerable. We have seen how he names and condemns ideologies and attitudes that discriminate and dehumanise the human person. He clearly admits that these ideologies play a significant role in the migration/refugee crisis. The Pope’s basic principles for moral evaluation speak of his concern for social structures and the role they play in social issues. The principles are presented as derived from the pillars of the social doctrine of the church and are fundamental to the realisation of peace and harmony in society. They are meant to pursue the values of the dignity of the human person and the common good. He insists that progress in building a people in peace, justice and fraternity depends on these four principles. His four-point agenda provides a counter-cultural framework to the negative ideologies and practices affecting the migration crisis. It is commendable that the Pope is not just identifying the sinful structures but proposing an alternative pathway. It is desirable however, that the Pope may use the language more given how significant the theme of social/structural sin has become in contemporary moral discourse.

For practical examination of how sinful social structures affect the migration and refugee crisis we shall examine the challenges of Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria and how the Church has responded to the challenges in the next chapter.

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<sup>66</sup> Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* no 68.

# Chapter Five: Sinful Social Structures and the Church's Response to the Challenge of Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria

## 5.0 Introduction

The Situation and concerns of Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria provide an experience for an examination of migrants/refugee issues through the lens of social/structural sin. Through critical analysis of the concerns of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the country, this chapter examines different sinful social structures as the church and the government seek ways of addressing the menacing condition. Our assessment is informed by the understanding from critical realism that social structures are best understood as systems of relation between social positions, and that social structures can be sinful through the restrictions, incentives, and opportunities they provide, when such restrictions, incentives, and opportunities make those within the social structure more likely to make choices for personal interests against the common good.

## 5.1 The State and Challenges of Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are a special group of migrants/refugees. Their situation presents itself as a major social evil showing evidence of social injustice and human right concerns. These persons are understood by the United Nations as “persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of, or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.”

<sup>1</sup> The African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, popularly referred to as the Kampala Convention, further presents “Internal Displacement” as “ the involuntary or forced movement, evacuation or relocation of persons or groups of persons within internationally recognized state borders.”<sup>2</sup> The attention of United

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, 2001, 1.

<https://www.unhcr.org/protection/idps/43ce1cff2/guiding-principles-internal-displacement.html>

<sup>2</sup> African Union Convention for Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention, 2009), Article 1, 3. ([https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36846-treaty-kampala\\_convention.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36846-treaty-kampala_convention.pdf))

Nations was only drawn to the concerns of Internal Displacement as late as 1992, but internal displacement has been a humanitarian concern for a far longer period. According to the 2020 Global Report on Internal Displacement, there are an estimated 50.8 million internally displaced persons worldwide. Among them, there are 45.7 million displaced due to conflict and violence and 5.1 million who were forced to move because of disasters.<sup>3</sup> It is therefore fitting that Pope Francis chose to focus on the pastoral care of this group of migrants in his annual message for the 2020 World Day of Migrants. IDPs are amongst the most vulnerable population in the world. They have no legal status under international law because upon displacement, they remain within their national borders and therefore, hardly receive the assistance and protection afforded other refugees.<sup>4</sup> They are largely left at the mercies of their respective states who most often are overwhelmed by their concerns. David Hollenbach S.J. insists that, “Beyond the convention definition, an ethical framework would lead us to conceive of forced migrants as those whose basic human rights... are not protected by their own political communities.”<sup>5</sup> Pope Francis attests to the plight of IDPs when he declares that “situations of conflict and humanitarian emergencies, aggravated by climate change, are increasing the numbers of displaced persons and affecting people already living in a state of dire poverty. Many of the countries experiencing these situations lack the adequate structures for meeting the needs of the displaced.”<sup>6</sup> Apart from facing the trauma all migrants face, IDPs carry the additional burden of living as second class citizens in their own countries with little or no international attention.

Nigeria has battled with increasing concerns of displacements since the civil war of 1967, but the situation has worsened in the last ten years. This is due largely to the rising cases of insurgency and terrorism in the country. According to the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), “over 3.2 million people are displaced, including over 2.9 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in north-eastern Nigeria, over 684,000 IDPs in Cameroon,

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2020/> (Accessed on 28th October 2020). The figure given here is larger than earlier provided. This is possible because of the times and the various indices that may be used in collating the data.

<sup>4</sup> David Hollenbach, “Introduction: Human Rights as Ethical Framework for Advocacy” in *Refugee Rights: Ethics, Advocacy, and Africa*, ed. David Hollenbach, SJ (Washington, D.C. Georgetown University Press, 2018), 2.

<sup>5</sup> David Hollenbach, “Introduction: Human Rights and New Challenges of Protecting Forced Migrants” in *Driven from Home: Protecting the Rights of Forced Migrants* ed. David Hollenbach, SJ (Washington, D.C. Georgetown University Press, 2010) 10.

<sup>6</sup> Pope Francis’ message for the 106th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 1.

Chad and Niger and 304,000 refugees in the four countries.”<sup>7</sup> The report further attests that the crisis has been exacerbated by conflict-induced food insecurity and severe malnutrition that has risen to critical level. About 12.5 million people are reported to be in need of humanitarian assistance in the Lake Chad Basin region, with 5.3 million people remaining food insecure.

UNHCR affirms that “the challenges of protecting the displaced are compounded by the deteriorating security situation as well as socio-economic fragility, with communities in the Sahel region facing chronic poverty, a harsh climatic conditions, recurrent epidemics, poor infrastructure and limited access to basic services.”<sup>8</sup>

The crisis of displacement has posed great dangers to national cohesion and stunted development and progress in the pursuit of standard living conditions for the citizens. It has created dehumanising conditions and gross violations of the human rights of the victims. A visit to any of the IDPs’ camps brings one face to face with the horrible situation. Apart from the trauma of having lost their homes and sometimes loved ones to conflicts, IDPs are deprived of basic capabilities. They lack the opportunity to apply themselves to trade and other activities to fulfil any goals. Access to education, good health and basic needs is a tall dream in many of the camps even as they are exposed to different forms of abuse and exploitation. The situation is worse for women and children who stand in greater need of privacy, protection and care and are most often the most vulnerable in conflict situations.

Although the displacement crisis is a general phenomenon suffered by people of all Faiths in Nigeria, Christian adherents have been the worse hit. This is because Christians are the primary targets of Islamic fundamentalists and terrorists’ groups like Boko Haram and ISWAP. In an article published in *Catholic World Report*, Ray Cavanaugh paints a good picture of the plight of Christians displaced in Nigeria:

... Nigeria has become a nightmare for many Christians, particularly in the northern region. As extremist groups ... continue to indulge themselves, Nigeria has become the world’s leading source of Christian martyrs. Nigeria alone accounted for 90 percent of Christians killed for their faith worldwide in the year 2018. Over the last five years, they have murdered more than

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/en-ie/nigeria-emergency.html#:~:> (Assessed 18<sup>th</sup> October 2022). The report attributes the crisis to the activities of the terrorist group, BOKO HARAM since 2014. The statistics given here are largely restrictive as it has not dealt with conditions in other parts of the country. Millions are displaced every year in all parts of the country by flood. Between August and October 2022 over 2.5 million were displaced by flood.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/en-ie/nigeria-emergency.html#:~:> (assessed 18<sup>th</sup> October 2022).

11,500 Christians and destroyed about 2,000 churches. The violence has displaced more than four million Christians.<sup>9</sup>

Since this article was written in October 2020, the situation has deteriorated further. Many displaced persons today have lost all hope of ever returning to their homes or being properly resettled and integrated into the society.

Various efforts have been made by the Nigerian government to address the challenges of displacement and displaced persons in the country. These include combating the different armed groups unleashing terror on innocent citizens, building camps for the displaced and providing basic facilities within their reach, and seeking solutions to the causes of some of the conflicts and natural disasters that displace persons. Efforts have been made at establishing a policy guideline regarding how to handle the plight of Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria. This followed the adoption of the United Nations General Assembly of a set of guidelines as a tool for the prevention and management of internal displacement by nations all over the world. These guiding principles were endorsed by West African nations in 2006 and set the foundation for the African Union Convention for Assistance and Protection of Internally Displaced Persons which was adopted in 2009.<sup>10</sup> The efforts at the national policy spanned over twenty years. A review of the National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons provides a good understanding of the state of IDPs in the country as well as government efforts in addressing the crisis.

### 5.1.1 Review of The National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria

A draft of National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons was signed by the former president of Nigeria, Dr Goodluck Ebele Jonathan in July 2012. The president attests that the recommendations submitted by the Technical Working Group constituted by the National Executive Council “were geared towards saving lives, preventing wanton destruction of property, engendering national unity, promoting human and social-economic development, as well as protecting the human rights of all.”<sup>11</sup> Since 2013, the draft policy underwent several reviews and was eventually adopted in 2021 by the Federal Executive Council and launched in

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<sup>9</sup> Ray Cavanaugh, “Catholicism in Nigeria: The Church Stays Strong While facing Terrorism and Persecution,” in *Catholic World Report* (October 7, 2020). (The figures given here are still conservative, yet it towers above the total figure given for displaced persons in Nigeria by UNHCR. It is a concern that an appropriate figure cannot be provided for IDPs in the country.)

<sup>10</sup> See The Forward to the Draft National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Nigeria released by the Federal Republic of Nigeria, July 2013, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> National Policy on IDPs, 6.

March 2022. The policy has six chapters and addresses the causes of displacement and the consequences it has both on the displaced and the nation. It provides guiding principles on how IDPs should be treated as well as the obligation of the government towards them. Generation and management of funds in addressing the crisis, as well as the modus operandi of non-state actors and voluntary agencies in their dealings with IDPs are all addressed by the policy.

The National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria (NPIDPN subsequently) identifies the following forms of displacement: Conflict-Induced Displacement, Development-Induced Displacement, Disaster-Induced Displacement, Forced Displacement and Forced Eviction. Though distinct from each other in specific definition and possibly having various implications in terms of management, legal framework and rights, forced displacement simply covers the others. Forced displacement is defined as the involuntary movements of people due to conflicts, natural disasters, chemical or nuclear disasters, famine, or development projects.<sup>12</sup> NPIDPN identifies the following as causes of displacement: violent conflicts with ethnic, religious, and political undertones; natural disasters like flood, erosion, oil spillage, and development projects in the Niger-Delta region. The situation is worsened by extreme poverty, lack of access to socio-economic resources and balanced development and a high unemployment rate among the younger generations who make up the larger population of the country.<sup>13</sup> The document admits that too much emphasis has been placed on displacement caused by natural disasters. “It has been noted, however, that undue emphasis on disaster-induced displacement led to government prioritising disaster risk reduction and narrowing its focus to responding to disaster-induced displacement. This approach has largely ignored non-disaster-induced internal displacement and lack of strategic framework to address the plight of such displaced populations and to provide durable solutions to all types of displacement.”<sup>14</sup> This is highly regrettable since most causes of internal displacements today are conflict-oriented and man-made. The document equally affirms the non-existence or weak existence of the process of enabling IDPs make an informed and voluntary decision as to whether to return to their home communities, remain where they are, or settle elsewhere in the country. This heightens the plights of IDPs and remains central to any policy thrust on internal displacement.

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<sup>12</sup> National Policy on IDPs, 15. <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5a7ae2324.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> National Policy on IDPs, 11.

<sup>14</sup> National Policy on IDPs, 11.

Any process that does not make IDPs actors in their own condition is fundamentally and morally flawed.

The following are identified as impacts of displacement:

1. Loss of houses and property and lack of access to necessities of life such as food, water, and shelter. “Most IDPs in Nigeria flee to neighbouring communities that are safe, usually taking refuge in temporary shelters such as schools, police stations, military barracks, public buildings and places of worship among others; having been deprived of their homes and sometimes their lands and livelihoods”.<sup>15</sup>
2. Barriers to accessing healthcare services, education, employment, economic activities, and information for participation in decision making affecting their lives. “With some IDPs camped in school buildings, education is usually disrupted for both local host communities and displaced children.”<sup>16</sup>
3. Insecurity and Exploitation. “IDPs in Nigeria face insecurity and all forms of exploitation and abuse, including rape, camping in congested shelters, isolated, insecure or inhospitable areas.”<sup>17</sup>
4. Disruption of family bond and lack of care for the most vulnerable. “IDPs are also largely separated from their families, especially unaccompanied children and teenagers, the elderly and sick, persons with disabilities and pregnant women, whose special needs and privacy are not attended to, due to fragmented and uncoordinated humanitarian response to the needs of IDPs.”<sup>18</sup>
5. Lack of Access to Justice. “IDPs in Nigeria also face lack of access to justice, whether in relation to cases of human rights violations such as discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities, sexual violence, and deprivation of means of livelihood.”<sup>19</sup>
6. Lack of durable solutions especially for those with special needs. Even when the situation of most IDPs improves, potentially durable solutions have remained out of the reach of specific groups with special needs or vulnerabilities like the elderly or sick

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<sup>15</sup> National Policy on IDPs, 11.

<sup>16</sup> National Policy on IDPs, 12.

<sup>17</sup> National Policy on IDPs, 12.

<sup>18</sup> National Policy on IDPs, 12.

<sup>19</sup> National Policy on IDPs, 12.



people, widows, members of minorities facing discrimination, marginalisation and exclusion or whose livelihoods depend on a particular attachment to their areas of origin or settlement. “For such groups, strategies or incentives that had encouraged others to move towards a durable solution may not have been effective or accessible, and the tailored support they needed to rebuild their lives was not available.”<sup>20</sup>

7. Burden and disruption of life in host communities. Overcrowding of internally displaced persons and overstretching of social basic amenities like water and social services have been identified as putting great burdens and disrupting life in host communities. Cutting down of trees for various uses to sustain the lives of IDPs poses the danger of environmental degradation in the long run. In cases where the host community is urban, several IDPs turn into migrants, deciding to settle and re-integrate into urban life. The Policy affirms that “Sometimes, as internally displaced persons over-burden existing community services, resources and job or economic livelihood opportunities, tension arises between the two populations, making effective local integration difficult. Cost of living in host communities increases, especially cost of food, housing, healthcare, and education.”<sup>21</sup>

Adopting the human rights-based approach and its principles, the policy identifies the need for protection, reintegration, and resettlement of IDPs. It addresses all causes of internal displacement, all groups affected, all the needs of the displaced, all phases of intervention at all levels and arms of government, and all affected areas. It identifies the rights of IDPs and the responsibility of the Nigerian government towards this group of citizens of the country.<sup>22</sup> The policy has as its goal the strengthening of institutional mechanisms and a framework for the realisation of the rights, dignity and wellbeing of vulnerable populations through the prevention of the root causes, mitigation of the impact and achievement of durable solutions to internal displacement in Nigeria.<sup>23</sup> The policy’s general guiding principles include, respect for sovereignty, gender equality, empowerment, participation and accountability. For humanitarian principles, it has principles of humanity, and humanitarian imperative, neutrality, impartiality and non-discrimination, independence and protection from harm and abuse.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> National Policy on IDPs, 12.

<sup>21</sup> National Policy on IDPs, 12.

<sup>22</sup> National Policy on IDPs, 19-20.

<sup>23</sup> National Policy on IDPs, 20.

<sup>24</sup> National Policy on IDPs, 21-24. These principles are adopted from the United Nations policy on IDPs and the Campala Convention resolution. They serve as international guidelines for formal intervention in the concerns of IDPs.

The policy affirms the rights and obligations of IDPs ranging from general constitutional rights of all citizens to rights of displaced children and women, those with disabilities, those living with HIV, and the elderly.<sup>25</sup> IDPs for their part hand are tasked to be law-abiding, take responsibility for individual and group crimes during displacement and after. They are obliged to respect the culture and norms of host communities and abide by rules and regulations in collective settlements.<sup>26</sup>

It is commendable that at last there is a national policy on Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria. The policy is rich in content and is highly informed by the United Nations policy on Internally Displaced Persons, the African Union Convention of 2009, and the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Ugandan Convention has been mostly domesticated by the National Policy. However, the policy can be critiqued on a few grounds:

1. Lack of sufficient consultation with IDPs. Although the policy claims to have been informed by wide consultation with necessary agencies and the public, its content does not reveal enough of this consultation with the IDPs themselves. This informs why it has recommendations based on its goals that are not backed up with practical solutions and actions. Here we have a policy affirming the rights of IDPs and the responsibility of the IDPs themselves, yet many IDPs hardly know what those rights are, much less talk of claiming them. Neither do they have adequate orientation on their responsibilities. There is a yawning gap between the true needs and expectations of IDPs and the provisions of the policy. What most IDPs need is justice and the guarantee of security to return to their homes with the possibility of rebuilding their lives. The policy commits to addressing the root causes of displacement with the goal of providing a lasting solution, but how this shall be achieved is not stated. A proper consultation with the victims of displacement would have addressed this lacuna.
2. The policy is not backed up with legal authority. For its legal framework, the policy claims to be predicated and inspired by Nigerian human rights and humanitarian law obligations pursuant to the Nigerian Constitution, status and relevant sub-regional and international treaties which Nigeria has ratified.<sup>27</sup> Based on that, the policy states that

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<sup>25</sup> National Policy on IDPs, 25-37. This constitutes the third chapter in the Policy. It is great that the specifically vulnerable are given needed treatment here as their specific needs are considered. The right to self-determination including IDPs' right to voluntarily return to original homes, integrate locally or relocate is covered by the policy as well.

<sup>26</sup> National Policy on IDPs, 38.

<sup>27</sup> National Policy on IDPs, 59.

the Nigerian government shall among other things “amend the existing laws of relevant national institutions to accommodate IDPs or enact a separate domestic law on the protection and assistance of IDPs; and liaise with local and state governments to enact relevant laws on the protection and assistance of IDPs having regard to respective legislative competences under the Nigerian Constitution.”<sup>28</sup> Yet to this day, no legal enforcement of the policy thrust has been recorded. Instead, the situation seems to be getting worse as many IDPs are left without care and protection and left to fend for themselves, while others fall victims of exploitation by different government agencies and some fraudulent Non-Government Organisations, none of which has been brought to justice. Bagoni Alhaji Bukar raises this concern of legal and policy challenges in the protection and assistance of IDPs in Nigeria. He observes that Nigeria at present, ... has no legislation that deals explicitly with IDPs, and no organisation equipped to handle IDPs’ registration and other related matters.<sup>29</sup> The draft policy may be rich in content and its principles commendable, but as Bukar observes, the Policy has no legal status and is therefore incapable of enforcement either by the government or the delegated actors.

3. Lack of accountability and monitoring. Apart from lacking legal backing, there is no body or organisation responsible for monitoring and implementation by the National Commission for Refugees (NCFR). Proper accountability by the commission and other agencies and Non-government Organisations involved with IDPs is therefore lacking. As Bukar observes, a national trust fund may have been established to generate funds complemented by various humanitarian agencies, but the problem of lack of accountability cripples the whole initiative.<sup>30</sup>
4. Lack of proper coordination. NCFR seems overwhelmed despite the partnership the body receives from other agencies like National Disaster management, National Human Rights Organisation and National Civil Rights Society. This remains so because there is hardly a proper coordination of the activities of these groups in the partnership. This lack of coordination compounds the problem of accountability

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<sup>28</sup> National Policy on IDPs, 59. (Section 12 of the 1999 Nigerian constitution requires ratified international treaties to be incorporated as part of Nigeria’s domestic laws before it can be enforced or applied in domestic courts.)

<sup>29</sup> See Bagoni Alhaji Bukar, “Nigeria needs to Take Responsibility for its IDPs” in *General Articles*, 44-45. <https://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/young-and-out-of-place/bukar.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> Bagoni Alhaji Bukar, “Nigeria needs to Take Responsibility for its IDPs” (Accountability remains a huge concern in Nigeria and it is playing a huge role in the management of the IDP concerns in the country.)

and efficiency as the different bodies could be mere duplications and redundant yet are feeding on the already insufficient finances of the country. Bukar maintains that a proper coordination can only be achieved with the establishment of a proper legal framework and a clear-cut policy on the process of this partnership.<sup>31</sup>

5. Lack of progressive updates on data and records. It is alarming that despite the urgency of the problem it took over twenty years for the government to adopt and inaugurate a policy. A process that began in 2001 was only concluded in 2022. While the document claims necessary reviews truncated the process at various times, there has been no substantial changes in content between the initial drafts and the final draft of the policy. It is incredulous that the 2013 statistics on displacement are what is still retained in the 2022 draft of the policy that has now been adopted! It is clear from the policy that no proper record has been kept on IDPs in the country. Muhammed Tawfiq Ladan observes that “existing figures on the number of affected populations are contradictory and pose a challenge for assessing the extent and impact of internal displacement on host communities.”<sup>32</sup> Yet at each step of the way, new committees were continuously set up and money voted into the process. While these continued, the situation continued to worsen and escalate as some persons profit from the corrupt system.

The critique reveals the bottlenecks in the bureaucratic processes in the country which leave a lot to be desired. The social and political systems of relations between the political leaders and those they govern are fraught with many restrictions, opportunities, and incentives that encourage decisions against the common good but encourage individual enrichment and self-centred pursuits. It is this sort of system that theologians of the critical realist school identify as sinful structures. In dealing with the challenges of IDPs in the country, it is imperative to examine these sinful structures against the intervention of the church in tackling same issues of IDPs.

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<sup>31</sup> Bagoni Alhaji Bukar, “Nigeria needs to Take Responsibility for its IDPs.” (Agencies are easily duplicated in Nigeria without proper clear-cut legal guidance on partnership to attain same objective. This is sadly playing out on the IDPS menace.)

<sup>32</sup> Muhammed Tawfiq Ladan, “National Response to the Rising Trend of Internal Displacement in Nigeria: Key Issues, Institutional Framework, Gaps and Challenges” (A paper presentation at Civil Society Consultation on Draft national IDP Policy and Domestication of Kampala Convention in Nigeria, held in Abuja, May 30 - June 1, 2022.) 7.

## 5.2 The Nigerian Church and The Challenges of Internally Displaced Persons

The Catholic Bishop Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) has been a strong advocate that continues to shape the moral, political, and social life of the country. We seek to review her efforts in combating the challenge of IDPs in Nigeria.

CBCN has responded to the challenge of IDPs in two basic ways: by denouncing the situation and calling for prayers and dialogue to resolve conflicts in her communiques, and by efforts to provide succour to the victims. It is first mentioned in the March 2014 Communique of the plenary session of CBCN where the bishops express the concern that: “many people across the country, but especially in the North Eastern part of the country have been forced out of their ancestral homes and are rendered to the status of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).<sup>33</sup> Although the issue is linked with the general insecurity in the country, it is distinctly treated as a threat to the dignity of the victims. The bishops see further violation of the victims by the effect the displacement has on the family”<sup>34</sup> They call on the government to collaborate with religious leaders to hasten the process of rehabilitating the IDPs so they can go back to their homes and normal lives.<sup>35</sup>

The Church in Nigeria has continued to reach out in charity to IDPs in the country. This is done mostly through the services of Caritas and Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC). These services cut across provision of temporary shelter, food, clothing, and other necessary material needs to the victims, health care services and pastoral needs to the camps of IDPs. The mode of operation varies from diocese to diocese. In some dioceses, the displaced are taken in and cared for by well-meaning Christian families. The diocese collectively reaches out to those families to support the IDPs so accommodated. Others make their facilities like halls and schools available as temporary shelters while church members volunteer to offer needed services in the camps. Some dioceses have gone the extra mile to build schools close to IDP camps and villages destroyed by conflicts to provide education for the victims. This is evidenced in Makurdi diocese that plays host to the largest number of IDPs in the Benue,

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<sup>33</sup> “The Lord Comforts His People” in *Our Concern for Nigeria: Catholic Bishops Speak* eds. Chris Anyanwu and Otumba Jide Fadugba-Pinheiro (Abuja-Nigeria: Directorate of Social Communications, Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, 2015) 335.

<sup>34</sup> “Good Families Make Good Nations” in *Our Concern for Nigeria*, 241.

<sup>35</sup> “Nigeria: Citizenship Rights and Responsibility” CBCN Communique, March 2019 (Courtesy of the Communication Department, Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria) The call is equally mentioned in the September 2018 communique.

Nasarawa and Abuja axis. In Yola diocese, befitting accommodations have been built to accommodate the IDPs who have no hope of returning to their invaded settlements. Today, that accommodation is a little village of its own with both a church and a mosque serving the religious needs of the occupants. Apart from these individual efforts, there have been occasions when aid has been collected from all the dioceses in Nigeria to assist the dioceses that have been most affected.

As commendable as the response of the church may be, we must agree with Orobator that the Church's advocacy for migrants does not end with charity.<sup>36</sup> Charity only becomes meaningful when backed up with prophetic actions that address social and political concerns with a view to eliciting conversion. We would like to evaluate the advocacy of the church on the IDPs concerns in that regard.

1. Nonexistence of Pastoral letter on IDPs. It is strange that CBCN has not issued any pastoral letter on the IDPs' issue that would provide a guide on her thoughts and plans on addressing the challenge. This may be responsible for why the church has no centrally organised programme for the huge humanitarian concern.
2. Nonexistence of Organised Social Actions. The church has also failed to carry out any organized social action to combat the challenge of IDPs. As observed by George Ehusani, one-time Secretary General of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria, "... providing succour for the under-privileged and victims of injustice is the realization of only one aspect of the social doctrine of the church. When it comes to challenging the evil status-quo, the social teaching of the church does not seem to have 'taken flesh' in the Nigerian context."<sup>37</sup>
3. Lack of Adequate Education on Catholic Social Teaching among the Faithful. Ehusani contends that many Catholics are hardly aware of the powerful pronouncements of the church on issues of justice and human development. He suggests that this is "perhaps because the public statements of the hierarchy have remained largely on the level of pious exhortations, passionate appeals, and benign denunciations but lacking any practical gestures of solidarity with the oppressed and distraught with the oppressor."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> See Agbonkhanmeghe E. Orobator, "Key Ethical Issues in the Practices of Policies of Refugee- serving NGOs and Churches" in, *Refugee Rights: Ethics, Advocacy, and Africa*, 230.

<sup>37</sup> George Ehusani, *A Prophetic Church* (Ede: Provincial Pastoral Institute Publication, 1996), 100-101. Ehusani's observation may be overtly overstated, but it has basic facts that needs to be considered.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. Ehusani, made this observation in 1996 while reflecting on the prophetic role of the church in Nigeria but his observation still holds sway to this day.

This huge lacuna is a big setback to whatever efforts the church is making towards the IDPs' issue.

4. Not much attention to the role of sinful social structures in the IDPs' Crisis. The plight of IDPs raises the question of our shared humanity and solidarity as well as common good, which form the root/basis for social/structural sin. It also calls to task the church's teaching on the concern for vulnerable people. The fundamental causes of internal displacement are man-made structures. As such, an appropriate theological response to the issues of Internally Displaced Persons, necessarily, must involve the theme of social/structural sin. The church's intervention in the IDPs' regime has not paid much attention to this. The church in Nigeria needs to take practical steps in addressing the sinful structures that are affecting the issues of IDPs in the country. If its advocacy for the IDPs is to make the desired impact.

From our critique, the church needs to do much more in addressing the IDPs' concerns. Apart from the need for CBCN to come out with a well-defined pastoral letter and pastoral plan on the issue, it needs to address fundamental sinful structures affecting or fuelling the crisis. We examine the church's role in that regard in the next section.

### 5.3 The Church, Sinful Social Structures, and the Challenges of Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria

As observed above, different sinful structures affect the challenges of displacement in Nigeria. The majority of IDPs in Nigeria are victims of man-made structures that define the state of the nation. Contemporary Nigerian society presents a picture of the 'Degenerate City' painted by the prophet Isaiah, which stands in dire need of justice, redemption, and cleansing (Isaiah 1:21-31). It is a nation where princes and the nobles have become rebels and companions of thieves; a nation where everyone loves a bribe and runs after ill-gotten wealth; where the orphans, widows and the vulnerable are neither defended nor advocated for (Cf Isaiah 1:23). CBCN acknowledges this unfortunate state of the nation when it observes that in Nigeria "Public institutions and essential social services, like education, health care, employment, housing, and transportation, have continued to deteriorate. The struggle for survival has led to near breakdown of ethical fabric of the society; of which corruption, immoral behaviour, violent crimes, and fear of ethnic and religious domination are only symptoms."<sup>39</sup> Those who perpetuate the acts of conflict that displace people and the poor treatment IDPs suffer are

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<sup>39</sup> "Authentic Religion Saves a Nation" in *Our Concern for Nigeria: Catholic Bishops Speak*, 102.

propelled by the situation CBCN has described above. The elements that define the situation constitute social sinful structures that need to be addressed in dealing with the IDPs' menace in the country.

In dealing with sinful social structures the church ought to adopt the objective (*ad intra*) and subjective (*ad extra*) approach recommended by Vatican II. *Ad intra* refers to the Church's own inner renewal within the contexts of faith, doctrine, and God's revealed truth, dealing with the Church in itself, but with the aim of helping it better to respond to its mission in the world. *Ad extra* refers to the Church's relationship with the world: the Church as it faces the world of today.<sup>40</sup> *Ad intra* calls on the church to constantly examine her teachings and operations in line with divine truth while *ad extra* refers to her responsibility to address the world with her objective truth.

The following sinful social structures have been identified with the IDPs' Crisis: corruption; an unproductive educational system; religious fundamentalism and bigotry; the polarization of the country on ethnic and tribal lines; a discriminatory patriarchal leadership structure. The elements identified are not exhaustive but stand out as factors covertly or overtly responsible for the challenges of displacement in the county. They are examined in detail both *ad extra* and *ad intra* as we examine the church's influence on the social and political structures behind the challenge, and the existence of sinful structures within its operations that may be fuelling the IDPs' crisis.

### 5.2.1 The Sinful Structure of Corruption

Corruption is a complex term to define. It embraces a structure of impunity where opportunists take advantage of a deficient system to enrich themselves at the expense of the common good. Corruption involves unaccountability on the part of leaders, social injustice, and exploitation of the poor and underprivileged. Wherever corruption thrives, labour is unrewarded. Instead, oppression and smart practices become the order of the day and bribery and nepotism are the propellers to ill-gotten wealth. Corruption is worse when it assumes a grand nature and becomes embedded in the political and social life of the society. Florence Anaedozie, in an article published in *the European Scientific Journal*, defines grand corruption as "the acts of the political elite by which they exploit their powers to make economic policies... this occurs when a corrupt political elite changes either the national policies or the implementation of

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<sup>40</sup> See Jeremy Hausotter, "The Hermeneutics of Ad Intra and Ad Extra" 2021 in Vatican Articles. <https://www.lenouvelesprit.com/vatican-ii-articles/ad-intra-ad-extra>.



national policies to serve its own interests at some cost to the populace. It involves high ranking government officials cashing in on the dysfunctional institutions to steal public funds.”<sup>41</sup> Quoting former President, Olusengu Obasanjo’s letter to the then, President, Goodluck Jonathan, Anaedozie makes clear how endemic corruption and its devastating effects have become in Nigeria. In his letter, Obasanjo admits that “Corruption has reached the level of impunity. It is also necessary to be mindful that corruption and injustice breed poverty, unemployment, conflict, violence and, wittingly or unwittingly, create terrorists.”<sup>42</sup> This is how deadly corruption has become in the nation. It is largely responsible for the many ills that have become the causes of displacements in Nigeria. Corruption and financial recklessness have assumed an endemic status in the country. Public office holders loot funds meant for public good, rendering most of the populace perpetually in poverty. As the gap between the rich and the poor stretches from one pole to another, agitation and struggles lead to frustration and conflicts which eventually produce displacement and death. With impoverished and dilapidated infrastructures, the urban centres become very attractive. Urbanisation leads to the migration of so many who end up being homeless and living in very deplorable conditions that expose them to all hazards. It has become so bad that even palliatives and provisions meant for the victims of displacement and other vulnerable members of the society are stolen by government personnel and sold to the public! It has so far defied all attempts to combat it as most of those who perpetuate these acts use this same ill-gotten wealth and association to evade justice. Corruption is indeed a sinful structure that has blinded people and skewed their consciences. To a great extent, it is responsible for poverty, high rate of criminal activities, restiveness as well as terrorism. If these are the causes of displacement, then it is obvious that the church must pay a greater attention to the issue of corruption in her advocacy for IDPs in the country. We examine the church’s intervention in the corruption malaise *ad extra* and *ad intra*.

*Ad extra*: On the eve of the return of the Nigerian nation to civil rule after over fifteen years of oppressive military regime, the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) identified corruption as a major ill in the country and dedicated a whole plenary session to it.<sup>43</sup> In the communique issued after the plenary, CBCN admits its pain that corruption has eaten deep into

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<sup>41</sup> Florence Anaedozie “Is Grand Corruption the Cancer of Nigeria? A Critical Discussion in the Light of an Exchange of Presidential Letters,” In *European Scientific Journal*, (2016 edition vol. 12, No 5), 11-34 at 14.

<sup>42</sup> Florence Anaedozie “Is Grand Corruption the Cancer of Nigeria? A Critical Discussion in the Light of an Exchange of Presidential Letters,” 12.

<sup>43</sup> “Corruption in Nigeria: Implications for Nation Building” in *Our Concern for Nigeria*, 162- 166.

the fabric of the Nigerian society. She laments that corruption has not only become pervasive but has been institutionalised to the extent that it almost passes for official policy in both the public and private life of the citizenry.<sup>44</sup> The following are identified as causes of corruption: cultural expectations of people; socio-economic dimension where wealth is extolled above moral values; poverty and lack of access to public goods and benefits; absence of social security and reliable infrastructures and utilities.<sup>45</sup> CBCN admits that corruption has done incalculable damage to Nigeria and her citizens. It has bred gross inefficiency of public institutions and eroded people's confidence in those institutions. It has led to diminished productivity and left the economy sterile and severely damaged. The poor economy has created unemployment in leaps and bounds and an acute degree of poverty in Nigeria. Corruption has resulted in unprecedented lowering of moral and ethical standard to the extent that many, especially the young can hardly discriminate between right and wrong.<sup>46</sup> Citing the scripture, (Exodus 23:8; Luke:13,14), *Gaudium et Spes*, no 75, and *Ecclesia in Africa*, no 110, the bishops affirms that corruption is an affront to the dignity of the human person, an assault on the human conscience and a negation of the Christian vocation to build here on earth a kingdom of justice, love and peace.<sup>47</sup>

To address the menace of corruption, CBCN recommends, a reembarment on a programme of rebuilding individual and collective consciences through public enlightenment driven by religious and moral education in religious institutions and schools; strengthening of the enforcement of laws against corruption; adequate welfare of workers, and an honest system of proper rewarding of accountability and probity for workers across the nation.

*Ad intra*: CBCN admits that the magnitude of corruption in Nigeria requires divine intervention to conquer it and calls for prayer to eradicate it.<sup>48</sup> The call for prayers is commendable. However, the prayers will make more meaning if the church pays attention to the elements of corruption within her institution. CBCN admits that the church and other religious organisations are themselves not completely free of corruption but fails to name how and to what extent this involvement is.<sup>49</sup> Unaccountability and misappropriation of funds have been

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<sup>44</sup> "Corruption in Nigeria: Implications for Nation Building" in *Our Concern for Nigeria*, 162

<sup>45</sup> "Corruption in Nigeria: Implications for Nation Building" in *Our Concern for Nigeria*, 163.

<sup>46</sup> "Corruption in Nigeria: Implications for Nation Building" in *Our Concern for Nigeria*, 163.

<sup>47</sup> "Corruption in Nigeria: Implications for Nation Building" in *Our Concern for Nigeria*, 164.

<sup>48</sup> "Corruption in Nigeria: Implications for Nation Building" in *Our Concern for Nigeria*, 166. (A Prayer Against Bribery and Corruption was composed in 1998 by CBCN, which is said in churches across the country.)

<sup>49</sup> "Corruption in Nigeria: Implications for Nation Building" in *Our Concern for Nigeria*, 164.

identified in church institutions. Inadvertently, it has promoted the same culture of impunity and injustice identified in public institutions. This happens with its system of operation that has centralized so much power and control of funds in the hierarchy. The clergy largely control church funds, and many have not been above board in accounting for these resources. Corruption happens when church institutions pay their workers poorly and provide very poor working conditions. Corruption is aided and abetted when church leaders entertain the looters of public funds openly to profit from their ill-gotten wealth. The attitude of openly associating with the wealthy without calling their attention to their ill-gotten wealth sends wrong signals. Jesus associated with all classes of people but constantly pricked their consciences and called them to conversion. The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), and Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10), Levi (Luke 5:27-29), and Simon, (Luke 7:36-50), (all tax collectors considered as public sinners) serve as good examples. Corrupt practices are aided also when the church uses her influence to assist looters of public funds and people engaged in other corrupt practices to escape justice. The former Director General of The National Agency for Food and Drug Administration Control (NAFDAC), the late Dora Nkem Akunyili, narrated an experience at an address to the students, priests, and professors in Catholic Institute of West Africa, Nigeria (CIWA). She expressed the frustration faithful Catholics face when trying to dispense their duties to the public. This happens when they seek to bring some influential persons who may be benefactors to the church to justice. At such times, she claimed that highly placed members of the hierarchy begin to intervene on their behalf. She appealed to the Church's hierarchy to look at the larger picture and stop making the job of those faithful Catholics difficult.

I Corinthians 5:6-7 teaches that, just as a little yeast leavens a whole batch of dough, so does every individual sin have social dimension. Any church community's tolerance of unchristian attitudes is a threat to everyone. The little acts of corruption we entertain and tolerate and even sometimes promote, eventually assist in establishing unchristian structures of sin that hurts everyone eventually. Unfair monetary demand on the faithful sometimes as prerequisites for receiving sacraments is almost at the level of Simony in some places.<sup>50</sup> The overbearing taxes have driven many away from the church. It has corrupted the consciences of many with wrong

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<sup>50</sup> The recent experience of Chimamanda Adichie, the multiple award-winning Writer is just one too many. Adichie had gone over to bury her uncle and was appalled at the demands to pay some purported debt owed the local church by the uncle before the funeral could take place. The local church allegedly demanded financial commitments from her towards some projects in the church as a condition for the funeral.

notions of the church as an instrument of exploitation rather than of salvation. It is becoming a widespread practice to consider the rating and categorization of churches according to their financial strength. The growth of churches is hardly based on the sacramental or spiritual status of members but on physical development and financial contributions. This places huge burdens on the poor and further marginalises them. These unprivileged members (who form the bulk of the church) either lose self-esteem because they cannot cope and are hardly counted in the scheme of things, or simply become aggressive towards the church. A church organisation that is only socially administrative in character but lacks prayer and charity has lost its true character. Unfortunately, many churches are becoming anything but prayer assemblies in Nigeria. All emphasis is on the generation of money as people are levied and taxed continuously without consideration of their poor economic situation. For the voice of the church to be firm in condemnation of corruption in the country, it must urgently address the elements of corruption in its institutions.

### 5.3.2 Sinful Structure of an Unproductive Educational System

Education is key to national development and prosperity. Ironically as asserted by Bishop Hassan Kukah, “most scholars of Nigeria would agree that education, more than anything else, has accounted for the serious disparity in opportunity and endless tensions and conflicts that have come to characterise the life of the nation.”<sup>51</sup> Kukah asserts further that the dominance the South has today over the North was propelled by the acquisition of Western education. This happened because the North remained suspicious of Western education as it equated it with Christianity and feared that it would erode Muslim values. For this reason, while by the middle or late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the missionaries had begun to open the South to education, the North was still ensconced in the womb of uncertainty. The education policy of the colonial government did not spread wide enough to accommodate the desperate non-Muslim communities in the North. It is also recorded that with the modus vivendi of the colonial government to consolidate its power, it was only opened to offering education to children of emirs and those who could succeed their fathers. Such an education as Kukah observes only offered deepened inequalities and institutionalised feudalism, rather than creating independence of mind and thought.<sup>52</sup> Kukah maintains that the pre-eminent place that religion has come to play in the violence and

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<sup>51</sup> Matthew Hassan Kukah, *At the Name of Jesus* (Ibadan: St Paul Publication, 2021), 25.

<sup>52</sup> Matthew Hassan Kukah, 25. Kukah observes that some of the colonial administrators were outright racists and preferred inferior education for Africans. They were unhappy with missionaries and saw their incursion into the north as distraction and education system as sabotaging the project of the colonial state.

underdevelopment that now characterise life in northern Nigeria, especially, and the rest of Nigeria is a measure of the larger implication of the choice of religion over education in northern Nigeria. He laments that with truly little effort by the political and bureaucratic elite to manage our diversity, the nation has remained stuck in cesspool of animosity, generated, and fuelled by prejudice and fear. Boko Haram is the eldest son of this marriage, and its mantra – Western education is a sin – is evidence of this untreated wound.<sup>53</sup>

With great persistence and pressure from the missionary societies the colonial government eventually permitted churches to build schools in Hausa land in the northern Nigeria. As gains of missionary education became clearer, the government began a grant-in-aid system which facilitated collaboration. This collaboration and cooperation have been replaced by suspicion and conflict culminating in the takeover of schools by the Nigerian government from the missionaries in 1973, shortly after the Nigerian civil war.<sup>54</sup> This takeover has assumed three forms over the years: pragmatic form with the takeover of school administration by the government in 1973; the gradual ideological takeover from the 1980s; the moral takeover from the 1990s. From the 1980s education has been founded on strange philosophies and psychology with either the aim of maximising profit or multiplying institutions without much regard for building character and skills. Emphasis shifts to paper qualification and theoretical learnings against skill acquisition and abilities. Teachers training institutes were abolished in favour of secondary school education. Moral takeover is related to the other two as gradually our education system has been disrobed of moral values. Certificates are bought and excellence and hard work are hardly rewarded. Teachers and professors exploit the unfortunate situation to abuse their students in many ways. Many graduates from Nigerian institutions are unemployable. These graduates who are turned out in their numbers every year face the temptation to go into fraudulent and criminal activities to survive.<sup>55</sup> Many of them become easy recruits for various criminal gangs and terrorists' groups.

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<sup>53</sup> Matthew Hassan Kukah, 26.

<sup>54</sup> See Matthew Hassan Kukah, 28.

<sup>55</sup> According to an article published by Ijeoma Ukazu in *University World News*, Nigeria admits two million candidates into various universities and higher institutions of learning and graduates over 600000 every year. Most of these ends up in the labour market searching endlessly for jobs. Ukazu Observes that "Nigeria's inability to engage a large proportion of her youth meaningfully through job creation has the potential for social dislocation. See Ijeoma Ukazu, "Too many Graduates Fighting for Too Few Jobs" in *University World News*. <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20211113143735211> (Accessed 11 April 2023)

Educational institutions are established primarily for the salvation of God's people, the formation of good conscience and for the services of the common good in society.<sup>56</sup> CBCN captures it well when it declares that quality education must be wholistic for it involves the formation of the whole person in their spiritual, moral, and technical dimension. CBCN maintains that such wholistic education is the antidote for recurring and related problems of poverty, corruption, insecurity, and incompetence in the country.<sup>57</sup> Unfortunately, the desire for quality and wholistic education seems a tall dream in contemporary Nigeria. If education serves other purposes other than the pursuit of common good and integral development of persons, it is sinful. The breakdown of education in the country is a huge factor in the IDPs' crisis. The perpetrators of the violent acts that displace people and the endless tension between different ethnic groups and members of different religious practices are victims of what CBCN tags "reductionist education" which lacks the light of truth. CBCN decries the lack of ethical values in Nigeria's education system and concludes that "technical education without ethical values creates persons who promote a culture of death. The terrorists in our midst are in no doubt well educated in the techniques of making explosives."<sup>58</sup>

*Ad extra:* The Catholic church has contributed immensely to the education sector in Nigeria. As CBCN observes, "in some Nigerian towns and villages, the only place of learning is a primary or secondary school run by the Catholic church and her dedicated army of teachers drawn from her clergy, religious, lay faithful, and even men and women of other faiths. Before the ill-advised takeover of schools by the military government in the early 1970s, Catholic schools showed that Nigerian children can live in harmony despite religious and ethnic differences. Our schools were noted for the formation of intellect and conscience for competence."<sup>59</sup> Though the church has always made huge investment in education at all levels despite the unfavourable environment, it is convinced that the education of every Nigerian citizen must be a collaborative venture and has consistently called on the government to collaborate with voluntary agencies and parents. A modality of partnership in funding is highly needed. the church must be commended for its role in education and should continue to mount

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<sup>56</sup> See *Gravissimum Educationis*, nos. 2 and 4.

[https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651028\\_gravissimum-educationis\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_gravissimum-educationis_en.html)

<sup>57</sup> "Education and Nation Building" in *Our Concern for Nigeria*, 306-307.

<sup>58</sup> "Education and Nation Building," 307. (The terrorists unfortunately lack proper moral and religious education, else, they would not use their technical knowledge for the destruction of innocent lives).

<sup>59</sup> "Education and Nation Building," 308.

pressure on the government for the formulation and implementation of comprehensive policies on education in the country. This is a huge way to make her advocacy for IDPs take flesh.

*Ad intra*, it is sad to observe that the church is caught up in the mess of a poor education system in Nigeria. Efforts to keep the Christian ethos in Catholic schools come at great costs. Either the church is battling with resources maintain a standard against other agencies who would compromise on the same standard, or it yields to the temptation to compromise. It is sad to observe that many Catholic schools are taking the latter option, either out of frustration or sheer lack of will-power to withstand the pressure from the wider society. To address this, the education commission of CBCN has organised series of education summits, but hardly has the recommendations from these summits been implemented. If we are to make an authentic and fruitful contribution towards the building of a just and humane nation that can adequately address the challenges of displacement, the church must be bold to fight the ills of different malpractices and abuses in her schools. That will give it the strong moral ground to challenge such ills in the larger society.

### 5.3.3 The Sinful Structure of Ethnicism and Tribalism

Nigeria presents a perfect picture of a pluralistic society. With over 250 ethnic groups with different cultural diversities and religious adherence, and a huge population of over 200 million, it is indeed a very complex society. With her history of colonialism, her struggles at building a unified nation have not been very successful.<sup>60</sup> This is largely due to the distrust that has continued to grow between different ethnic groups and the role these ethnic sentiments play in the country's politics. The Nigerian government has worked out tentative power-sharing arrangements to help ensure that its many ethnic groups have some say in how the country's natural resource wealth is spent, yet major questions about ethnicity and how to balance the many competing interests still dog the society.<sup>61</sup> As a result of this, the rich benefits that are available to the nation from its cultural diversities are suppressed as different ethnic groups struggle to outdo one another. Discrimination and prejudices are heightened by different political groups who thrive on these ethnic sentiments for selfish motives.

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<sup>60</sup> Many scholars are of the view that Nigeria is hardly a nation state, but an assemblage of multiple ethnic nations held loosely together by the independence and republican declarations in the 1960s or by the 1914 amalgamation programme of the British. See Michael Eden, *Confused Values* (Lagos: Jeromelaiho & Associates Ltd., 1993.) 33. Cyril Imo, *Religion and the Unity of the Nigerian Nation* (Stockholm: Alquist and Niksell International, 1995,) 47.

<sup>61</sup> See *PBS News Hour* 5 April 2007. [https://www.pbs.org/newshour/arts/africa-jan-june07-ethnic\\_04-05](https://www.pbs.org/newshour/arts/africa-jan-june07-ethnic_04-05). The situation has continued to deteriorate frustrating every effort at building a true homogeneous nation.

Ethnicity is a complex term to define. Steven Fenton observes that it refers more to a social construct of descent and culture than a qualification of an ontologically tangible existence out there. As such, ethnicity cannot be understood as a theory.<sup>62</sup> At the pragmatic level, ethnicism may not be a threat. It simply affirms our unique differences which are in themselves great resources. At the level of ideology, ethnicism, like racism seeks to define people as superior or inferior depending on their physical looks or their ethnic origin or the community they identify with. When this thinking leads people to develop an attitude of discriminating against, maltreating, excluding, ridiculing others and even physically assaulting them, it is sinful. It is worse when racist and ethnocentric convictions and attitudes are webbed into societal structures and institutions. It negates the truth of our common humanity and individual dignity as beings created in the image of God. As observed by Bishop Kevin Doran, this undermines the formation of trusting interpersonal relationships and contributes instead to ignorance, fear, and suspicion. “Once we convince ourselves that certain categories of people are somehow less human than we are, it becomes easier to justify depriving them basic human rights, such as right to property, the right to education or even the right to life.”<sup>63</sup>

The Nigerian nation is bedevilled by both pragmatic and ideological ethnicism and tribalism. Almost all policies and relationships seem to be influenced, if not determined, by these two elements. This has been heightened by an unprecedented nepotism in the government of President Muhammadu Buhari. Almost all key government offices are occupied by Muslims from the Northern part of the country with complete disregard to the Federal Character thrust in the Nation’s constitution. The result has been endless marginalization of some groups and relentless agitations leading to widespread conflicts.<sup>64</sup> The civil war of 1966-1969 was engineered by this ethnic and tribal tension. Apart from being responsible for some of the conflicts leading to displacement, these elements have blinded many to the plights and pains of displaced persons. In fact, many do not care and may even rejoice at the pain of the unfortunate victims of displacement, if those victims belong to a perceived ethnic group they despise and/or consider as enemies. Ethnicism and tribalism are indeed sinful structures

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<sup>62</sup> Steven Fenton, *Ethnicity* 2nd edition. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 1-6.

<sup>63</sup> Kevin Doran, “Rejecting Racism: Welcome, Protect, Promote and Integrate” in *Intercom: A Catholic Pastoral and Liturgical Resource*, September 2019, 8-9.

<sup>64</sup> Since 1960 when Nigeria became an independent nation, the Hausa Fulani who are mostly Muslims have dominated leadership in the country. See *PBS News Hour* 5 April 2007. [https://www.pbs.org/newshour/arts/africa-jan-june07-ethnic\\_04-05](https://www.pbs.org/newshour/arts/africa-jan-june07-ethnic_04-05).



destroying the Nigerian nation and hugely responsible for the problem of displacement in the country.

*Ad extra*, The Church must be acknowledged as an organ of unity that brings people of all ethnic groups together under one umbrella. It has continuously urged the government to see the ethnic diversity of the country as a rich asset for mutual exchange, healthy rivalry, cooperation, and solidarity. CBCN insists that ethnicity should not be blamed as the bane of the nation's journey to nationhood, but the lack of good governance.<sup>65</sup> The church continually condemns the lopsided appointments of the government that favours groups against others especially, the Muslim Hausa Fulani.

*Ad intra*, the church in Nigeria has proved to be sensitive to the plural ethnic nature of the country. The Leadership structure of CBCN and appointments into national bodies of church organisations are done on rotational basis to give each section of the country a sense of belonging. However, it needs to watch against ethnic politics creeping into her institution. The trend is beginning to rear its ugly head in church appointments and even establishments of church institutions. The case of the diocese of Ahiara in the Eastern part of Nigeria is a reference point here. In this diocese, the priests and lay people resisted the installation of a bishop appointed by the Roman Pontiff for them. The reason was because the bishop-elect came from a different geographical location outside the diocese and province.<sup>66</sup> The church cannot afford to oil the wheel of the evils of tribalism and ethnicism in any form.

#### 5.3.4 The Sinful Structure of Hypnotic Religiosity and Bigotry

Africans are assumed to be notoriously religious, carrying religion into every facet of life and determining world views on religious lines. It is a common knowledge that for the African, religion is life and thus entwined with socio-political life of the people. While this religious character may have a lot of positivity, it could be counter-productive to true prosperity and growth. In Nigeria, this overbearing emphasis on religion has developed a culture that could be highly retrogressive as distinction is hardly made between religious consciousness and plain naivety and superstition. In *Fides et Ratio*, Pope John Paul II makes it clear that truth rides on the two wings of faith and reason and explains how defective it is to reduce reality to either of the two. The pontiff states that "Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit

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<sup>65</sup> "The Lord Comforts his People" in *Our Concern for Nigeria*, 337.

<sup>66</sup> See Lawrence Njoku's Article in *The Guardian* 25 June 2017. <https://guardian.ng/sunday-magazine/ibru-ecumenical-centre/catholic-church-ahiara-diocese-mbaise-why-crisis-lingers-despite-popes-intervention/>

risers to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth—in a word, to know himself—so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves.”<sup>67</sup> Truth is known through a combination of faith and reason. The absence of either one will diminish human ability to know themselves, the world and God.<sup>68</sup> Human reason seeks the truth, but the ultimate truth about the meaning of life cannot be found by reason alone, because the ultimate truth which reason seeks is rooted in faith.<sup>69</sup> In the West, the scale tilts in favour of reason and technology to the detriment of faith and faith-based morality. The opposite seems to be the case in Africa. In Nigeria a culture of overbearing religiosity has grown over the years that blinds many to realities and make them victims of abuse and exploitation at the hands of hoodwinks. Almost all political and social affairs are dictated by religious convictions and interpretations. This has been a contributory factor to the crisis and injustice in the country. As practiced in the country now, neither Islam nor Christianity (the two major religions) encourage people to seek for their fundamental rights. A lot of human-made situations that demand rational solutions are interpreted from spiritual perspectives. Obvious cases with natural causes are interpreted on religious grounds. In worst case scenarios, sick people would rather seek healing in religious houses than go to the hospital. There have been cases where people have died because they refused simple medical treatment because of their religious convictions. Appointments and jobs are offered based on ethnic and religious grounds and not merits. Even status and dignity are measured on religious lines. Churches and religious houses of the Christian faith, Islamic faith among others, grow in thousands on daily basis where people spend precious hours in prayers and religious activities at the expense of work and productivity and capacity development. While poverty plays a role in this unfortunate culture and practice, the biggest culprit is the misconstrued religious orientation prevalent in the country. This has given birth to all forms of bigotry, fanaticism, and fundamentalism. Politicians have caught onto this for their selfish motives, exploiting the ignorance of many to chart their course to power. CBCN acknowledges this fact when it states that “there is ... misuse and abuse of religion when people fraudulently manipulate religion for gaining undue political, social and economic advantages over others.”<sup>70</sup> Religious practices that encourage illiteracy and fundamentalism are cherished and propagated by the elite for

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<sup>67</sup> John Paul II, *Faith and Reason*, no 1. [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_14091998\\_fides-et-ratio.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091998_fides-et-ratio.html)

<sup>68</sup> John Paul II, *Faith and Reason*, no 16.

<sup>69</sup> John Paul II, *Faith and Reason*, no 42.

<sup>70</sup> “Authentic Religion Saves a Nation” in *Our Concern for Nigeria*, 103.

selfish motives. Most of the unrest and conflicts in the country today have religious undertones and are causes of displacement of persons in the country.

*Ad extra*, the church in Nigeria has been a true advocate for authentic religion, a religion that does not only recognise the right to religious freedom, but presupposes public recognition and respect for authentic religious values that meet human deepest concerns as well as capable of furnishing ethical motivation for personal and social responsibilities.<sup>71</sup> While acknowledging the positive value in the overtly religiosity of Nigerians, CBCN has not been oblivious of the fact that many fraudsters have also swooped on the ill-informed psyche of the populace to hypnotise and exploit unsuspecting victims who go to them seeking solutions to myriad of problems. It admits that “in the name of religion, a lot of evil has been perpetrated in our society. Fraud, injustice, violence, even murder have been committed behind the mask of religion.”<sup>72</sup> Several houses of prayers have been exposed in recent times as slave harbours and human trafficking centres. In some cases, people were discovered held in chains and subjected to different forms of abuse. While the people are subjected to all terrible forms of abuse, the leaders of these religious houses continue to live in great comfort and luxury. In some well-established churches and other religious houses, there may be no physical abuse, but different forms of exploitation and extortion continue under different guises of religious teaching on offerings. To address the misuse of religion in the country, CBCN insists that:

In all this, responsibility falls on every religious adherent, but in a special way on the leaders. In such situations of misuse and abuse of religion, peaceful collaboration becomes almost, if not totally, impossible. The role of government as an impartial umpire in religious matters is also crucial if religion is not to become a major problem in the society.<sup>73</sup>

*Ad intra*: There has been an increasing tendency to reduce the gospel to prosperity and financial interests. This first began to be a feature of the Pentecostal churches in the 1980s, but it is fast taking root in the main line churches in Nigeria. All forms of methods are used to raise funds as people are made to believe they get blessed by the Lord by giving. There is so much emphasis on money, such that church communities and individual members are valued by the financial contributions they make to the church. People are constantly taxed or levied. As we observed above, the burden has been so much that some have been forced to leave the church because of the constant harassment they face over levies. In some cases, people are denied the

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<sup>71</sup> “The Lord Comforts his People” in *Our Concern for Nigeria*, 336.

<sup>72</sup> “Authentic Religion Saves a Nation” in *Our Concern for Nigeria*, 102. (The bishops attribute the abuse of religion to ignorance and dishonesty of heart.

<sup>73</sup> “Authentic Religion Saves a Nation” in *Our Concern for Nigeria*, 103.

sacraments, funeral rites, and other religious and spiritual benefits because they could not meet up their financial obligations. Pope Francis condemns this unfortunate reality in *Evangelii Gaudium* and warns that “we must recognize that if part of our baptized people lacks a sense of belonging to the Church, this is also due to certain structures and the occasionally unwelcoming atmosphere of some of our parishes and communities, or to a bureaucratic way of dealing with problems, be they simple or complex, in the lives of our people. In many places an administrative approach prevails over a pastoral approach, as does a concentration on administering the sacraments apart from other forms of evangelization.”<sup>74</sup> This unfortunate development is affecting the church’s advocacy for displaced persons in many ways. It contributes to further impoverishing and disenfranchising the poor faithful. It takes away the image of the church as a home for the poor and marginalized and as an instrument of salvation for all. This does not only contribute to the problem of displacement, but also weakens the church’s advocacy role. Against this backdrop, CBCN highlights the essential characteristics of authentic religion and exhorts all its followers to rededicate themselves to the authentic principles of Catholic faith. True religion puts God first; it means concern for others who are creatures of God; it brings peace, not tension, love not hatred.<sup>75</sup>

### 5.3.5 Patriarchal Structure of leadership with Discriminatory Elements Against Women and the Young

Leadership structure in Nigeria is fraught with many misogynist elements and undue advantage to older male folks. The political and traditional system of operation and organisation has great discriminatory traits against women and the young. It does not appreciate the capabilities of women and their special needs adequately. Neither does it make enough room to enrich the society from the energy and knowledge of the younger generations. Overbearing masculinity has created a misogynist culture that is visibly operating in all works of life. The percentage of women in governance in the country is scandalously low. According to a report, published in Vanguard Newspaper in June, 2022, the national average of women’s political participation in Nigeria remain at 6.7 percent in elective and appointive positions, which is far below the global average of 22.5 per cent, Africa regional average of 23.4 percent and West African Sub

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<sup>74</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelium Gaudium* no 63. (The pope acknowledges that the Catholic faith is being challenged by both the proliferation of new religious movements and secularisation with many exploiting the weakness of people living in poverty and in the margin of society.)

<sup>75</sup> “Authentic Religion Saves a Nation” in *Our Concern for Nigeria*, 103.

Regional Average of 15 percent.<sup>76</sup> The report further states that, Nigeria, currently, ranks 181 of 193 countries on the Gender Equality Index for reasons such as poor resource allocation in the economic and social sectors, frequent conflicts, forced displacements and inadequate inclusion of women and girls' perspectives in policy-making decisions. Other reasons include low representation of women in governance and politics, and inadequate legal framework and limited capacity to support women's empowerment and equality efforts.<sup>77</sup> With such an unfortunate trend, the huge resources and potential of women who are acknowledged to be of a higher population in the country remain unutilized even when it is obvious the male counterparts have failed to provide adequate leadership for the country.

Peculiar needs of women have not been taken into cognisance enough in the policies of the nation. Culturally, childbearing is considered a distinguished capability for women in Nigeria. Rightly too, the church teaches procreation as a goal of marriage. But childbearing alone does not define the capability and uniqueness of women. A culture that reduces women's dignity to childbearing is indeed a sinful one. It limits women's potential and encourages discrimination against the female gender. Besides, nature has provided suitable virile age for women. As such, women need to be given opportunity to develop themselves and be equipped and independent enough in their youthful age so they can fulfil the goal of marriage without losing their dignity and worth. In Nigeria today, child marriage is still an issue and efforts to legislate against it have been heavily resisted by a male-dominated parliament.

Equally of great concern is the lack of adequate attention to the youth who form the larger population of Nigeria and constitute a large part of the country's wealth and potentials. CBCN observes that "we can expect to reap dividends from their talents and future if only we invest in them."<sup>78</sup> The lack of proper investment in the youth is a huge factor in the displacement crisis. With no proper formation and lack of meaningful and gainful employment, many of these young people become easy prey for unscrupulous politicians who use them to cause different unrest in the country. With such enormous potential not properly utilised, the nation loses a great deal and continues to grow in poverty amidst great resources. CBCN observes that without readdressing the damage already done in this sector, much of the efforts being made

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<sup>76</sup> See report in the *Vanguard News Paper*, 6 June 2022. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/06/only-6-women-active-in-nigerian-politics-report/>

<sup>77</sup> <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/06/only-6-women-active-in-nigerian-politics-report/> (The report acknowledged that the patriarchal dominance inherent from the colonial era is responsible for the current trend.)

<sup>78</sup> "The Word of God: A Lamp to my Feet and Light for my Path" (CBCN Communique, March 6, 2020, Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria Resource Centre, Durumi, Abuja) no 6.

today to sanitise society will be a waste. It calls on government and relevant authorities and stakeholders to invest more resources in the education sector of where the youth are formed and empowered for the future.<sup>79</sup>

*Ad extra:* The church in Nigeria deserves a lot of commendation for girl-child education and youth formation but there is still great room for improvement. Apart from offering education to a large population of young people, it has continued to condemn the gross lack of job opportunities, equity, gender balance between male and female and other ills in the country.<sup>80</sup> The general traditional orientation that makes women subservient to their male counterparts still rules our society. This needs to change in the kind of education and orientation given to the girl-child and their male counterpart. Social welfare policies and practices in the country are heavily discriminatory against women and encourage irresponsibility on the part the male folks as well as putting the lives of numerous children in jeopardy. Leadership in all spheres still revolves around the elderly to a great disadvantage of the young ones.

*Ad intra:* The church in Nigeria needs to pay more attention to discriminatory trends in her institutions. This trend manifests itself where the laity councils and pastoral councils are still dominated by men and in some cases the elderly male members. The structures of our churches are still heavily patterned on the traditional chieftdom where everything begins and ends with the chief or king. Administration and general organisation of the church are heavily clerically centred, giving the clergy so much power and overwhelming responsibilities, most of which they can hardly handle properly. As such the institutions weaken with time and produce negative and abusive results.

Where young people are not given enough participation in leadership, a lot is at stake: a sense of irresponsibility, activism and a loss of vitality and innovation in the system. This leads to decay and eventually to unrest that create the displacement of people.

## 5.4 Concluding Remarks

IDPs are among the most vulnerable people in Nigeria today. Their concerns cannot be addressed sufficiently with policy documents that lack any legal backing, charity, and mere condemnation. For both government and church interventions to be effective, both must stand up against all sinful structures that are responsible for their plight and do all within their reach

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<sup>79</sup> “The Word of God: A Lamp to my Feet and Light for my Path” no 6.

<sup>80</sup> “Human Fraternity: Path to building Sustainable Peace in Nigeria” (CBCN Communique, March 11, 2022, Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria Resource Centre, Durumi, Abuja) no 3.

to address the ‘poverty’ of these children of God who are victims of greed and the failures of both political, cultural, and ecclesial leadership. As George Ehusani has observed above, providing succour for the under-privileged and victims of injustice is the realization of only one aspect of the social doctrine of the church. the social teaching of the church needs to ‘take flesh’ in challenging the evil status-quo in the Nigerian context.<sup>81</sup> If the church in Nigeria is to make desired impact, it must fully identify with the plight of IDPs in all ramifications. The church retains, against all odds, greater moral power than most organisations and institutions in Nigeria and it has a high percentage of adherents.<sup>82</sup> Her intervention matters a great deal in the IDPs’ crisis. With the principles of Catholic Social Teaching as its lodestar, the church needs to enmesh itself fully in the struggles of the displaced persons both *ad extra* and *ad intra*. Any action and inaction of the church that fails to provide opportunities, restrictions, and incentives to help the cause of IDPs is thus sinful. The structures that favour or make such actions possible are sinful structures. The church’s advocacy will only become fully impactful when it addresses sinful social structures behind the IDPs’ regime both by strong pastoral documents and social actions.

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<sup>81</sup> George Ehusani, *A Prophetic Church* (Ede: Provincial Pastoral Institute Publication, 1996), 100-101

<sup>82</sup> Catholic population is estimated to be 20%.

# Chapter Six: General Conclusions and Recommendations

## 6.0 Introduction

This chapter provides general conclusions on the thoughts and findings of our research. We assert the enormity of the migration and refugee crisis and the depth of the implication the crisis has for Christianity and humanity. We reaffirm the fundamental role of sinful social structures in the crisis and the need to address those structures in addressing the crisis. Based on the conclusions, the chapter makes some recommendations which we suggest are imperative in addressing the crisis. The situation of Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria has been explored in the previous chapter to establish the strong relationship between sinful structures and the migration/refugee challenge. While our recommendations are general in nature, some of them are particularly focused on the Nigerian situation. They could however be universalised as every sinful structure is sinful in all contexts. Pope Francis's four-point recommendation of *welcome, protect, promote, and integrate*<sup>1</sup> shall be our road map as we make our recommendations.

## 6.1 General Conclusions

Some fundamental conclusions are established from our research.

1. The research establishes the enormity and complex nature of modern migration/refugee concerns and their implication for the Church and humanity.
2. Migration and refugee crisis are fuelled and sustained by sinful social structures. The enormity and complex nature of modern migration and refugee regime reveal that the humanitarian crises it has generated are fuelled by some social structures which we have established are sinful.
3. The Church's rich advocacy for migrants/refugees needs to pay more attention to the role of sinful structures.
4. Social structures are sinful by the independent role they play in individual choices. Our preferred understanding of social structures is from the sociological school of Critical

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<sup>1</sup> The details of Pope Francis' twenty-point agenda and proposed global impact are available in the Document- Towards the Global Compacts on Migrants and Refugees, 2018, released by the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Vatican Dicastery for Integral Development. The Section was established by Pope Francis in 2017. <https://justiceandpeace.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/A4-ENG-Towards-the-Global-Compacts-2018-EMAIL.pdf>



Realism which presents social structures as systems of relations between people of different positions and argues that social structures when established have the capacity to become independent and become causative agents affecting people's choices through the opportunities and restrictions built into the systems of relations.

5. Pope Francis' robust intervention in the migrant/refugee crisis admits of the relevance of sinful social structures. The pontificate of pope Francis has given huge attention to the migration and refugee crisis. The pope's approach has been all-embracing, and a review of his work reveals his deep concern for fundamental social structures that are playing a pivotal role in the crisis. He proposes a four-point agenda of *welcome, protect, promote, and integrate* in dealing with the crisis. We consider his agenda a positive system of relations between people in different positions that counter the sinful social structures now fuelling and sustaining the crisis.
6. The migrant/refugee challenge is a task for all as individuals and groups.

Each of the conclusions is discussed in detail below.

### 6.1.1 Modern Migration is Enormous and Complex with Huge Moral Implications

As observed by Cardinal Sarah, migratory flows have always existed, but the current movements are distinguished by their magnitude, characterised by heavy risks and a grand design to depopulate less privileged nations.<sup>2</sup> With the West presented as Earthly Paradise, hunger, violence, and war can, and do continue to drive millions of African people and others from different poor backgrounds and war-torn zones to Europe and other safe havens. This has huge implications and raises some fundamental questions. Cardinal Sarah poses some of these questions: "But how is it acceptable for some countries to be deprived of so many of their sons and daughters? How will these nations develop if so many workers make the choice to go into exile? What are these foreign humanitarian organisations that crisscross Africa urging young men (and women) to flee while promising them better lives in Europe? Why are death, slavery, and exploitation so often the real result of the travels of the many African brothers (and sisters) towards the El Dorado of their dreams?"<sup>3</sup> Cardinal Sarah expresses similar concerns with Pope Francis in *Fratelli Tutti* where the Pope condemns populist political regimes and liberal economic systems that operate to prevent the influx of migrants at all costs and argue for the

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Cardinal Sarah, *The Day is Now Far Spent* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2019,) 243.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Cardinal Sarah, *The Day is Now Far Spent*, 243.

propriety of limiting aid to poor countries, so that they can hit rock bottom and so be forced to take austerity measures.<sup>4</sup> The unbridled capitalist economic system that rules the world now operates by a paradigm that fosters injustice and lacks moral efficiency. It advances the cause of the developed world to the detriment of developing countries.<sup>5</sup> Besides, the prejudice that claims the supremacy of the North to the rest of the world lingers on and continues to be perpetuated and sustained by international politics. The North continues to determine market dynamics and influence even political operations in other nation states. Unfortunately, a good population of the developing world still live by the inferiority complex that claims that Northern people are superior. Where people react against such domination and exploitation of their resources, they are tagged rebels and hunted by their state governments and the international community. At such moments, arms dealing is on the rise and while the dealers swell their economic fortunes, the blood of innocent people keeps flowing as millions are displaced and forced to flee from their homes and cultural ties. Yet these same economically advanced nations tag them with all sorts of names when they knock on their doors for refuge.

The deliberate and conscious economic and global politics by which modern migration is fuelled and sustained can be likened to the slave trade in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the colonisation and partition of Africa in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is a product of a global system that impoverishes and exploits less influential economic and political nations to the advantage and growth of the big economies. Millions of the victims of this obnoxious and inhuman system flee their homes to seek survival where they meet humiliations of all sorts and are at the mercies of their host countries if they survive through the hard and dangerous routes of migration. Citing the example of Libya that was cynically destroyed to pillage its oil, Cardinal Sarah poses a question as to why the Western Governments have so few projects to propose with a view to its reconstruction. On the contrary evidence abounds that the western powers are aware of the activities of the smugglers who traffic forced migrants to Europe.<sup>6</sup> The Cardinal quotes General Gomart, former French military intelligence who explained that “This invasion of Europe by migrants is programmed, controlled, and accepted... None of the migratory traffic in the Mediterranean is unknown to the French military and civil authorities.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* no 37.

<sup>5</sup> See Karl Heinz Peschke, “Debt Crisis and Debt Relief” in *Irish Theological Quarterly* Vol. 70 no. 4, 2005, 355. Peschke agrees with other scholars that the problems of international debt burden are essentially caused by a global and financial system that is dominated by industrial countries and their interests upon which developing countries are dependent to varying degrees.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Cardinal Sarah, *The Day is Now Far Spent*, 244.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Cardinal Sarah, *The Day is Now Far Spent*, 244. From the testimony of General Gomart, the smugglers work hand in hand with western government intelligence. The authorities are informed in different destinations

The invasion is planned, anticipated, and coordinated. Western authorities know where the smugglers would get supplies for their boats. They are aware but prefer to shut their eyes to the false passports issued by Turkey and every minute detail of the migratory traffic in Africa. The migrants are simply cargoes and are treated as such both during the trip and at their eventual destinations. It is no news that thousands of Africans die in the Mediterranean every year. Apart from the physical horror of this planned migratory process, the victims are being uprooted from their religious and cultural background to be thrown into a western culture that has become heavily atheistic and secularised. Cardinal Sarah insists that this cultural and religious uprooting of Africans to Western countries that are themselves going through an unprecedented crisis is a lethal compost.<sup>8</sup> This was what forced Pope Francis to embark on his first trip as pontiff outside of Rome to the island of Lampedusa.<sup>9</sup> The homily he delivered at the mass on that trip clearly sets the agenda of his pontificate for migrants and refugees. He decries the culture of comfort, which makes us think only of ourselves, and makes us insensitive to the cries of others and presents the global indifference that grows because of this as responsible for the way migrants and refugees are treated.<sup>10</sup>

### 6.1.2 Migration and Refugee Crisis are Fuelled and Sustained by Sinful Social Structures.

At the international and local levels, economic, political, and legal systems bear the characteristics of sinful structures. As we have observed, the capitalist free trade continues to thrive in the interest of big economies at the expense of the developing economies. The structures of international monetary agencies are designed to keep developing nations perpetually in debt and dependent.<sup>11</sup> With such situations, skilled workers and professionals

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in Europe especially, in France and Italy before the obnoxious voyage through the Mediterranean with European ships ready to pick them up and lead the migratory streams to safe port so they are not lost in the coast of Africa.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Cardinal Sarah, *The Day is Now Far Spent*, 244, 226. The cardinal argues that the remote causes of terrorism are in part religious because some of those who embrace radical Islamism are reacting against the highly secularised culture of the West into which they just cannot integrate. The agenda to impose Western democratic understandings on other cultures informs the migratory programme.

<sup>9</sup> Lampedusa is one of the islands in the Mediterranean Sea, Southern Italy and serves a harbour for thousands of migrants from Africa on a daily basis.

<sup>10</sup> Pope Francis, *Homily at the Island of Lampedusa*, July 8, 2013.

([https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130708\\_omelia-lampedusa.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130708_omelia-lampedusa.html)).

<sup>11</sup> John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* 36. ([https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_30121987\\_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html))

are forced to look for greener pastures in the developed economies further widening the gap with the brain and human resources drain.

On the other hand, legal systems and immigration laws in most countries are unduly protective of their citizens with very hard border controls. Some immigrants are forced to seek alternative means and fall victims to scammers and fraudsters who take advantage of their plight to further exploit them. Some autochthonous communities are hostile to migrants who are often misunderstood and considered as burdens and threats to civil and already established cultures.<sup>12</sup> The situation forces some migrants to take to crime to survive, while some just live in despair and trauma of all sorts. At the local level, in the country of departure, corruption and oppressive leadership among others, aid and abet the conditions that force people to migrate. The case of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) is peculiar in that sense that they are not covered by international protection. They are stocked in their countries which most often are overwhelmed and can hardly address their concerns.<sup>13</sup>

### 6.1.3 The Church's Rich Advocacy for Migrants/Refugees Needs to Pay More Attention to the Role of Sinful Social Structures

The Church has responded in vital ways to the migrant/refugee crisis through different advocacy channels and granting of humanitarian aids to victims of migration and displacement. However, its attention to the challenge of sinful structures in that regard has been inadequate. Pope Pius XII's *Exsul Familia* provides the fundamental magisterial thoughts on migration and refugees.<sup>14</sup> Three key theological foundations are provided by *Exsul Familia*.

1. The emigration of the Holy Family of Nazareth provides a biblical and theological justification that migration is natural.
2. There is a Christological import that shows Jesus as sharing in the pains of all who are forced to flee from their home.
3. Creation is exulted as a gift from God, and hence, a universal gift to all.

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<sup>12</sup> See Kristin E. Heyer, "Social Sin and Immigration: Good Fences Make Bad Neighbours," in *Theological Studies* Vol. 71, no 2, 426-428. (This article is discussed in depth in chapter five of this thesis).

<sup>13</sup> See the understanding and status accorded IDPs by the United Nations in United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, 2001, 1. <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/idps/43ce1cff2/guiding-principles-internal-displacement.html>

<sup>14</sup> Pius XII, *Exsul Familia* (Apostolic Constitution, 1952) <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius12/p12exsul.htm> (See particularly, the introductory paragraph and the first title of the publication). The document responded to the migration challenge in Europe after the second World War.

Magisterial intervention in the migration/refugee challenge has continued to be drawn from the articulations of *Exsul Familia*.<sup>15</sup> Theological reflections on migration/refugee concerns have drawn inspiration from *Exsul Familia* as well. Orobator presents three partly overlapping and partly antithetical angles from which responses to migrant crises take their roots: Forced Migration as political problem; forced migration as a human rights problem; forced migration as a problem of charity.<sup>16</sup> He further indicates that these various angles, though with different points of emphasis, represent essentially, complementary approaches to forced migration that are more effective when integrated and coordinated.<sup>17</sup> Bernard Brady has outlined five principles which have emerged over the years from the rich traditions of the Church's teaching with regards to migration.<sup>18</sup> They include:

1. persons have the right to find economic, political, and social opportunities to live a dignified life in their homeland.
2. persons have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families for all goods of the earth belong to all people.
3. sovereign nations have the right to control their borders, but not when such control is exerted merely for the purpose of acquiring additional wealth.
4. refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection by the global community as they flee from wars and persecution.
5. the inherent human dignity and human rights of all migrants should be respected, regardless of their status, be they documented or undocumented.

Most of the principles are centred on 'rights' be they human rights or legal rights. Most theological responses to the migrants/refugees' crisis revolve around rights and Christian hospitality. Not much attention has been paid to the theme of sinful social structures with regards to the crisis. There may be several reasons for the inadequate presence of the role of sinful structures in the church's advocacy for migration/refugee. However, we suggest the major reason is the overbearing emphasis the church has placed on individual and personal nature of sin and its hesitancy to acknowledge the possible independent and causative nature

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<sup>15</sup> The predecessors of Pius XII all responded to the migration challenge, all emphasising the thoughts of *Exsul Familia*. We have singled out Pope Francis because he represents contemporary magisterial thoughts on the migration regime.

<sup>16</sup> Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, "Key Ethical Issues in the Practices of Policies of Refugee- serving NGOs and Churches" in, *Refugee Rights: Ethics, Advocacy, and Africa*, David Hollenbach SJ ed., (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2008), 226-229.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

<sup>18</sup> Bernard V. Brady, *Essential Catholic Social Thought*, 2nd ed. (New York, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2017), 238. (The Concept of Social/Structural sin is clearly missing from the list.

of social structures. There is the need to further develop the theme, ‘social/structural sin’. Thankfully, some theologians have sought to address that need in the past decade. Outstanding among these efforts are the works of Daniel K. Finn and other theologians of the *Critical Realism* school. Their works explore into theories from Sociology to establish the independent nature of social structures and how these structures can be sinful.

#### 6.1.4 Social Structures are Sinful by the Independent Role they Play in Individual Choices

Critical Realist Sociology presents social structures as systems of human relations among social positions.<sup>19</sup> These systems have mechanisms that create ‘opportunities’ and ‘restrictions’ in the social relationship that affect the choices people make. As Theodora Hawksley observes, social sin needs to be seen beyond its understanding as accumulation and concentration of individual sins. There is a complementary need to see the social systems governing human relationship and see how that causes sinful situations that people are webbed into. When individuals carry out harmful acts, the danger that has been produced is not just in the destruction of personal lives of individuals but harm is done to the social structures themselves; to the norms that order the common life; to the institutions that govern the lives of citizens; to the values and principles by which people are educated and through which the perpetrated sinful act tried to justify itself.<sup>20</sup>

Regarding the migrant/refugee crisis, social structures are sinful in the sense that they create opportunities and restrictions that affect the choices of people which cause the inhuman conditions migrants and refugees find themselves in. Those who put such evil structures in place and continue to sustain them are culpable of social structural sin and are called to repentance and conversion as well as to address the structures themselves. Sociologists of the Critical Realist school explain that social structures have causal impact in the lives of individuals who operate within them through the restrictions, *enablements*, and incentives the structures present to the individuals. Structures are not conscious agents themselves but emerge from the conscious activities of individuals. However, having emerged, they have an independent causal impact because conscious human persons make decisions in the light of the

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<sup>19</sup> Douglas V. Porpora, “four Concepts of Social Structure,” *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 19 (1989) 195.

<sup>20</sup> Theodora Hawksley “How Critical Realism Can Help Catholic Social Teaching” in *Moral Agency within Social Structures and Culture: A Primer on Critical Realism for Christian Ethics* ed. Daniel K. Finn, (Washington: Georgetown press, 2020.) 14-15.

restrictions, *enablements*, and incentives that are presented by the structures.<sup>21</sup> Any effort at addressing the migrant/refugee crisis without paying conscious attention to those structures will always be inadequate. This is what our research has established. Sinful Social structures must be named and addressed in responding to the migration/refugee crisis. The choices individuals are making under prevailing social structures and cultures have great implications for the migrant/refugee crisis. Both individuals and social structures need conversion.

### 6.1.5 Pope Francis' Robust Intervention Acknowledges the Relevance of Sinful Social Structures in the Migration Crisis.

Pope Francis has tackled the migrant regime head on right from the outset of his pontificate. Confronted with a very complex situation, his approach has been multidimensional and very radical, embracing other social concerns like environmental exploitation, human trafficking, just sustainability, integral development, homelessness, global exploitation, and social justice. He ties the migrant crisis to other social issues and treats them all as having a bearing on one another. His method in addressing the migrant/refugee crisis has been more practical than theoretical. He has been concerned with the practical issues responsible for the growing forced migration and the culture of indifference and inhuman treatment refugees and migrants receive.<sup>22</sup> His efforts have been to challenge the factors behind the unfortunate situation like indiscriminate plundering of the earth's resources and the pursuit of economic gains and industrial and technological advancement to the neglect of the dignity of the human person.<sup>23</sup> The Pontiff, like his predecessors, calls on all to rethink the value of human life and creation in the face of industrial advancement. Our thesis has reviewed the thoughts of the pontiff in this regard. He does not directly name systems and factors behind the migration/refugee crisis 'structures of sin'. However, all he is challenging falls within the understanding of sinful social structures we have been able to establish. Pope Francis acknowledges some systems of human relations and cultural attitudes that are behind the migration phenomenon and are affecting the negative ways migrants and refugees are perceived and treated across the globe. Some of these include, globalisation of indifference, throwaway culture, consumerism. In Europe, and America, migrants are treated without dignity as they are packed in camps and condemned to waiting indolently without knowing what the future holds for them. Cardinal Sarah refers to

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<sup>21</sup> Daniel K. Finn, "What is Sinful Social Structure" in *Theological Studies* vol. 77(1)151.

<sup>22</sup> See Pope Francis, *Homily at the Island of Lampedusa*, July 8, 2013. (The thoughts expressed in this homily have been greatly expanded in the pope's encyclical, *Fratelli tutti especially chapters one and two*.)

<sup>23</sup> See Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, nos. 52-59.

[https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html)

the Calais Jungle in France which he calls a disgrace. He asks how a man without a job is expected to find genuine fulfilment.<sup>24</sup> In a recent article in *The Guardian* Jeremy Corbyn (former leader of the labour party in the United Kingdom), asserts that “the refugee camps are riddled with disease, poverty, and violence. The French create the terror and squalor – and UK ministers pay them to do it.”<sup>25</sup> Corbyn further describes the horror in the camp and how complicit the UK government is in the diabolic situation.

Having fled the horrors of war, environmental disaster and destitution, refugees there have sacrificed everything to find safety. Instead, they die slowly in a hopeless wasteland. Muddied tents provide the only shelter from the freezing cold. Children beg for water contaminated by faeces, as rats scurry into people’s makeshift homes. The human shrieks of a rodent-sighting are nothing compared to the wails of infants longing for their mother’s embrace. One of the main sites of separation is Calais itself. Since the destruction of the “jungle” in 2016, the French police have enforced a policy of “zero-fixation points” to prevent refugees settling elsewhere. Evictions are carried out daily; tents, blankets, identity papers, mobile phones, clothes, and medicines are confiscated or destroyed.<sup>26</sup>

The situation described above is what has forced Cardinal Sarah to insist that “without a concise plan for integration, it is criminal to offer hospitality to migrants.”<sup>27</sup> The word ‘criminal’ as used here by the cardinal may appear too strong as many refugees will welcome any kind of ‘welcome’ just to escape the horrific situations they are fleeing. However, ‘criminal’ in this sense reveals the evils behind the exploitations of the situations of migrants/refugees which question the quality of ‘welcome’ offered by destination countries. That is the crux of Pope Francis’ intervention in the migrant crisis as he insists on a wholistic programme of *welcome, integrate, promote, and protect*.<sup>28</sup> A critical look at Pope Francis’s four-point agenda suggests that the pope is proposing the advancement of a positive structural framework. This serves as a counterculture to the sinful ideological and attitudinal structures by which migrants, refugees, and displaced persons are recognized and treated in our contemporary world.

Our thesis agrees with Pope Francis that the lasting and genuine solution to the migrant/refugee crisis is to address the economic development of Africa and other poor economies by dealing

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<sup>24</sup> Robert Cardinal Sarah, *The Day is Now Far Spent*, 245. Calais Jungle (officially known as Camp de la Lande) was an official refugee and migrant encampment in the vicinity of Calais, in France, between 2015 and 2016. Though no longer an official encampment, it is still a harbour for migrants and refugee living in very dehumanising conditions.

<sup>25</sup> Jeremy Corbyn, “Article” in the *Guardian* 21st January 203.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/jan/21/tory-migrant-policy-calais-refugee-camps-french>

<sup>26</sup> Jeremy Corbyn, “Article” in the *Guardian* 21st January 2023. (Corbyn affirms that refugees are constantly assaulted at the worst of forms and the UK government supplies the funding for the gargets used for the assault yet absolves itself of international responsibility for the plight of migrants.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Cardinal Sarah, *The Day is Now Far Spent*, 245.

<sup>28</sup> This is found in the Compact the Pope presented to the United Nations in 2020.



with the root causes of impoverishment, hunger, and unnecessary conflicts. All must be done so people can freely, joyfully, and meaningfully remain in their land of birth. On the other hand, everything must be put in place to ensure that migrants, refugees, and displaced persons are treated with the dignity and respect worthy of human beings.

### 6.1.6 The Migrant/Refugee Challenge is a Task for All as Individuals and Groups.

The migrant/refugee crisis is a huge task for all, international organisational actors, local leaders in migrating countries, and leaders in host countries both in the political and ecclesial circle and all people of goodwill. We have established the root causes of forced migration, and the inhuman treatments and misconceptions migrants/refugees receive as sinful social structures both in the birth countries of the migrants and destination countries. This establishes that we are all connected in one way or the other to the complex reality of modern migration and refugee regime. Matthew Soerens and Jenny Hwang Yang affirm this position as they insist that once we take time to listen to the stories and experiences of migrants, we will understand that immigration is very often the consequence of difficult and sometimes unliveable conditions in many parts of the world. Using the experience of the United States, they insist that:

As long as the average salary of a worker in Mexico and central America is a small fraction of what workers in the United States earn, mass migration will continue whatever border enforcement techniques we employ. As long as wars and persecution threaten the lives of people, there will be constant supply of refugees to America and other safe havens. As long as environmental degradation threatens people's ways of life, there will be movement to other communities... People on all sides of the debate ... can agree that we should address these root issues that motivate migration.<sup>29</sup>

Soerens and Hwang Yang say it all here for as Warsan Shire writes in her emotionally-laden graphic poem, "you have to understand, that no one puts their children in a boat unless the water is safer than the land."<sup>30</sup> While our Christian faith teaches and challenges us to welcome immigrants and accord them genuine respect and dignity, we ought to be concerned about how people should live with dignity in their home countries and not be forced to migrate. This calls for genuine examination of our perspectives, attitudes and lifestyles when addressing the migrant/refugee crisis. As observed by Soerens and Hyang Yang, our consumption habits, our

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<sup>29</sup> Matthew Soerens and Jenny Hwang Yang, *Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion and Truth in the Immigration Debate* (USA: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 184.

<sup>30</sup> Warsan Shire *Home* (A Poem) <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/no-one-puts-their-children-in-a-boat-unless-the-wa/>

use of energy, our country's foreign policies affect how others live. We may think our individual choices insignificant but collectively, they have great potential for positive change. How many young men eager to get married, for example, stop to think where the diamond in their fiancée's engagement ring came from, or if it helped to fund a civil war in West Africa? Most would rather pay \$1 less for a bag of coffee than spend the additional money for the assurance that the coffee farmer was paid a reasonable wage. How many of us seriously consider the environmental impact on the poorest nations as we hop into our cars instead of using public transportation, walking, or riding a bicycle? How many citizens take time to investigate how their country's trade policy, or support for particular foreign political leader will affect individuals in other countries or take time to let their elected representatives know what they think.<sup>31</sup> This shows clearly how we all have great responsibility in the migration/refugee crisis. Soerens and Hyang Yang call on all well-meaning individuals, especially, Christians, to help improve the situations in countries from which immigrants emigrate by examining their lifestyles, advocating just policies, and supporting churches and ministries doing important works abroad to support economic development, improve health and protect and provide for children, increase education, and empower women.<sup>32</sup> The recommendations we shall make in the next session are informed by the understanding we have established, namely, that the complex challenges of migration and refugees ought to be addressed through the lens of sinful social structures in our contemporary world.

## 6.2. Recommendations

We have situated the migration, refugee, and displacement concerns in their theological context. We have established that the church's ministry to the migration/refugee regime is both pastoral and prophetic. As noted by Orobator, "..., Catholic social teaching affirms the complementarity of humanitarian and structural responses to the crisis of refugees and displaced people. Both are important, but neither by itself completely satisfies the need of refugees and displaced people for both charity and justice."<sup>33</sup> Orobator's assertion gives impetus to the argument of our thesis that the concept of social/structural sin is a veritable theological tool in addressing the crisis of migration and displacement. The Church is already doing a lot in its humanitarian response to the crisis. It needs to complement this with a stronger

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<sup>31</sup> Matthew Soerens and Jenny Hwang Yang, *Welcoming the Stranger*, 185.

<sup>32</sup> Matthew Soerens and Jenny Hwang Yang, *Welcoming the Stranger*, 185

<sup>33</sup> Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator, "Justice for the Displaced: The Challenge of a Christian Understanding" in *Driven from Home: Protecting the Rights of Forced Migrants* ed. David Hollenbach, SJ (Washington, D.C. Georgetown University Press, 2010) 37-54 at 45.

prophetic response. This is very necessary because her advocacy involves securing the rights and dignity of refugees and displaced people. It establishes the imperative of transforming the unjust structures of socioeconomic, and political organisations.<sup>34</sup> The Church needs to address unjust structures both within her institutions and the political and economic institutions in the political sphere. Individual Christians have the responsibility to examine their lifestyles and make effort not only to destroy sinful social structures but to aid in establishing structures of grace that seek after the common good of all. As Jeremy Corbyn says, “we need an immigration system grounded in compassion, dignity and care. One that brings an end to the poverty, environmental collapse and wars that are displacing people around the world. One that stops spewing the hateful rhetoric of “invasions” and instead says loudly: refugees are welcome here.”<sup>35</sup>

Applying Pope Francis’ four-point agenda of ‘welcome’, ‘protect’, ‘promote’, ‘integrate’ to the international migrant/refugee crisis and the situation of IDPs in Nigeria, we suggest some practical and pastoral actions that may need to be taken for the church to play its prophetic role.

### 6.2.1. *Welcome*

Cardinal Sarah’s insistence that without a concise plan for integration, it is criminal to offer hospitality to migrants, provides an insight into the kind of welcome that is meaningful to migrants and refugees. For the cardinal, “if governments have already welcomed these men and women, this implies that they have a precise plan for giving them all guarantees of dignified life, with housing, jobs, and stable familial and religious life. The contrary would be irresponsible and disturbing.”<sup>36</sup> Welcoming entails expanding legal pathways for entry and creating conscious awareness of the plight of migrants and displaced persons. It involves balancing our concern for national security with the concerns for fundamental human rights of migrants and displaced persons as we practice the Christian virtue of welcoming strangers.<sup>37</sup> The pastoral Orientations on Internally Displaced People recommended by the Migrants and Refugee Section of The Dicastery for Integral Development (M&R Section) calls on the church to encourage the media and wider society and governments to raise awareness of the struggles of refugees and displaced persons. All are called to have the courage not to turn away from

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<sup>34</sup> See Agbonkhanmeghe Orobator, “Justice for the Displaced,” 37-54 at 44.

<sup>35</sup> Jeremy Corbyn, “Article” in the *Guardian*, 21st January 2023.

<sup>36</sup> Robert Cardinal Sarah, *The Day is Now Far Spent*, 245.

<sup>37</sup> Migrants and Refugees Section, Dicastery of Integral Human development, *Towards the Global Compacts on Migrants and refugees* <https://justiceandpeace.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/A4-ENG-Towards-the-Global-Compacts-2018-EMAIL.pdf> no. 4.

refugees and forcibly displaced persons. Instead, we are to allow their faces to penetrate our hearts and welcome them into our world. We are called to listen to their hopes and despair to understand their feelings.<sup>38</sup> This calls for conscious pastoral actions. Local churches need to develop their awareness of the plight of refugees and displaced persons and of the responsibility we owe them as Christians. Bishops' conferences are encouraged to set up committees in their assembly to handle this great pastoral concern. Catholic Universities are to be tasked to study the various aspects of migration thoroughly for the benefits of concrete service to migrants. Pastoral guidelines need to be drawn up locally from careful study of local situations to serve as guide. Migrant studies need to be introduced in Catholic schools, especially seminaries to create adequate awareness of the concerns of migrants and displaced persons and the pastoral responsibilities towards them.<sup>39</sup>

Taking the concern of IDPs in Nigeria into context, we would like to recommend some practical actions for providing meaningful 'welcome'.

1. **Challenging Tribal and Ethnic Discriminations.** There is an urgent need to address tribal discrimination with the gospel teaching on welcoming the stranger. The Nigerian constitution guarantees freedom of movement and right of residence to all Nigerian citizens in any part of the country. The constitution equally forbids any discrimination against any citizen, or any advantage or privilege to any citizen on account of their place of birth, ethnic or community affiliation.<sup>40</sup> Practical experiences in the country suggest otherwise. There is an unwritten policy of indigenisation and ethnic bias where people are treated as strangers or foreigners in communities and states that are not of their ancestral descent. This continues to make true the position of many scholars of Nigerian Studies that the country is hardly a nation, but an abstraction of ethnic groups loosely held together by the independence declaration of 1960 or the British Amalgamation programme of 1914.<sup>41</sup> This trend is completely antithetical to the gospel message, yet the unfortunate culture of discrimination is today entrenched in

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<sup>38</sup> Migrants and Refugees Section, Dicastery of Integral Human development, *Pastoral Orientation on Internally Displaced persons* <https://migrants-refugees.va/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/1.-Read-On-Screen-A5-EN-.pdf> no. 11-13.

<sup>39</sup> Migrants and Refugees Section, Dicastery of Integral Human development, *Pastoral Orientation on Internally Displaced persons* P. 14. (Though this document centres primarily on IDPs, it reflects the concerns of migrants and refugees generally. It is used here with that understanding even as we make specific reference to the situation of IDPs in Nigeria.)

<sup>40</sup> See Nigerian 1999 constitution as amended, chapter IV, sections 41-43. [https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Nigeria\\_2011.pdf](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Nigeria_2011.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> See Michael Edem, *Confused Values* (Lagos: Jeromelaiho and Associates Ltd., 1993), 33. & Cyril Imo, *Religion and the Unity of the Nigerian Nation* (Stockholm: Alquist and Niksell International, 1995), 47.

the politics, social and sometimes religious structures of the Nigerian nation. Most of the ethnic tensions in the country is fuelled by this unfortunate culture. While we commend its efforts so far, the church in Nigeria needs to do more *ad intra* in providing orientations that could give better understanding to her followers in this regard. It is great that interactive forums exist at different levels through sports, socio-cultural and academic platforms between seminaries and houses of formation. However, the acrimonious spirit of competition that sometimes arises at these interactions suggest that there is need for better orientation. Besides, with provincial seminaries becoming the order of the day, there is need for a stronger emphasis on socio-cultural studies and ethno-historical studies in the curriculum of studies in the seminary. The programme of pastoral and apostolic works during formation should be inter diocesan at some stage of formation, so seminarians could encounter other cultures other than the ones prevalent in their local environment of formation. The church's advocacy for equal consideration for all must never wane.

## **2. Providing Adequate Pastoral Programme for Displaced Persons and Refugees.**

There is the need for the provision of an adequate pastoral program for the Internally Displaced Persons in countries like Nigeria. The programme must be clear in its objective to welcome, protect, promote, and integrate displaced persons, irrespective of their tribal, ethnic, or religious affiliation. The Bishops' Conference of Nigeria need to come up with a pastoral letter detailing the pastoral plans for displaced persons in Nigeria. Seminaries in Nigeria and Catholic institutes should include in their programmes, Migration and Displacement Studies. Resources can be drawn from other Bishops' conferences like American Bishops' Conference that has a detailed pastoral letter on refugees addressing the colossal concerns of refugees in the United States and Mexico.<sup>42</sup> As rightly observed by the M&R section, there is no proper collection of data on IDPs in many states. This is a huge concern as it shows how less the concern is for these brothers and sisters of ours. It means most often they are not recognised, not to mention being protected and considered for inclusion in specific programmes designed for them. As a church we can help in this regard by advocating with international organisations and the national government of Nigeria for the collection

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<sup>42</sup> <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/immigration/strangers-no-longer-together-on-the-journey-of-hope>. (Issued in 2003, the letter acknowledges the huge concern of migration and refugees and while condemning the maltreatment and discriminations against refugees, affirm the responsibility we owe to them by our humanity and Christian faith.)

of data on IDPs in the country; by building capacities and competencies in our institutions for the formal identification and recognition of IDPs; by making the churches infrastructure and knowledge available to improve the collection and sharing of quality data.<sup>43</sup>

- 3. Addressing the Concerns of Host Communities.** One of the big challenges to authentic welcoming of migrants and displaced persons is the concerns of host communities. As observed by the M&R section, communities that host IDPs are often underprivileged and living in precarious situations themselves. They often do not have the resources and infrastructure necessary to welcome large numbers of newcomers. They often do not benefit from the funding channelled to the IDPs they host, leading to unequal treatment and discrimination against them. This situation can and does create tensions that complicate both the state of IDPs and the vulnerable host communities.<sup>44</sup> This is very true of the Nigerian situation where the situation is heightened by corruption, indifference, tribalism, religious differences, and nepotism. The church in Nigeria has a lot to do in this regard. It is commendable that local church authorities provide aid to all in different IDP camps regardless of their faith and ethnic affiliation. However, there is a strong need for a coordinated advocacy for host communities burdened with caring for themselves as well as displaced persons. This can be achieved by promoting among all actors a balanced and comprehensive approach to humanitarian aid. That way, all programmes, resources, and infrastructures aimed at responding to the needs of IDPs also consider and benefit host communities. Agencies providing aid and assistance to IDPs should be encouraged to assist the local development of host communities in the areas of health, education, and welfare.<sup>45</sup> Pastoral cares must not be limited to IDPs alone but should include host communities. An enabling platform for interpersonal interactions between IDPs and host community members should be encouraged where both IDPs and members of host communities engage in both social and development work in the community.

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<sup>43</sup> Migrants and Refugees Section, Dicastery of Integral Human development, *Pastoral Orientation on Internally Displaced persons* no. 18-21. (The office of Justice, Development and Peace and Caritas has done a lot in assisting state authorities with data and other relevant resources in elections and natural disasters in the country. This body needs to do more concerning IDPs in the country).

<sup>44</sup> Migrants and Refugees Section, Dicastery of Integral Human development, *Pastoral Orientation on Internally Displaced persons* no. 22.

<sup>45</sup> Migrants and Refugees Section, Dicastery of Integral Human development, *Pastoral Orientation on Internally Displaced persons* no. 23-25 (A good example is what has been achieved in Yola diocese where accommodation has been built for the IDPs and worshipping and other infrastructures including schools and health facilities serve both the IDPs and the host community).

4. **Examining the role of language in the migrant and displacement crisis.** In furtherance of offering ‘welcome’ to migrants and displaced persons, we may need to re-examine our language. There may be the need to change the language structure and perspectives in the way we talk about and see refugees and migrants. Language matters a great deal in addressing any social situation. For example, the term Internally Displaced Persons puts emphasis on the politics rather than the dignity of the victims.<sup>46</sup> Persons Displaced from their Homes, or Victims of Displacement should be preferred as those terms put the emphasis on the ‘persons’ (not politics) and draw attention more to the moral implications of the state of the persons in such a vulnerable state. The term IDP creates a psychological discriminatory tag. It also hides our responsibility for the state of displaced persons. At most, it only describes a political situation that may not provoke concern or a sense of responsibility. We need a language that immediately makes displaced persons inclusive in the larger community; a term that immediately pricks the conscience regarding their state. A term like ‘Victims of our Created Structures of Sin’ is provoking. A response that perpetually reminds IDPs of their dependency and brokenness does not help at all. The hardest part of being in their condition is knowing they are not wanted as integrated members of the larger human society.

### 6.2.2 Protect

Pope Francis presents “Protecting” as our duty to recognise and defend the inviolable dignity of those who flee real dangers in search of asylum and security and prevent them from being exploited.<sup>47</sup> Insisting that God does not discriminate for he watches over the foreigner and sustains the orphan and widow,<sup>48</sup> the Holy Father singles out women and children as being most vulnerable and exposed to risks and abuse. More vulnerable groups include those escaping armed conflicts, physically challenged persons and members of discriminated ethnic groups. Most of those fleeing their homelands either because of poverty or conflicts face great dehumanising treatment. Some of these represent the best brains in their countries of origin and would have contributed immensely to the growth of those countries. Many others take to different survival activities that dehumanise their persons. Catholic Bishops Conference of

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<sup>46</sup> This is evident in the refusal of United Nations and the international community to see IDPs as refugees with same status as recognised by the 1951 Refugee Convention even though IDPs are victims of the same type of violence and circumstances as other refugees.

<sup>47</sup> Migrants and Refugees Section, Dicastery of Integral Human development, *Towards the Global Compacts on Migrants and refugees* no. 4.

<sup>48</sup> Psalm 146:9.

Nigeria, (CBCN) names some of these dehumanising activities to include drug peddling, bank fraud, and prostitution. The bishops single out prostitution particularly, and stresses how many of the young girls who are lured by organised syndicates with false promises of scholarships or easy employment opportunities, go through all forms of indignity, ranging from physical abuse and emotional torture to forceable repatriation or imprisonment.<sup>49</sup> A lot of practical steps need be taken to address this lamentable situation. CBCN calls on the Nigerian government and indeed other governments in impoverished nations to protect their citizens abroad through diplomatic channels and appeal to the Bishops' Conferences and other agencies in host countries to provide spiritual and humanitarian assistance to all who are victims of organised prostitution.<sup>50</sup> More practical steps need to be taken to address some structural practices that expose migrants/displaced persons and other vulnerable people to danger, abuse, and dehumanizing conditions. Some suggested practical steps are discussed below.

1. **Building a structure of accountability and financial prudence.** To protect the vulnerable in general, and displaced persons, there is need for proper accountability, financial responsibility and modesty in public offices and in the church. In countries like Nigeria where corruption and financial recklessness have become endemic, public office holders loot funds meant for public good, rendering most of the populace in perpetual poverty and in conditions unworthy of human beings. As the gap between the rich and the poor stretches from one pole to another, agitation and struggle lead to frustration and conflict which eventually produce crime, displacement, and death. The Catholic Bishops of Nigeria acknowledge that corruption is an affront to the dignity of the human person, an assault to human conscience and a negation of the Christian vocation to build here on earth a kingdom of justice, love, and peace.<sup>51</sup> To challenge and call for change in the public sector, the church needs to address all forms of financial abuse and misappropriation in its organisation. The accounting system of the church may need some revisiting. The system where the clergy largely control church funds needs to be reconsidered. Proper and functional financial systems must be seen to be in place at all levels of the church's institutions, from dioceses to parishes, schools, and societies. With so much poverty around us, it is sinful for the clergy to

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<sup>49</sup> See "Healing the Nation" in *Our Concern for Nigeria: Catholic Bishops Speak*, edited by Chris Anyanwu and Otumba Jide Fadugba-Pinheiro (Lagos: Gazup Prints Limited, 2015) 135-136.

<sup>50</sup> "Healing the Nation" in *Our Concern for Nigeria: Catholic Bishops Speak*, 136.

<sup>51</sup> "Corruption in Nigeria: Implications for Nation Building" in *Our Concern for Nigeria: Catholic Bishops Speak*, 154. (Here, the bishops refer to the social teaching of the church in *Gaudium et Spes* 75 which admonishes governing authorities and officials to always exercise their offices without thought of personal convenience and without bribery).



live in affluence of any sort. It is equally sinful to give undue regard to the affluent members of the church and the public at large to the open neglect of the less privileged. The scandalous attitude of openly associating with the wealthy without calling their attention to their ill-gotten wealth is an affront to the underprivileged members of the society who are at the receiving end of the exploitative activities of those affluent people. Corruption is not just politicians stealing money but nepotism and other ills that discriminate and exploit. Jesus associated with all classes of people but constantly pricked their consciousness and called them to conversion. The clergy and all well-meaning Christians must be seen to follow the saviour's approach. Pope Francis' admonishment that pastors ought to have the smell of the sheep must be heeded with utmost seriousness.<sup>52</sup> With the church increasingly becoming indigenous and independent, the financial burden placed on the faithful sometimes proves excruciating. It has led some away from the church and contributed to impoverishing the people more. It is double jeopardy to see the fund contributed from great struggles and sacrifices mismanaged and spent recklessly for an affluent life of the clergy. This can be curtailed by a proper check and balance structure in the financial system of the church. There is need too for stronger orientation and formation on financial management in the seminaries.

2. **Creating befitting working conditions and suitable remunerations.** Closely linked to the issue of financial accountability is workers' welfare. Financial security is a vital aspect of protection. Conditions of service and workers' welfare packages still leave a lot to be desired in many institutions in Nigeria. Apart from salaries not being paid, pensioners go through a lot of bottle necks to access what belongs to them. CBCN acknowledges that to discourage corruption, employers of labour both in the private and public sectors ought to pay adequate salaries and wages to their employees and as at when due.<sup>53</sup> The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church affirms that remuneration is the most important means of achieving justice in work relationships for the just wage is the legitimate fruit of work.<sup>54</sup> As John Ryan rightly states, there is

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<sup>52</sup> The pope first said this at the Chrism mass of 2013. <https://www.thecatholictelegraph.com/pope-francis-priests-should-be-shepherds-living-with-the-smell-of-the-sheep/13439>

<sup>53</sup> See "Corruption in Nigeria: Implications for Nation Building" in *Our Concern for Nigeria: Catholic Bishops Speak*, 165. (Underpaying workers is exploitative and an assault to their dignity. It encourages sharp practices on the part of workers to make ends meet).

<sup>54</sup> Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Dublin: Veritas Publication, 2005.) no 302. A just wage must not be below the level of subsistence and as implied, agreed salary between employers and workers does not qualify as just wage.

a certain minimum of goods to which every worker is entitled by reason of their inherent right of access to the earth. All workers have the right to at least a decent livelihood; that is, they have a right to the requisites of sustenance as will enable them to live in a manner worthy of human beings.<sup>55</sup> Ryan describes a decent livelihood as “food, clothing, and housing sufficient in quantity and quality to maintain the worker in normal health, in elementary comfort, and in an environment suitable to the protection of morality and religion; sufficient provision for the future to bring elementary contentment, and security against sickness, accident, and invalidity; and sufficient opportunities for recreation, social intercourse, education, and church-membership to conserve health and strength and to render possible the exercise of the higher faculties.”<sup>56</sup> While we continue to challenge the unfortunate system of governance where political office holders earn outrageous salaries and live very ostentatiously, and civil servants live on meagre salaries, the Church in Nigeria needs to re-examine the welfare of its employees. In many church institutions in the country, workers are poorly paid and made to work under very poor conditions. There is hardly a well-defined system of employment and remuneration in many dioceses and church institutions. Workers’ welfares are most often left to the discretion of individual clergymen who administer the institutions. Such exploitative treatment of workers leaves many disenfranchised and in dehumanising conditions. This makes sharp practices of different sorts appealing to many who seek different ways of survival. If we seek to truly advocate for the vulnerable, (IDPs inclusive,) we must set up a proper system of employment that guarantees the welfare of all employees in line with the teachings of the church. The more we don’t see to justice being done, the more we sow seeds of disaffection which eventually lead to conflicts and subsequent displacement of people.

3. **Addressing the culture of impunity.** Another concern that needs attention is the culture of impunity where government officials live a life of licentiousness and get away with crimes under everyone's watch. The law seems to be made for the poor and defenceless as the affluent are not brought to book when they err. CBCN decries this culture of impunity. It acknowledges that though the Nigerian constitution has copious

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<sup>55</sup> Harlan R. Beckley, ed. *John A. Ryan, Economic Justice: Selections from Distributive Justice and Living wage* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1996.) 115.

<sup>56</sup> Harlan R. Beckley, ed. *John A. Ryan, Economic Justice: Selections from Distributive Justice and Living wage*, 115.

provisions to deal with corruption in the public sector, it is sad that these provisions are routinely flouted and very few offenders get sanctioned. The majority escape justice even when they are caught in the act if they are well-connected or can bribe their way out of trouble.<sup>57</sup> On the flip side, virtuous acts are hardly rewarded, A culture that emphasises punishment only for those who cannot ‘buy’ justice, but rewards criminality does not encourage efforts at living by right values. People are not motivated to live positive lives as that does not seem to be rewarded in the system of life we have created where impunity thrives on impunity. CBCN acknowledges that there should be an honest system of rewarding probity and accountability for all workers in the country and admonishes the society to cease conferring honours on people whose source of wealth is questionable.<sup>58</sup> The culture of impunity is indeed a huge concern in addressing social issues in Nigeria. Many resort to taking the law into their hands because they fear they cannot get justice through legal means. This is remotely responsible for the unending conflicts and agitations in many communities.

4. **Establishing a Culture of Justice and Peace.** There is the need for prompt interventions in brooding conflicts. A lot has been achieved by the church in Nigeria through her Justice, Peace, and Development programme. More is needed to sensitise communities on the value of peace, advocating for justice when it is clearly seen to be denied and assisting development initiatives. Justice is the best way to establish a culture of peace. CBCN affirms this when it states that justice governs our relations to others and the relations between the state and the subjects. Each person is called to give others their due and seek from them only that which they can demand as right. The state through its officers distributes the wealth of the country and the benefits at its command, according to its laws and regulations.<sup>59</sup> To avoid conflicts and create the culture of peace, all that upsets justice must be addressed at all levels. CBCN identifies bribery among other ills as sins against commutative justice by wrongful appropriation of wealth, and sins against distributive justice and unfair distribution of benefits.<sup>60</sup> To

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<sup>57</sup> “Corruption in Nigeria: Implications for Nation Building” in *Our Concern for Nigeria: Catholic Bishops Speak*, 164. (Section 98, Cap 77, section 404, and section 115 of the Criminal Code Act of Nigeria all address the issue of corruption, yet very few offenders are duly punished. Even the judiciary has unfortunately become highly enmeshed in the unfortunate waters of corruption).

<sup>58</sup> “Corruption in Nigeria: Implications for Nation Building” in *Our Concern for Nigeria: Catholic Bishops Speak*, 166. (CBCN has long resolved not to recommend such persons of questionable wealth for papal honours).

<sup>59</sup> “Current Abuses” in *Our Concern for Nigeria: Catholic Bishops Speak*, 2.

<sup>60</sup> “Current Abuses” in *Our Concern for Nigeria: Catholic Bishops Speak*, 2.

protect the vulnerable, displaced persons, migrants and refugees, a culture of justice leading to true peace must be the prerogative of all, as individuals and as a community.

### 6.2.3. Promote

‘Promote’ in relation to migrants, refugees and displaced persons entails creating an enabling environment for their development and usefulness. It entails supporting their integral human development. This invokes the biblical teaching that God loves the foreigner residing among us, giving them food and clothing, and we are to love them equally.<sup>61</sup> Migrants and displaced persons are most often excluded from full economic and social participation. This is largely because of structures that discriminate against them. Pope Francis stresses the importance of ensuring access to all levels of education for children and the young in this regard.<sup>62</sup> Migrants and refugees have the right to realise and develop their potential. As affirmed by Pope John XXIII, every human being has the right to life, bodily integrity and to the means which are suitable for the proper development of life.<sup>63</sup> Social structures need to be put in place to enhance the opportunities for this and all social structures that impede access to facilities and amenities for integral development must be challenged and condemned. The following practical steps may be considered.

#### 1. **Re-examining the educational system and policies on migrants/refugee’ welfare.**

There is a need to re-examine the fundamental structures of education and government policies regarding the promotion of migrants’ welfare. The educational system in countries like Nigeria is driven by a ‘retrogressive-progressive’ approach with emphasis on certificates, regardless of how these certificates are obtained. As a result, many graduates lack the basic skills in their acclaimed areas of study and are unemployable. Some who get employed prove so incompetent that most of our government establishments hardly function adequately. According to an article published by Ijeoma Ukazu in *University World News*, Nigeria admits two million candidates into various universities and higher institutions of learning and graduates

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<sup>61</sup> Deuteronomy 10: 18-19. (This text defines the understanding of the place of refugees in Judeo-Christian tradition and the equal dignity with which they are to be treated.)

<sup>62</sup> Migrants and Refugees Section, Dicastery of Integral Human development, *Towards the Global Compacts on Migrants and refugees*, 10.

<sup>63</sup> Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, (Vatican City,1963), no 11. (The holy father lists food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, and necessary social services as primary to the right to life and bodily integrity.)

over 600000 every year.<sup>64</sup> Most of these end up in the labour market searching endlessly for jobs. Ukazu Observes that “Nigeria’s inability to engage a large proportion of her youth meaningfully through job creation has the potential for social dislocation. The dire unemployment situation that many graduates and those with advanced education in the country face is a cause for widespread concern. World Bank data pinpoints the percentage of unemployed Nigerians with advanced education at 13.69% in 2016, and 15.3% in 2019. This is worrisome as it translates to a bulging youthful, energetic unemployed population with no contribution to the economic growth of the country.”<sup>65</sup> The situation is compounded with the collapse of public institutions after so many years of neglect and mismanagement. Many resort to private schools that are most often beyond the reach of the less privileged. Today, Nigeria accounts for one of the worst cases of out of school children. Statistics from UNICEF reveals that every 1 in 5 out of school children is in Nigeria. UNICEF maintains that “Even though primary education is officially free and compulsory, about 10.5 million of the country’s children aged 5-14 years are not in school. Only 61 percent of 6–11-year-olds regularly attend primary school and only 35.6 percent of children aged 36-59 months receive early childhood education.”<sup>66</sup> UNICEF further reports that in the north of Nigeria, “the picture is even bleaker, with a net attendance rate of 53 percent. Getting out-of-school children back into education poses a massive challenge. Gender, like geography and poverty, is an important factor in the pattern of educational marginalization. States in the north-east and north-west have female primary net attendance rates of 47.7 percent and 47.3 percent, respectively, meaning that more than half of the girls are not in school. The educational deprivation in northern Nigeria is driven by various factors, including economic barriers and socio-cultural norms and practices that discourage attendance in formal education, especially for girls.”<sup>67</sup> Apart from the negative impact, the poor education trend has on the nation’s development, the system becomes a breeding ground for criminals and recruits for terrorists. IDPs are the most affected in the scenario painted above. Uprooted from their homes and seeking shelter in camps, many of the children have hardly any hope of formal

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<sup>64</sup> Ijeoma Ukazu, “Too many Graduates Fighting for Too Few Jobs,” in University World News. <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20211113143735211> (Accessed 11 April 2023) Latest report published by Global audit and tax firm, KPMG projects that Nigeria’s unemployment rate is expected to rise to 40.6% as compared to 2022’s 37.7%.

<sup>65</sup> Ijeoma Ukazu, “Too many Graduates Fighting for Too Few Jobs”.

<sup>66</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/education#:~:> (Accessed 11 April 2023).

<sup>67</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/education#:~:> (Accessed 11 April 2023).

education. The situation must change for us to promote the cause of the marginalised and create enabling platforms for all to realise their potential. The church can help in this regard by re-evaluating her institutions of learning to ensure that its schools are affordable and not driven by profit. Church institutions are established primarily for the salvation of God's people, temporarily and eternally. If it serves other purposes other than this, it is sinful.

**2. Seeking political pathways of better welfare for refugees and the vulnerable.**

There is a need for political solutions. Migrant, refugee, and displacement situations need to be addressed politically. As Bishop Hassan Kukah affirms, there is hardly any institution be it legal, ecclesiastical, or political that has the capacity to meet the purpose of its establishment in Nigeria today. The ecclesia community have got to push for policies that would address the fundamental factors that create the situation as well as the discriminatory treatment the migrants, refugees, and displaced persons receive. Generally, social welfare policies and practices in countries like Nigeria are heavily discriminatory against women and encourage irresponsibility in the political class, heavily dominated by men, as well as put the lives of numerous children in Jeopardy. The church must continue to hold the government and its officials accountable. As the church continues to denounce all discriminatory policies, it must continue to advocate for alternative policies that are inclusive and work for the common good. The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church attests that “the full attainment of the common good requires that the political community develop a twofold and complementary action that defends and promotes human rights.”<sup>68</sup> Quoting *Pacem in Terris* no 55, the document insists that “it should not happen that certain individuals or social groups derive special advantage that their rights have received preferential protection. Nor should it happen that governments in seeking to protect these rights, become obstacles to their full expression and free use.”<sup>69</sup> All must be done to promote the rights and dignity of migrants and refugees without government policies obstructing the expressions of these rights. The church must continue to denounce all unjust structures in the country without any acquiescence and advocate for positive

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<sup>68</sup> Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2005.) no 389.

<sup>69</sup> Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 389.

actions against unjust institutions and policies in the country. To help in this regard, the church must make her advocacy effective by being above board in its operations.

#### 6.2.4 Integrate

‘Integrate’ makes ‘welcome’ meaningful. It entails full participation of refugees and displaced persons in the life of their host communities in such a way that breeds mutual benefits. Pope Francis states that allowing refugees and migrants to participate in the life of the society is a part of a process of mutual enrichment and fruitful cooperation that is at the service of the integral development of the local community.<sup>70</sup> Migrants and displaced persons are no less human than other members of the society, but as St. Pauls says, are fellow citizens with God’s people (Ephesians 2:19). If anything, they are a great asset to our faith and humanity as their very conditions remind us of our vulnerability and dependence on God. Refugees are not to be treated as dependants needing handouts. They are people who should be considered as an integral part of our society from whom kingdom values can be learnt. A lot of healing and re-examination of communal and individual attitudes to migrants and refugees are needed for both migrants/refugees and host communities to mutually benefit from one another. This can be achieved through a process of reconciliation and building a culture of restorative justice as well as Advocating for a programme of better inclusion of women and the young.

1. **Building a culture of reconciliation and restorative justice.** Migrants, displaced persons, and refugees are people who have been hurt tremendously, psychologically, and physically. Apart from being deprived of the life they are naturally used to; many are carrying the pains of lost ones and the trauma of living every day not knowing what fate holds for them. Robert Shreiter affirms that all categories of migrants be they displaced persons, refugees or voluntary emigrants face different degrees of trauma at three different stages of their experience. These include the stage of leaving their homes, the transit to the new situation and the stage of settling into their new situation.<sup>71</sup> The suffering state of migrants creates pastoral concerns of healing. As

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<sup>70</sup> Migrants and Refugees Section, Dicastery of Integral Human development, *Towards the Global Compacts on Migrants and refugees*, 10.

<sup>71</sup> Robert Schreiter, “Migrants and the Ministry of Reconciliation,” in *A Promised land, A Perilous Journey*, eds. Daniel G. Groody and Gioacchino Campres (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 109 – 110. (He identifies the traumas of physical danger, disorientation, sometimes in post-traumatic stress syndrome, depreciation caused by indignity in different asymmetries leading to humiliating status).

stated by Schreiter, the healing process involves principally, the migrants themselves, the migrant's community, the autochthonous community, and those involved in the healing ministry to the migrant population. The objective is a proper integration of the migrants; one that helps them overcome the harmful effects of their experience. He insists rightly that integration must be understood "not as assimilation that discounts or negates the specific aspects of the migrant's biography or experience, but rather as capacity to function in a healthy way in a variety of roles and communities in which the migrant now lives."<sup>72</sup> Schreiter focuses on the contribution of Christian understanding to the larger reconciliation process with its emphasis on the importance of the divine in the healing process and prospects for a new beginning.<sup>73</sup> Scheiter admits the importance of the pursuit of justice in the healing process and integration of migrants. He states that "Justice is not seen as an alternative to reconciliation, but rather as a condition for its fulfilment. Thus, the pursuit of justice is not only compatible with the efforts at reconciliation; such pursuit is a necessary component of reconciliation itself."<sup>74</sup> Justice achieved most often may not always be satisfactory as most of the loss may never be fully recovered. However, as Scheiter observes, what is important is to realise that even if the situation cannot be completely resolved, action is still possible. As such, he suggests three dimensions to the pursuit of justice: gaining an acknowledgement of wrongdoing on the part of the wrongdoer, or of innocence of the victim; overcoming the asymmetries that have risen; and regaining of agency on the part of the migrants.<sup>75</sup> He calls attention to the concerns of restitutive or distributive justice, structural justice surrounding adequate and human legislation regarding immigration and settlement in the new country (or community), and proper allocation of resources to make settlement possible. These are all necessary for proper integration of migrants and refugees because as Scheiter observes, "reconciliation as understood by Christians has at its base the restoration of human dignity to the victims

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<sup>72</sup> Robert Schreiter, "Migrants and the Ministry of Reconciliation," 111.

<sup>73</sup> For details on the elements, see Robert Schreiter, "Migrants and the Ministry of Reconciliation," 114 – 116. (The Christian perspective should not be seen as contradistinction to other approaches of the processes of healing that are involved in the restoration of victims of migration or reconstruction of society, but as complementing them. It introduces a significant dimension of the divine that ultimately embraces the wholistic complex and far-reaching experience of migration).

<sup>74</sup> Robert Schreiter, "Migrants and the Ministry of Reconciliation," 116.

<sup>75</sup> See Robert Schreiter, "Migrants and the Ministry of Reconciliation," 117. (The three dimensions involve acknowledgement of the trauma and pain that have been inflicted, breaking silence on the horrible experiences and establishing the truth for the deeper truth about human dignity supersede positive law; realigning asymmetries of all forms of discriminations; and regaining the capacity to function as full free persons in accord with the Christian understanding of human dignity and equal regard.



who have been robbed of that sense of value and equal regard.”<sup>76</sup> For justice to be truly realised, there must be a proper justice system. When the justice system is corrupt and the law seems to be only for the poor and vulnerable, trust in the civil process is lost. With loss of trust in the justice system, many can only seek justice through other means or take advantage of the system to escape justice. Many youths going into crime are motivated by this phenomenon and the growth in restiveness and conflicts in most parts of Africa especially Nigeria can be traced to a failed justice system. The restoration of human dignity involves a determined process of spiritual consciousness and the creating of a welcoming space for victims of the traumas of migration and displacement. Where this is lacking, the easy temptation for the victims is to seek vengeance against all real and perceived aggressors responsible for their pains. This has created a culture of enmity and bitterness leading to further conflicts at the slightest provocation especially in Africa. The culture of violence, and vendetta needs to be greeted with a conscious building of a culture of true reconciliation and forgiveness. Elias Opong, reflecting on the African situation offers what he calls ‘Dialogical Reconciliation’ as the way forward. He argues that “at the heart of reconciliation is dialogue that builds bridges to reach out to the other.”<sup>77</sup> This is aimed at rebuilding the social cultural fabric of the community and societies that has been eroded by conflicts. There is the need to draw together the diverse available spiritual, cultural, and social resources that can be creatively applied to address these conflicts and other social and economic crises. This is done to build a new culture that can lead to harmony and prevent future conflicts. Opong insists that dialogical reconciliation is conversational reconciliation. Here, communal sessions of reconciliation take place in conversational form drawn from the wisdom of elders and members of the community with the intention of reinforcing social accountability and cohesion.<sup>78</sup> This, in some cases have involved some reconciliatory rituals and in the conversation,

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<sup>76</sup> Robert Schreiter, “Migrants and the Ministry of Reconciliation,” 118.

<sup>77</sup> Elias Opong, SJ, “Dialogical Reconciliation in Africa: Envisioning Common Spaces for Transformative Encounters” in *building Bridges in Sarajevo: The Plenary Papers from CTEWC 2018*, Kristin E. Heyer, James Keenan, SJ & Andrea Vicini, SJ Eds. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2019) 167. (Such dialogue aimed at reconciliation operates under the assumptions that relationships have been broken because of conflict, trust has been eroded and replaced with suspicion, animosity, and desire to eliminate the other, and the social fabrics for mutual cohesion has been threatened or damaged. Opong affirms that this is the experience of many African societies that have experienced conflicts in recent past.

<sup>78</sup> Elias Opong, SJ, “Dialogical Reconciliation in Africa,” 168. (The dialogue is not only between individuals in conflict but also families and clans represented by the individuals. This gives communal effect to the reconciliation process).

the focus is not on the differences but on the truth of the common heritage of all parties involved.<sup>79</sup> The process involves acknowledging the dispute between parties, confronting the truth, admitting injustices, and hurt, and a willingness to ask for forgiveness and to forgive. African approach to dialogical conversation is restorative and not retributive yet it does emphasise truth telling and compensation as a way of giving justice to the victims, believing in an alternative future.<sup>80</sup> For the church, this dialogue conversation takes a sacramental form and could be done in reconciliation services and masses which should be preceded by proper interventions between parties in the conflict.

2. **Advocating for a programme of better inclusion of women and the young.** A necessary integration programme is the restructuring of Ecclesial Structures for better inclusion of women and the young. As observed in the fifth chapter of our research, the structure of our churches is still heavily patterned on the traditional chieftom paradigm where everything begins and ends with the chief or king. In African churches, this sort of structure is informed by a disproportionate emphasis on masculinity. Church structure is heavily clerical centred giving the clergy so much power and overwhelming responsibilities, most of which they can hardly handle properly. As such, the institutions weaken with time and produce negative and abusive results. Such a structure does not incentivise but creates limitations to positive moral decisions and actions and should be considered sinful in that sense. Such a system tends to be too patriarchal with discriminatory tendencies against women. A proper integration that will profit all including migrants and refugees needs to be informed by a structure that accommodates all and gives everyone the platform to live out their faith in a graceful manner. It is a welcoming development that the theme of the place of women in church life, ministry and administration is part of the on-going synodal process. As touching migrants and refugees, this call is most essential as women and children represent the most vulnerable groups among them. Their special needs need to be appreciated. Any traditional orientation that makes women subservient to their

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<sup>79</sup> See Elias Opong, SJ, "Dialogical Reconciliation in Africa" 169. (Opong presents different forms of ritualistic dialogue conversations from different African communities in Uganda, Mozambique, and South Africa.

<sup>80</sup> Elias Opong, SJ, "Dialogical Reconciliation in Africa," 169 -170. (It is worthwhile noting here with Opong that there is need to shift from utopian glorification of traditional African values that are hardly practiced in modern democracies to creative harvesting of traditional African values that nurture national cohesion, conversational reconciliation, social-economic progress, peace, and sustainability).

male counterpart needs to change. This can be achieved in the kind of education and orientation given to both boys and girls. The church in Nigeria deserves a lot of commendation for girlchild- education but there is still great room for improvement. CBCN maintains that Nigeria is in dire need of a quiet revolution, and Nigerian women may well be a key to that revolution.<sup>81</sup> The bishops insist on the belief that “the true potential of women, their crucial contribution and their rightful place in the nation building are yet to be realized. Women must count and be counted. They must not be scapegoats of policies and strategies on population control that are morally flawed and morally unacceptable.”<sup>82</sup> CBCN acknowledges the role women play in the church and encourages them to intensify their active participation in the larger society. It is however, not enough to encourage women to participate actively. The enabling platform needs to be provided. The church needs to examine its structures and address areas that limit women’s participation. The on-going synod on synodality emphasises the need for full participation of all. “The three dimensions of the theme of the synod are **communion, participation, and mission**. These three dimensions are profoundly interrelated. They are the vital pillars of a Synodal Church. There is no hierarchy between them. Rather, each one enriches and orients the other two. There is a dynamic relationship between the three that must be articulated with all three in mind.”<sup>83</sup> All must be done to ensure that women in the Nigerian church (and indeed everywhere in the world) have full communion and participation in the mission of the church. Any form of leadership that revolves around the male species and the elderly to the disadvantage of women and the young is antithetical to the spirit of the synodal church, hence sinful in nature. As we have observed in chapter five, where young people are not given enough participation in leadership, a lot is at stake: a sense of irresponsibility, activism and a lack of vitality and innovation in the system results. This leads to decay and eventually unrest that create the displacement of people.

### 6.3 Chapter Conclusion

As affirmed by *Gaudium et Spes* the church immerses itself fully in humanity's struggle against dangers both internally and externally.<sup>84</sup> She proclaims a Christ who has conferred divinity on

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<sup>81</sup> “Women in Evangelization: Mary as Model” in *Our Concern for Nigeria: Catholic Bishops Speak*, 59.

<sup>82</sup> “Women in Evangelization: Mary as Model,” 59.

<sup>83</sup> Pope Francis, *For a Synodal Church, Communion, Participation and Mission*  
<https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2021/09/07/0541/01166.html#>

<sup>84</sup> Vatican 11, *Gaudium et Spes*, no 1.  
[https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-)

all creatures by his death on the cross. As such, the poor and the vulnerable represent his face. Christ is the son of God who ennobled humanity by becoming part of it, even sharing to the full its most gruesome injustices. The poor are not human detritus, mere garbage fit for the rubbish heap, but belong to him and deserve the same reverence. Any action and inaction of the church that fails to show the world the face of Christ is thus sinful. The structures that favour or make such actions possible are sinful structures. The church must insist on structures that serve the common good and make for proper integration of the weakest and vulnerable members in the society. Migrants and refugees are among the most vulnerable people in today's world. The humanitarian crisis their concern has generated may be complex but the social structures behind the crisis are quite visible and affect each one of us in different degrees. Pope Francis has given us a road map in addressing the plight of these our brothers and sisters. The pontiff's road map of 'welcome', 'protect', 'promote', and 'integrate', functions as a whole. Each aspect would be incomplete without the others because each finds full meaning in the others. They present true Christian attitude that facilitate a structure of grace in dealing with the migrant and refugee crisis. The sinful structures behind the huge humanitarian crisis of migration, refugee and displacement have been examined in the light of the pontiff's intervention. We affirm with Gustavo Gutiérrez that the poor and migrants must not remain nameless in our globalised world, but their personhood must be acknowledged, and their human dignity must be recognised. It should be a major concern for the theology of migration to seek proper understanding of the present circumstances and situations of migration and refugees and see how these could be the Good News for migrants and refugees; how the Good News is witnessed in deed and word for it to be translated from scripture into their daily lives.<sup>85</sup>

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et-spes\_en.html (The church is concerned about both the spiritual and material wellbeing of humanity. She identifies with the joys and pains and the challenges of humanity in her proclamation of the good news.)

<sup>85</sup> See Gustavo Gutiérrez "Poverty, Migration, and the Option for the Poor" in *A Promised land, A Perilous Journey*, eds. Daniel G. Groody and Gioacchino Campres (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 77.

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