

Conflict Resolution and Peace-Making in Traditional View of Ekpeye People: A Pastoral Response

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Abstract: This essay is devoted to the understanding of conflict resolution and peace-making according to the Ekpeye people of Ahoada East Local Government Area of Rivers State. It considers the significance attached by the people to conflict resolution in religious, moral, political and social experiences. The essay investigates, what, in the people's opinion, constitute a conflict, who initiates it, its causes, and the relationship between conflict and violence. This study further considers the concept of conflict resolution from the Ekpeye perspective and its significance to the development of Ekpeyeland. Using an ethnographic approach, the essay reveals that the Ekpeye have a good understanding of what constitute a conflict and the basic causes of conflict in Ekpeye land are clash of personal and group interests, selfishness and disobedience. The study holds that there is a significant coloration between conflict and violence. In Ekpeyeland conflict is usually resolved by oath taking and eating of sacred meal administered by a traditional chief priest, a community leader or both. This in turn enhances socio-economic, cultural, religious and political developments in Ekpeyeland.

Keywords: Pastoral Response, Ekpeye, social experiences.

1. INTRODUCTION

This essay is devoted to the understanding of conflict resolution and peace-making according to the Ekpeye people of Ahoada East Local Government Area of Rivers State. It considers the significance attached by the people to conflict resolution in religious, moral, political and social experiences. The essay will investigate, what, in the people's opinion, constitute a conflict, who initiates it, its causes, and the relationship between conflict and violence. This study will further consider the concept of conflict resolution from the Ekpeye perspective, its cultural, socio-economic, religious and political significance. All these will be discussed from the within the framework Jeremiah's theology of peace-making and conflict resolution. This paper is basically an ethnographic survey. Much of the information is obtained from questionnaire and personal interview. Information gathered from oral interviews is incorporated in this discussion of findings in order to improve on the quality of data gathered earlier through the questionnaire. The key oral interviewees are Ekpeye elders who have an indebt understanding of the Ekpeye traditional world view.

The Concept of Conflict and Peace Building:

Conflict like religion does not have a single meaning, and even though scholars may present different images and meanings, there are many points of convergence. The term originates from the Latin word *confligere*, meaning 'to clash or engage in a fight'. It connotes a confrontation between one or more parties aspiring towards incompatible or competitive means or ends (Amadi 2004). Barkun (1964:19) see conflict as "the pursuit of incompatible goals by the different groups". Bendal and Malone (2000:16) defines conflict as ". . . a social situation in which a minimum of two actors (parties) strive to acquire at the same moment in time an available set of scarce resources".

The predominantly confrontational image of conflict and its sometimes being easily equated with fighting, crisis, destruction, war, misunderstanding, etc. is responsible for the negative feelings about conflict. Many would see conflict as destructive and something to be avoided, prevented, fought, resolved, managed, etc. Conflicts involving religion particularly fit this typology. Yet, not all conflicts that carry such effects, or may be considered destructive. There is a deliberate attempt among most conflict scholars, especially those of the functional school, to draw attention to the positive possibilities and the opportunities presented by every conflict. It is increasingly now being admitted by conflict workers that some amount of conflict is necessary for social progress to take place. This recognition has found expression in the use of terms like conflict transformation and peace building, for instance. Thus, while admitting that conflict could be negative and destructive, there is a sense in which the other side of the coin views conflict as potentially positive and constructive: an opportunity that can be exploited by parties to bring about positive change and transformation. In taking a positive and constructive approach to conflict, one must recognize the prevalence of two discernable forms of conflict as follows (Wallensteen 2006:24) in (Odili 2014: 8):

(1) Functional Conflict: This is conflict that is positive which also brings about change. This form of conflict should be tolerated and understood as part of life, and should lead to questions being asked, injustices being challenged and corrected, contradictions being resolved, deprivations being addressed, etc.

(2) Dysfunctional Conflict: This is negative conflict mostly accompanied by violence that leads to problems and destruction of relationships, property and even the parties to the conflict themselves. Dysfunctional conflict should be discouraged using the methods of conflict management like dialogue, negotiation, mediation, adjudication, etc.

Clifton (1987:40) maintains that conflict takes place in the course of interaction between individuals and groups. Furthermore, it takes place because individuals and groups are seeking to achieve goals and objectives, or to fulfill certain desires which may be scarce and which others are also seeking or are reluctant to share with others. These individuals and groups could vary from religious, ethnic, class, clan, national or other forms of identity. Thus, conflict becomes an inevitable outcome of human interaction. Although conflict is potentially dangerous, it is also malleable and can respond to positive management and resolution, depending on the willingness of parties to the conflict themselves to find a solution and work towards such solution. For conflict to be malleable, parties have compromises and concessions to reach a settlement. He further notes that it is a task for any intervener to try to impose a solution on unwilling conflict parties. Since it takes at least two for conflict to happen, it must also take the acceptance of peace by such parties for conflict to be managed and for peace to be achieved. This follows the adage that since it is men that fight wars, it is also men that will be relied upon to make peace as peacemaking is a process embarked upon not necessarily by friends, but more often by presumed or actual enemies. Protracted conflicts often fail to come to an end sometimes not only because the needs of parties are unmet, but also because they are not willing to shift ground and allow the conflict to be resolved (Collies, 2000:80). Thus, from a conflict progression and escalation standpoint, it is recommended that stakeholders and persons responsible for solving problems that could potentially turn conflictive do so early.

John Burton, one of the founders of the field of conflict resolution, along with some of his friends, tries to distinguish between conflicts and disputes. He suggests that many of the things we refer to as 'conflict' are not really conflict but disputes. Conflicts, to Burton, occur over deep-seated human needs such as security, identity, access, participation, etc. and cannot be resolved unless those needs are met with appropriate satisfiers (Burton 1990). On the other hand, he suggests that disputes are disagreements that are less deep; they are negotiable and can be resolved by parties more easily.

This term has been generally associated with former United Nations Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his *An Agenda for Peace* launched in 1992. In that material, Boutros-Ghali discussed a number of interrelated peace concepts and outlined various options for outside intervention into conflict situations that had become rampant in the aftermath of the cold War. He noted that preventive diplomacy is purposed to prevent the escalation of conflict into violent confrontation by dealing with its underlying contradictions while peacemaking aims to bring about the cessation of hostilities by working on parties and persuading them to look for and utilize non-violent alternatives. Peacekeeping to him tries to maintain the state of non-violence achieved by peacemaking; while peace building consolidates conflict solutions aiming at sustainable settlements (Boutros-Ghali, 1992).

This conceptual approach has been criticized as being unduly preoccupied with the post-conflict stage of conflict, whereas peace building could take place at all stages of the conflict process. Secondly, it is seen as being narrowly in favour of non-violent conflict, thereby ignoring for instance the classical doctrine of "structural violence" introduced by Johan

Galtung (1969) to which many peace scholars subscribe. Structural violence refers to situations that are inherent in social systems that on their own are tense and could lead to conflict, such as inequities and inequalities, forms of deprivation and social injustice, etc. Critics also indicate that the Boutros-Ghali approach places too much emphasis on outside intervention, mainly military; many of the limitations of which have now been seen in a number of conflict formations in Africa (Dekadt. 1965).

Be that as it may, the concept of peace building has come to stay in the nomenclature of conflict and peace practice. It has been further popularized by other scholars like John Paul Lederach of the Eastern Mennonite University and the work of the United States Institute of Peace. For instance. Lederach in reacting to Boutros-Ghali differs with him on the placement of peace building at post-conflict:

Peace building is more than post accord reconstruction. Here, peace building is understood as a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates and sustains the full array of processes, approaches and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships (Lederach, 1997: 20 cited in Odili 2014:6).

Lederach further likens peace building to the metaphor of building a house, a process requiring different components and stages. It includes, for instance, a vision usually contemplated in the architectural design, the structure and its details, sourcing for materials, a strong foundation with strategically placed pillars, crosscutting beams, and boards to strengthen the structure, detailed finishing and maintenance, etc. He provides what he calls a comprehensive framework for peace building that should incorporate structure, process, relationships, resources, and coordination. Peace building is not a one-off event that can be started and completed, after which its main stakeholders can walk away believing it has been achieved. Peace building is a continuous exercise needing constant investment, re-investment and counter-investment. It gulps resources and these have to be sourced for and provided. Peace building at the maintenance stage, like the metaphor of building a house, should be taken seriously, otherwise the structure will deteriorate.

The question begging for an answer is whether or not a peace building process exists, or can be said to be in existence in Ekpeyeland? Who are its builders and what is the content of the building? If indeed there is a peace building process, why do they have the repeated episodes of violent confrontation among themselves? Is there a shared vision of peace building between the leadership and identity groups in the land? Is this based on compromise or based on competition and a win-lose approach?

2. DISCUSSION OF DATA

Analysis of data reveals that the Ekpeye people generally understand conflict as disagreement between persons or groups as initiated by an offender. There is never any conflict without a prior disagreement however slight it might be. Sometimes, this conflict eventually leads to full blown war if not properly managed or resolved. According to my informant, Emmanuel Igwe (2013), a farmer in Eligbo land, conflict is necessitated by clash of interests, selfishness, and disobedience, and it is seemingly not unavoidable in the community life. This view was corroborated by another informant, Sunday Nwadike (2013), a traditional medicine practitioner in Okporomini who viewed conflict as a normal human situation. Hence, conflict exists to better human relationships and standards of living. This overtly positive view of conflict could be responsible for the overwhelming evaluation of conflict as both a public and private phenomenon. However, Richard Okpu (2013, personal interview), a civil servant of Okporomini was clear in identifying conflict with violence. So long as it causes a disruption of the social order conflict is nonetheless violent in character. This implies that the Ekpeye people assess the positivity of conflict on a platform of probability: If and only if it is timely met with conflict resolution. From our research therefore, violence or war becomes the immediate outcome of conflict if not properly managed or resolved. Here lies the relationship between conflict and violence. Thus, it is the passionate concern of the Ekpeye people to see conflict resolved amicably and in due time before terrible disasters are borne out of them.

Our analysis of data further shows that popular opinion regards conflict resolution as a process of ending conflict. This does not in any way negate such scholarly view of conflict resolution as an academic discipline. The later was held by such teachers as Emmanuel Ewoh of Okporomini (2013, personal interview), Okpona Appolo of Ogbo (2013, personal interview), Kennedy Ohirim of Abarikpo (2013, personal interview), and James John of Edeoha (2013, personal interview). Be that as it may, the Ekpeye people view conflict resolution as a process of peace-making. It is duly initiated by the elders of the community but does not end with them. In other words, conflict resolution in Ekpeye land is community-oriented. According to my informant, Paul Monday (2013), a public servant from Ubie “every conflict no

matter how small affects the community and the community must in turn bear the responsibility for its resolution". This is also the opinion of an Ahoada-based businessman, Okpara Peter (2013, personal interview) who viewed conflict resolution as belonging to the "community-interest".

Conflict resolution is community oriented, hence, the more reason why it embraces a communal process. The Ekpeye people, therefore, insist on oath-taking as the catalyst for peace settlement. In his view, John Anyadike (2013, personal interview), a traditional medicine practitioner from Ubarama has this to say:

When the aggrieved persons come to the shrine, it is a sign that they want to be reconciled. While in the shrine, they must kneel and face ... the god of our ancestors. Then taking some heaps of clay from the earth, they are to call on the names of our ancestors to come and testify to their covenantal pact if this is obeyed, they shall receive the blessings of our ancestors, if not they shall be cursed.

From this view of John Anyadike (2013, personal interview), it becomes so clear that the covenant bond is at the heart of the Ekpeye reconciliatory process. In addition to this are sacred meals and the tradition of pouring libation which more often than not accompany the rite of oath-taking. Hence, Ebelogu Michael (2013 personal interview) a farmer from Ula-Ikata was strong to affirm that "pounded yam with ...soup as well as a carton of dry gin must be provided" for the unity festival (ugwu ekpeye).

In the light of our research, it is the general view of the Ekpeye people that the chief priest is the primary agent of conflict resolution. He so assumes this responsibility because he is the efficient cause of conflict resolution. He conducts the process of reconciliation; he admonishes the aggrieved parties on the implications of going against the will of the gods/deities as well as the implications of disrupting the communal order; He appraises and condemns right and wrong acts respectively; with incantations he summons the gods/deities to be present in the forum, he promises blessings and curses to those who will keep to the covenant (ahodinpom) or break it accordingly etc. Apart from the traditional chief priest, the Ekpeye people have such secondary agents of conflict resolution as community heads, village chiefs, and paramount rulers. Any of these can function in the absence of the chief priest.

Our research indicates that conflict resolution is of deep religious value. According to Ake Ihi (2013, personal interview), a civil servant from Ihubogo whenever people settle their differences, they identify themselves as bearers of the image of God. Having identified themselves as wearing the image of God they begin to live in love and harmony and try to avoid those vices that separate them. It is this identification that fully recaptures Ekpeye traditional vitality and brotherhood. Little wonder, Maduenyi Paul (2013, personal interview), a legal practitioner from Ubeta so much admired church unity, ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue as some of the vestiges of the religious dimension of conflict resolution.

Furthermore, our research ably reveals the conviction of the Ekpeye people that political development is strongly tied to conflict resolution. James Orlu (2013, personal interview), a farmer from Edeoha lamented the high spate of political thuggery and assassination in Ekpeye land owing to conflict situations. He was so distressed at the political instability in the land which he saw as being responsible for an uneven representation of Ekpeye sons and daughters at the local, state and federal tiers of government. His very words are as follows:

I don't know what has become of our children. They allow politics to divide them, forgetting they all come from one source. They do not properly represent our people in governance, and they bring a bad name to us.

This view of James Orlu (2013, personal interview) was supported by a clan head, Peter Ekwueme of Eligbo (2013, personal interview) who was of the stance that "Ekpeye sons and daughters in politics should not be washing their dirty linens in the public". This implies that they must allow themselves to be guided by the consciousness of their common origin and brotherhood. Political development in Ekpeye land is possible, but first, the resolution of every portent conflict. Apart from political development, conflict resolution unravels the cultural matrix of the people. In an oral interview with Jacob Dike (2013, personal interview), a farmer from Okporomini village, the rich cultural heritage of the Ekpeye people is seen in their oneness and solidarity. But whenever, there are violent disagreements, they are always regarded as foreign to the Ekpeye culture.

By implication, the Ekpeye cultural milieu has the framework of peace, (uyodu) love and affection and not violence. This is manifested in the community visit to a sick person's home; the sharing of food and drinks during festive periods; the rites of passage; traditional marriage ceremonies, naming ceremonies etc. Indeed, these cultural events are forces that impel unity, peace and progress. These are therefore the values that make-up the Ekpeye culture and that continue to

attract the indigenes back to their homeland. Hence, according to Paul Umesi (2013. Personal interview), a civil servant from Eligbo, “cultural activities in Ekpeye land are social and divine because they bring to reality the interplay between the human society and spiritual entities that govern the human society ... I cannot afford to miss any of them”. Thus, the general expectation of the Ekpeye people is to witness a hitch-free cultural celebration.

Our research also identifies socio-economic development as a necessary consequence of conflict resolution. This is the position of our eighty-five (85) respondents. To buttress this point, Abraham Orisah (2013, personal interview) a farmer from Eligbo affirmed as follows:

It is only when we live in peace that our society can develop. It is only when we are united that we can think together to better the lot of our dying community: build schools, roads, hospitals ... united we stand but divided we fall.

Consequently, the degrading state of public and private infrastructures in Ekpeye land is as a result of scores of conflicts and violence. There has also been a monumental loss of goods and property worth millions of naira. Accordingly, at the wake of every conflict, the socio-economic sphere is always at the receiving end of the crises. Hence, the urgent need for an effective management of conflicts for peace-making.

In the light of these, one of the elders from Okporomini, Solomon Nwokoma (2013, personal interview), agreed that peace-making and conflict resolution are one and the same thing. (uokeini) In his own view, peace is not just the absence of war but living in harmony. There could be absence of war and yet people are not living in harmony, but there can never be harmony and then war. In fact, what really defines the absence of war as peace is when people are living in harmony. One of our oral interviewees (whose name is withheld) accused most Ekpeye leaders as being responsible for the disruption of peace. According to her, most of our ideal leaders have deviated from being custodians of peace & progress to becoming catalysts for conflict and violence. She accused most of them of being unjust, corrupt, and greedy in the exercise of their leadership roles. In her candid opinion, Ekpeye land is in dire need of justice, reconciliation and restoration for the return of peace and progress.

This opinion is reflected in the popular opinion registered in the questionnaires. In other words, having identified conflict-resolution with peace-making, it is the general opinion of the Ekpeye people that the preservation or sustenance of peace is dependent on how much justice, reconciliation and restoration are upheld and practiced. Generally, the Ekpeye people see the chief priests, paramount rulers and clan heads as the custodians of peace. These are the authorities that must be referenced in matters of peace-making or conflict resolution. However, there is a deep longing for a constant up-dating of the traditional process of conflict resolution. Expressing this sentiment, Ebere Martins (2013, personal interview), a businessman from Ihubogo said that the process of conflict resolution in Ekpeye should be dynamic just as every culture is dynamic. For Ekpeye Andrew, this process should be able to adapt to changing times and seasons in such wise that it still preserves its meaning and purpose.

Following our research, this quest for a dynamic conflict resolution does not pay much attention to government intervention policies rather it insists on the inclusion of more traditional elements into the process of conflict resolution. This traditional rite should be observed by aggrieved parties.

A Pastoral Appraisal:

Our effort at this juncture is to turn our attention towards the agents and challenges of the pursuit of peace vis-a-vis the implications of Jeremian covenant theology alongside the recommended pathways of our conflict and peace studies. Under King Solomon, the Ark of the Covenant was confided to the priesthood; this was perhaps an insignia of the inner interconnection between the covenant, the throne, the priesthood and, later on, the prophetic ministry. Here we state rather categorically that prophecy has a very essential connection with the throne in the society of God's covenant people. It is through prophecy that the leadership of the covenant society is steered in a manner consonant with the divine will. It is through the prophets that society got to know from time to time how well it is doing or how far it has derailed. And following the tension of false and true prophecy underlined in Jeremiah about Israelite society, every society of God' people is also required to reconsider its appreciation of prophecy as an organ of the covenant society.

The Ekpeye people could do well to take particular note of this. Israelite society disintegrated basically because it preferred listening to the “lying visions” of the false prophets than heed the outcry of the true prophets. Biblical literature and the prophecy of Jeremiah in particular, show that any society is bound to suffer plunder and desolation if its ruling powers succumb to the recurrent temptation to oppose true prophecy and to entertain the ministration of lying prophets.

Those in the corridors of power in Ekpeye society must therefore realize that the prophets are essential contributors to social justice and civic progress in the covenant society, whose role as messengers of God do not depend on the disposition of local chiefs and politicians or youth leaders. The well-being of Ekpeye people therefore demands that those in positions of authority should hearken to the voice of the prophets and the voice of the true prophets in particular as portrayed in Jeremiah. And, at the same time, those who call themselves prophets in the land must examine their own ministerial authenticity. Chief C.O.G. Enyilike (2013, personal interview) has observed that “leading [African] religious figures are very often class actors in partnership with political elites to seek to achieve mutually advantageous [selfish] goals” and that “leading members of religious hierarchies are often...intimately bound up with state representatives in a continuing project to maintain a hegemonic domination over society”. Ekpeye religious leaders and so-called prophets are no exception to this corruptive influence of power and avarice. Jeremiah calls them to a watch.

Conflict and peace studies reveal that though religion has often been the cause of unending conflicts around the world. Religion still, and religious leaders have contributed a great deal to the success of peacemaking process worldwide. Kevin Avruch (1991:25) recount how “the Pope mediated an agreement in 1984 between Chile and Argentina concerning the Beagle Channel; the All-Africa Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches were instrumental in the talks that stopped the fighting in the civil war in Sudan in 1972; the Quakers were mediators in the Nigerian civil war from 1967 to 1970, and attempted reconciliation between the two Germanies after World World II and in the India-Pakistani war of 1965; Anglican envoy Terry Waite before he himself was taken hostage in Lebanon, negotiated the release of missionaries in Lybia in 1985” and there is also the contribution of Sant’Egidio to the 1992 peace accords in Mozambique. And in all these we see religious peacemakers have a track record. They use their moral status and perceived neutrality as a foundation for engaging with multiple actors, including leaders of conflict parties. But the mention of the hostage taking of a religious peacemaker is of course a sensitive matter. It shows the work can also be dangerous. It is a challenging responsibility, if not a dangerous calling. Besides mere hostage taking there can be outright threat to the mediator’s life. Other times there will be accusations of playing the stooge, as was the case in Father Matthew Kukkah’s peace efforts in the failed Shell-Ogoni reconciliation project. Or the clergyman will simply be accused of muddling in politics, as Archbishop Desmond Tutu’ critics kept saying of him. Yet genuine religious leaders cannot just boycott the peace process (struggle). Religious leaders of Ekpeye and those serving therein cannot justly escape this duty; it is a duty imposed upon them by the Social Gospel, which is about the socio-political responsibility that goes with faith. It is the *orthopraxis* (right action) which, as Latin American liberation theologians have very rightly insisted, must go hand in hand with *orthodoxy* (right doctrine, right believing).

It must be established that this connection which must exist between religion and peacemaking among Ekpeye people does not end with the clergy. Nyoyoko (2003:63) has already shown us how to use “the image of covenant relationship as an interpretation of the persistence of the search for community in the African daily life and experience”. While following his lead, our effort in this section would be to focus the searchlight of covenant thought, powered by Jeremiah criticisms, in the direction of the Ekpeye people, vis-à-vis their sociopolitical history. This amounts to “the task for a sociopolitical implication of covenant in the African society”, which in the words of Nyoyoko (2003: 65), “is an attempt to bridge the gap between the individual centers of power and the desire for power”. Here, the widespread sociopolitical confusion of recent times in most African societies is the backdrop of our position. And part of this backdrop too is a cheated fate the Ekpeye have had in an oil-centered Nigeria, ruled and governed, as it were, by the politics of competitive ethnicity. From this we see that Jeremiah has a marvelous sociopolitical relevance for Ekpeye people.

Jeremiah steps in to maintain that the sociopolitical scenario earlier on ascribed to the Ekpeye is uncharacteristic of God’s covenant people. “The theme of covenant”, says Nyoyoko (2003:69), “reminds us that relationship between persons in African society carry a special weight”. To be sure, the traditional African society deplored political and community leaders who treat other persons as mere means to an end. Jeremiah would say that this should be the case with God’s covenant people, whether under the canopy of the traditional religion, or as the New Covenant people. Jeremiah’s principle could reject the scenario of political individualism and social disintegration among Ekpeye people. This points to the fact that the Ekpeye have in several ways lent a hand to their own sociopolitical marginalization. This is unbecoming of God’s people anywhere, anytime. This evaluation critical of the situation in contemporary Ekpeye in which individualistic concerns have undermined the people’s devotion to the will of God for his people. Jeremiah thus confronts all those who occupy positions of service in Ekpeye society to approach their service with the zest of a covenant obligation. He reproaches all those who claim to be religious, be it traditional or Christian, who yet are merciless in

oppressing the poor and the voiceless: Jeremiah declares them to be godless and adulterous. In all these, Jeremiah's prophetic criticism demands a whole new understanding of persons in society, and of course, of Ekpeye society in particular. The situation is thus hardly different from that of ancient Israel of Jeremiah's days.

Peace-building is a social initiative aimed at promoting nonviolent mechanisms that foster structures that meet basic human needs and maximize public participation, thus serving to prevent conflict or its resurgence, especially in its violent, catastrophic kind. In light of peace and conflict studies peace-building has become a strategic political responsibility. Indeed, to create a conducive environment for durable and lasting peace is for sure a major political project. Politics is charged by a fundamental moral responsibility to replace the spiral of violence and destruction, wherever it is found, with a spiral of peace and development, and to use the later to eschew the former wherever the former has never reared its head. Those who occupy political offices in Ekpeye must imbibe the culture of peace-building, a veritable culture of preventive conflict management.

The structural dimension of peace-building focuses on overcoming the social conditions that foster violent conflict. If this is done a lot of scarce resources would not be wasted in violent and destructive conflicts, nor in the so-called security votes, nor in long periods of peacekeeping and peace enforcement: the opportunity cost of neglecting peace-building. Many note that stable peace must be built on social, economic, and political foundations that serve the needs of the populace. In many cases, crises arise out of systemic roots. These root causes are typically complex, but include uneven land distribution, environmental degradation, and unequal political representation. If these social problems are not addressed, there can be no lasting peace.

3. CONCLUSION

One of the unforgettable sociopolitical imports of the New Covenant prophecy in Jeremiah and even among the Ekpeye people and people everywhere is its promise of social integration and national unity for those to whom it is addressed. This is readable in the prophecy's emphasis on the fact that the Covenant would be "a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah". The social integration and national unity implied here stems from the fact that these two peoples, once the one People of God, had been rather sadly divided, and this New Covenant would be the first event to bring them to having anything so serious in common again. This likewise holds bright implications for Ekpeye people, who too have no little been taunted by internal disintegration, besides being sorry victims of national dividedness in Nigeria. The New Covenant prophecy is a prophecy of a better deal in terms of social interaction both within Ekpeye and between her and other peoples. It holds a promise of social reconciliation. For Ekpeye people, all these mediation brings peace and conflict resolution among them, hence for maintenance of peace the need-based solution should be employed and also the provision of basic social amenities should be provided for the people. These basic necessities will enhance progress, peace among the people of the Ekpeye kingdom.

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