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"HANDS OFF AFRICA: THE ROLE OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS IN MAKING NIGERIA THE PROTAGONIST OF ITS OWN DESTINY"

MARCH 2024 - 2025



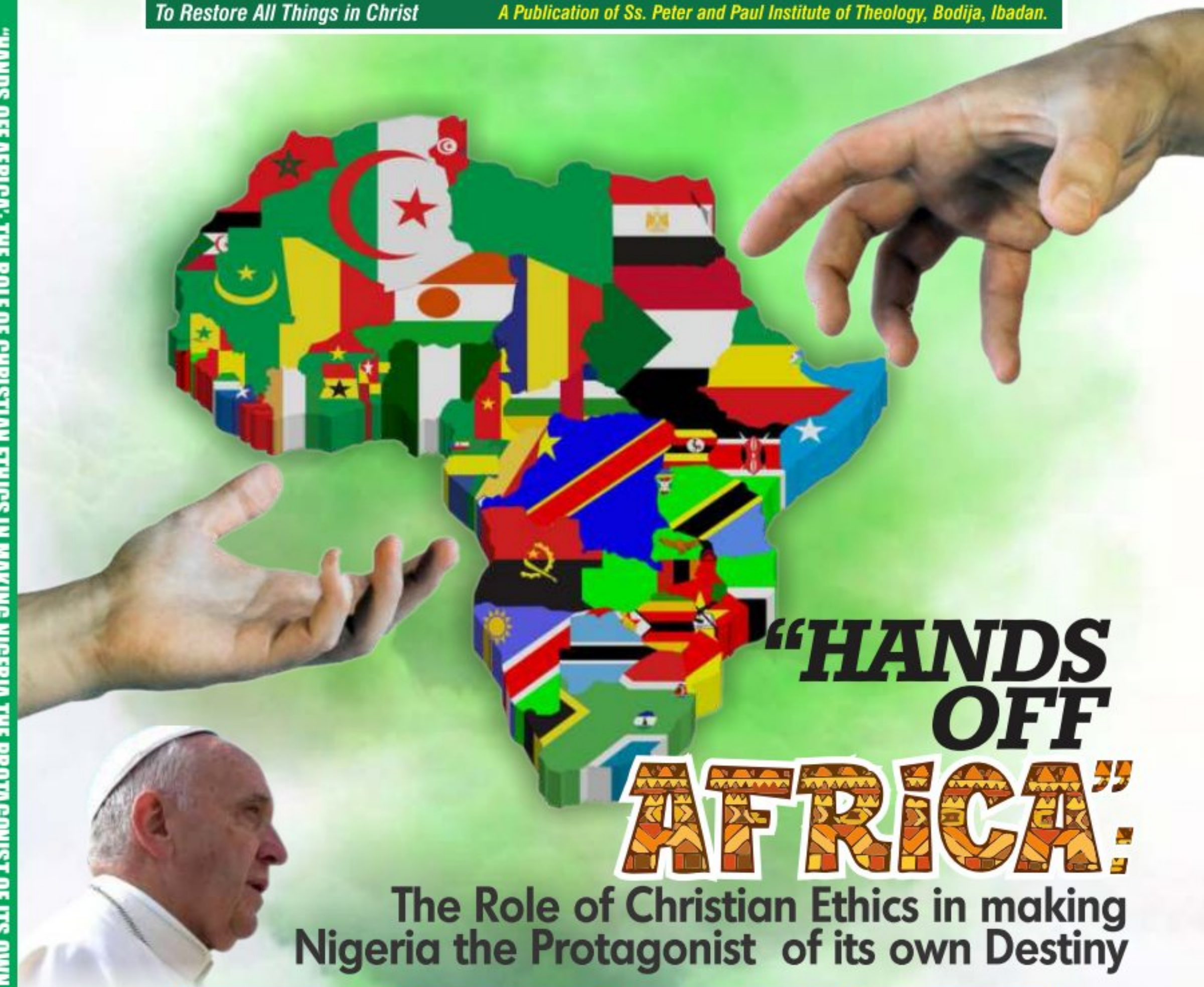
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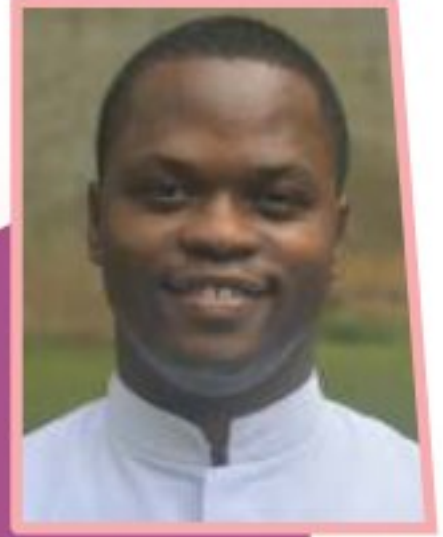
The Role of Christian Ethics in making Nigeria the Protagonist of its own Destiny



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Editorial

CHARTING A NEW COURSE: THE IMPERATIVE OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS IN OUR CONTEMPORARY WORLD



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Our contemporary world is characterized by the rapid pace of technological advancement, cultural shifts, and geopolitical changes, which has ushered in an era where traditional moral foundations are increasingly eroding. The consequences of this erosion are felt in the rise of ethical dilemmas, social injustices, and a pervasive sense of moral relativism. In the face of this challenging reality, our focus turns to the indispensable role of Christian ethics, which offers a steady anchor to weather the numerous storms of moral ambiguity plaguing our world.

As described by Karl Peschke, Christian ethics "is the part of theology whose object is the foundations, attitudes and guidelines which enable a person to attain to his/her final goal." Our final goal is to be with God. Therefore, Christian ethics, deeply rooted in the Sacred Scriptures, Sacred Tradition, and the Magisterium furnishes the framework upon which individuals can live out the vicissitudes and moral complexities of our earthly existence in a Christian way.

In his encounter with the Scribe, Jesus prioritized love of God and love of neighbor above all other commandments (Mark 12:28-31). This mirrors the Ten Commandments given to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 20:1-17). The first three commandments maintain the vertical relationship with God, echoing Jesus' injunction to love God with all our hearts and minds. The subsequent commandments guide the horizontal relationship with our fellow men. Despite this seeming compartmentalization, both decrees to love God and our neighbor go hand in hand; thus, we cannot claim to love God and hate our neighbor (1 John 4:20).

Thus, love serves as the foundation for every Christian value and ethics.

However, the current state of the world, marked by conflicts like the war between Russia and Ukraine, geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and in Africa, as well as the ecological crises, economic warfare, deliberate exploitation, and various forms of evil afflicting nations, reflects our collective failure to internalize Christ's command to love God and our neighbor.

Fortunately, from January 31st to February 5th, 2023, the African continent had the privilege of hosting Pope Francis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. During one of the briefings, Pope Francis spoke truth to power, saying: "Hands Off Africa! Stop



choking Africa: it is not a mine to be stripped or a terrain to be plundered. May Africa be the protagonist of its own destiny! May Africa, the smile and hope of the world, count for more. May it be spoken of more frequently, and have greater weight and prestige among the nations!"

Recognizing the timeliness and relevance of these words to the Nigerian socio-political landscape, the 63rd edition of the Voice magazine contextualizes the invaluable insights from Pope Francis' call to action,

emphasizing the theme: **"HANDS OFF AFRICA": THE ROLE OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS IN MAKING NIGERIA THE PROTAGONIST OF ITS OWN DESTINY.** This theme resonates deeply because Nigeria, in reality, is cornered by a selected few who exploit and plunder the nation's treasury at the expense of the masses.

Despite the presence of numerous Church outlets, we, the so-called religious Nigerians, continue to exploit ourselves on a large scale: politically, socially, psychologically, economically, and even religiously. We sell ourselves to foreign organizations, engage in theft and bribery, support faulty systems when they favor us, and keep silent when we should speak up. These are instances in which we all

partake, perpetuating a cycle that inflicts hardship on ourselves and adds insult to the injuries of our already wounded nation. Indeed, we are all entangled in this dark web in some way or another.

Thus, through this publication, we aim to remind everyone that if we are to recalibrate Nigeria and chart a new course, we must all be true to our Christian values and ethics. These values must permeate all aspects of our lives, as the toga of Christian ethics should be worn always,

irrespective of others' prejudices and biases, for it encompasses universal principles that seek the good of all and protect our collective rights.

On this note, I encourage you to savor the richness of the ideas presented in this magazine, leveraging the articulated thoughts to challenge yourself to do better, to embrace Christian ethics, and to break free from the cycles that impede progress, prosperity, and peace in Nigeria, our beloved continent, and the world at large. *Happy reading!*

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Introduction

Throughout the centuries, Africa has captivated minds for various reasons. To some, it is a continent teeming with vibrant cultures and natural wonders. To others, however, it has been viewed as a territory to exploit, where the people were considered uncivilized and subject to abuse—stripped of their cultural heritage, natural resources, and fundamental human rights. This exploitation has paved the way for the four horsemen of the apocalypse – war, pestilence, famine, and death – to wreak havoc on the continent.

It is undeniable that Africa has endured centuries of imperial powers, oppression, and ruthless exploitation by colonial masters. This has left many nations poverty-stricken, with limited opportunities to fulfill the aspirations of their people. Consequently, the overall quality of individual lives has been compromised, and collective well-being is on the verge of collapse.

Remarkably, several African states have now become empirical examples of 'failed states,' susceptible to both internal and external crises. These crises manifest as ignominious massacres, widespread violations of human rights, and large-scale population displacements. The African continent, as a result, hosts the largest number of refugees and displaced persons globally.

In light of the aphorism "*ubimultitudo, ubipeccata*," the African predicament has evolved, encompassing domestic and cross-border conflicts fuelled by ancient feuds, brutal ethnic, religious, social,



cultural, or linguistic strife, and various

"HANDS-OFF AFRICA": THE ROLE OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS IN MAKING NIGERIA THE PROTAGONIST OF ITS OWN DESTINY



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existential crises. This symphony of challenges demands a re-evaluation of the role of Christian ethics in empowering Nigeria to steer its own destiny. The narrative that follows examines this vital interplay between Christian ethics and the quest for a self-determined, prosperous future for Nigeria.

Background to the concept – "Hands Off Africa!"

The concept of "Hands Off Africa!" brings us to a significant moment in January 2023, during the pilgrimage of peace by His Holiness, Pope Francis, to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and South Sudan. Set against the backdrop of Kinshasa, the capital of DRC, the Pope delivered a powerful message in the garden of the *Palais de la Nation*, proclaiming, "Hands off Africa! Stop choking Africa: it is not a mine to be stripped or a terrain to be plundered. May Africa be the protagonist of its own destiny! May Africa, the smile and hope of the world, count for more. May it be spoken of more frequently, and have greater weight and prestige among the nations!" This apostolic journey, hailed by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie as "a tribute to the primary importance of ordinary human beings," aimed at promoting reconciliation in conflict-ridden countries and advocating for their independence from foreign interference.

The Democratic Republic of Congo, positioned in Central Africa and ranking as the second-largest country on the continent after Algeria, gained independence from Belgium in 1960. Despite boasting vast deposits of industrial diamonds, cobalt, copper, forest reserves, and hydroelectric potentials, the nation grapples with extreme poverty, affecting over 50% of its population—roughly 100 million people.

Unfortunately, this plight is not unique to the DRC but extends across much of sub-Saharan Africa.

In a distressing narrative, many African countries, abundantly blessed with invaluable natural resources such as diamonds, crude oil, gold, platinum, and uranium, still find themselves mired in abject poverty. This reality positions Africa as the poorest continent globally, despite its immense potential. Astonishingly, the economic power of the entire African continent is just about half of that of Japan—a country significantly smaller



in both size and population.

The perplexing question arises: Why has Africa struggled to realize its natural potential? The answer lies in a massive wealth drain, where more wealth leaves the continent than enters. Africa remains shackled by foreign exploitation, primarily through trade and investments, contributing to its economic challenges. Thus, there is the urgent need to break free from these chains and empower Africa to harness its natural wealth forms the core message of "Hands Off Africa!"—a rallying call for a self-determined and prosperous future for the continent.

The chains of Exploitation: The African Predicament

The complexities of exploitation reveals the harsh reality of the African predicament. When trade terms are dictated solely by one nation to its advantage, the repercussions for the trading partner can be detrimental. A glaring example is the export of agricultural produce from Africa juxtaposed against the import of