

ANAMBRA POLITICAL SCENARIO: THE INVESTIGATION OF A CATHOLIC THEOLOGIAN- Chudi J IBEANU

The overriding, indisruptible and indestructible reality was that Yahweh had His eternal plan of salvation for the chosen people of Israel and through them, the whole world. To accomplish this plan, God needed the services of human instruments, concretised in MOSES and later in JOSHUA. It began in time, with that small number of the patriarchs (cf. Deut. 26: 5a). The choice of Israel as the starting point of this divine plan of salvation, and later the choice of Moses and Joshua, was purely divine initiative, groundless and unconditional. Neither was it because Israel was the most numerous of all peoples (Deut. 7: 6-8), nor was it because Moses (Deut. 34: 50-52) and later Joshua were the holiest of all men. It was only a divine ELECTION for the divine MISSION of liberation made tangible through the use of divine INSTRUMENTS.

The concrete form of this divine plan of salvation for humanity was made visible through His liberation of the chosen people from the slavery of Pharaoh and Egypt. Starting from his call by the burning bush (Ex 3: 1-6), the mission of Moses was made clear, and the Power behind this mission was also revealed, namely, God Himself:

“Yahweh then said, 'I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying for help on account of their taskmasters. Yes, I am well aware of their sufferings. And I have come down to rescue them from the clutches of the Egyptians and bring them up out of that country, to a country rich and broad, to a country flowing with milk and honey.... Yes indeed, the Israelites' cry for help has reached me, and I have also seen the cruel way in which the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now I am sending you to Pharaoh, for you to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt'” (Ex :7-10).

It was the fact that Yahweh has seen the misery and the existential burden of Israel in Egypt. It was the fact that God has decided to INTERVENE to liberate Israel from the clutches of the Egyptians and to bring them out of Egypt (symbol for slavery and all its anti-existence and anti-life burdens), and ultimately to bring them into a land rich and broad, a land flowing with milk and honey (symbol for meaningful existence).

In the face of Yahweh Moses acknowledged his sinfulness and unworthiness for this great mission of liberating God's chosen people: “who am I to go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” ((Ex 7: 11). The unworthiness and the sinfulness of the divine Instrument of liberation is here to be taken note of. And this should in no way be construed as the endorsement of sin and evil in history and in the society. The mission of God overrides the instruments in this very mission. A divine instrument remains responsible and accountable for his sins and actions before God and humanity. In spite of him and irrespective of his abilities and disabilities, the mission of God, initiated and sustained by Him alone as the chief Actor, moves on to its sure fulfilment.

This observation above was made clear through the death of Moses in the wilderness, just before the long awaited entrance into the Promised Land. He was opportuned to have a glimpse of the land from afar. He had to transfer the remaining part of his responsibility to Joshua.

In the biblical texts that witness to this act of responsibility-transfer, the mission was again and again made clear: “to bring the people of God into possession of the land” (Deut. 1: 38), “to cross at the head of the people and to bring them into possession of the land” (Deut. 3: 28; see also Deut. 31: 7, 23). The texts made once again the documentation that, the whole burden of bringing out and bringing in on God rests: He has made His promise of the land to the ancestors. Therefore He will lead, be with, not fail nor desert the human leaders of the people. The human leaders, convinced of this God's assurance, should therefore have no fear.

Joshua accepted this great responsibility of carrying on with the divine mission filled with the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him (Cf. Deut. 34: 9). After the death of Moses and the beginning of Joshua's mission, Yahweh appeared again on the scene to make it clear to Joshua that he did not receive this mission from Moses but from Him, Yahweh. He challenged him to be strong, firm and faithful in this great mission of bringing the people into the Promised Land.

“After Moses, the servant of the LORD, had died, the LORD said to Joshua, son of Nun: "My servant Moses is dead. So prepare to cross the Jordan here, with all the people into the land I will give the Israelites... No one can withstand you while you live. I will be with you as I was with Moses: I will not leave you nor forsake you. Be firm and steadfast, so that you may give this people possession of the land, which I swore to their fathers, I would give them. Above all, be firm and steadfast, taking care to observe the entire law, which my servant Moses enjoined on you. Do not swerve from it either to the right or to the left, that you may succeed wherever you go. I command you: be firm and steadfast! Do not fear nor be dismayed, for the LORD, your God, is with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1: 1-9)

From the above, especially from the underlined, we can see that the real active force behind this mission, the force that protects and sustains this mission is God. Without this force the mission will only remain a will-o-the-wisp that eludes every actualisation. It will remain a fruitless venture. The mighty and outstretched arm of God, which led the people out of Egypt amidst signs and wonders will still lead them into the promised land and make them prosper in this land flowing with milk and honey (Deut 26: 8-10). In full awareness of God's support and protection, Joshua carried out and lived up to the demands of the mission entrusted to him. We now turn to the situation, which urged us to make this reflection.

The political situation of Anambra state especially under the three years administration of Dr. Chris Ngige has sensitised the fibres of both active and inactive politicians. The theatre that was played in this state for the past three years has left many people observers, politicians and non-politicians, professionals and non-professionals. Even the most-often-unconscious interest of the lay has been sensitised by the happenings of these years. I, personally as a citizen of this state, that has been under the oppressive and exploitative hands of few cabals since its creation in 1991, and as a catholic theologian, have been watching the situation and its development till the 15th day of march 2006 with keen interest. It has been for me years of bitterness with moments of excitement of-course. What has really sustained me is my strong belief in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; the God of the chosen people, who in history intervened in the life of this people to liberate them from their affliction, misery and slavery under the oppressive hands of the Egyptian Pharaoh.

We are all reminiscent of the afflictions of the people of this state especially under the administration of Chris Mbadinuju. Underdevelopment, poverty, lack of education, non payment of salaries and pensions, lack of healthcare services, bad roads that have remained holes of deaths and many known and unknown political assassinations have remained the people's lot. The life of the people could be compared to the predicament of the chosen people of Israel in Egypt under Pharaoh, but in our own case, it is not under Pharaoh but under his modern equivalents: political godfathers, cultists, murderers, that I would only characterise as “the shameless vultures” of the state, whose ambition was and is to suck life out of the people of this state, to make the state desolate and turn it into a grave yard for the millions of innocent citizens of this state. In the face of this existential jigsaw, the noble citizens of this state looked unto God as their only saviour and liberator. We can remember

the many prayers offered in different churches, communities and families of different congregations. We cannot forget quickly the indefatigable efforts of different religious leaders who acted as the prophets of God telling the political oppressors of this state: “let my people go!” The people prayed, watched and waited.

The Lord saw the misery of the people. He heard their cry for help and decided to ultimately intervene. He mapped out His mission: to liberate the Anambrarians from the clutches of the “vultures” who have sucked dry, skinned, enslaved and made life difficult for them.

Three elements come into play in divine intervention: time, place and persons. In the case of universal salvation, it started only late during the time of Abraham. The place was Israel and the concrete persons needed were the patriarchs up to Moses and Joshua. For our case study, Anambra, the elements are: time: 2003 and the election of this year, place: Anambra state itself, persons: within the scope of this write-up, we are limiting them to Dr. Chris Ngige and Mr. Peter Obi.

With the announcement of the results of 2003 election which, as it were, was grossly rigged and the installation of Dr. Chris Ngige as the Governor of Anambra state, the stage was really set for the great war of liberation. I would not like to go into the antecedents that led to the enthronement of Ngige as the Governor of the state under PDP. I have tried personally to reflect on these antecedents and have come to see them as part of my religious conviction; that God may sometimes allow evil, as His permissible will, in order to shame the evil and claim victory for Himself in accordance to His purpose. The good will then manifest itself in the face of the evil as a VICTOR! This is my naïve answer to the antecedents of Ngige’s regime. And remember, my interest is not essentially focused on the instruments but on mission itself and the initiator of this mission. The mission was to liberate Anambra state and its innocent citizens. God remains the initiator of this mission and the operative force behind this mission of liberation.

When Ngige came in, the “Pharaohs” thought it was business as usual because they, in the hardness of their hearts, refused to hearken to voices of the prophets sent to them. They blinded their eyes to see the divine signs and wonders (remember the plagues in Egypt) manifesting all over the places. The vultures invested every demonic energy left of them to disrupt the divine plan of liberation. Like Pharaoh of Egypt and his warriors they were humiliated and many of them perished in the red sea (Police commissioner Ige, Justice Onyia, etc). The red sea has not dried up! Like Moses, Ngige matched on with the people focusing on his mission of liberating the state, constructing roads even in places man thought impossible, paying salaries to workers, rebuilding the educational system, giving water to the thirsty and re-awakening the hope of the poor and the hungry at the risk of his life, attacks and estrangement from his political party. The journey continued till Jordan, at the threshold of the Promised Land, when the appeal court of Enugu on March 15, 2006 declared Mr. Peter Obi the winner of 2003 election. Like Moses, Ngige will not enter the Promised Land! For not recognising the divine origin of his mission and thereby running after other gods (Okija shrine), he has to pay for his sins. But he has heroically fulfilled his own part of the mission, namely, liberating the state from the hands of the political cabals that had held the state in chains since its creation. Ngige was conscious of the end of his own part of the mission, as he himself was to testify after the Enugu verdict: "I am also happy that the cabal that held Anambra hostage since its creation lost out in the entire deal. What we have today is a new state that is devoid of any form of misrule and misappropriation of public funds in the name of politics. Anambra will no longer be the same. I wish to thank people of the state for their support in liberating our state from the bondage of misrule." (This Day, March 16, 2006)

My personal judgement of the whole situation is that, just like Moses remains the greatest Prophet of all the prophets of Israel, Ngige will remain indelible in the minds of Anambrarians. He will remain a hero for his readiness to die for the sake of the people! He is a liberator of the people. Onye nzoputa!

And just like Joshua, Mr. Peter Obi has received the mantle of leadership from Dr. Chris Ngige. What is interesting is the blessing, which Ngige gave to Obi, as if to repeat the blessings of Moses on Joshua (Deut. 31: 7-8): "I salute Obi for his doggedness and determination, which saw him pursue his case to a logical conclusion. I also congratulate him for being my successor in office while also wishing him good luck and God's guidance in his new assignment. I call on you, my dear good people of Anambra State, to give him your maximum co-operation, much more than you gave me, to enable him succeed in his new assignment so that in the end, all of us will be beneficiaries of his stewardship."(The Guardian, March 18, 2006)

One can immediately judge that the new Governor, his Excellency, Mr. Peter Obi understands the divine origin, the focus and the challenges of his mission. This he clearly stated in his inaugural speech at Awka on March 17, 2006: "Our long ordeal on the road to this day indicates that the Almighty God has a design to use us to bring about some positive changes in our state. I acknowledge the contributions of my predecessor and offer him my hand of fellowship in our collective duty to better the lot of our people. There are no victors and no vanquished. Anambra state is the winner. Nonetheless, I make a solemn promise that, with your support, I shall do everything within my power as the Governor to address our problems in a comprehensive and holistic manner. This is my testament. The pace of development will not slow down in Anambra state. Rather, it will be accelerated strategically for the creation of a better future for our children." (Vanguard, March 18, 2006)

Just like Joshua completed the mission which Moses started by bringing the people into the promised land, the entire liberated people of Anambra state are anxiously looking up to Mr Peter Obi to lead them into the promised land which God, in whom they have always hoped, to whom they have prayed throughout the years of misery, oppression, exploitation and slavery in the hands of the few vultures and cabals of the state, promised them; a land flowing with milk and honey.

Then for those modern equivalents of Pharaoh, the vultures and the cabals, who, in the hardness of their hearts, might still be ready to pursue the liberated people of Anambra state and their leaders, let them be aware that THE RED SEA IS NOT YET DRY! For the liberated citizens of this state: do not be afraid! Enjoy your liberation and freedom! Take up the responsibilities that follow this liberation! Never you forget that you were once slaves! Let everyone share with his brothers and sisters the experience of this freedom! There should be no slavery and oppression in any form in your midst anymore! Never forget your God who liberated you with signs, wonders and out-stretched arm! Share with one another this love, which you have experienced from God. I repeat, live on, and do not be afraid, for the one who is in your midst is the HOLY ONE of Israel!

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