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## **The Implications of Pauline Concept of Reconciliation for Rebranding Nigeria.**

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### ***Abstract.***

*Nigeria as a nation has suffered and continues to suffer from different economic, social, political, and religious upheavals. This situation has been attributed to the multi-cultural, multi-religious, multi-lingual nature of the country which make it uneasy for citizens of the nation to live and think as one. The effect of this has resulted in several clashes which have led to the destruction of lives and property. The bruise inflicted by this is observed in the unpatriotic nature of Nigerians towards Nigeria even in the wake of the re-branding campaign. This paper therefore aims to bring to the fore the importance of the concept of reconciliation from biblical perspective and the need for its implementation in enthrone peace, stability, progress and unity in Nigeria. Reconciliation being both physical and spiritual phenomenon can be very effective instrument to direct and re-direct the affairs of this great country. The paper aims at reawakening both spiritual and physical attitude of Nigerian. It believes that in spiritual and physical reawakening, meaningful development in all spheres of the country will be possible especially in the wake of the re-branding process.*

### **Introduction**

From time immemorial, it is the desire of men to have peace, freedom, progress and unity. This desire cannot be achieved without proper understanding and implementing the act of reconciliation. Some vivid examples from the Bible buttress the fact that reconciliation is an important concept to consider in order to achieve a meaningful development, peace, progress, and harmonious co-existence. The story of Esau and Jacob, where Jacob stole the blessings due to his brother which generated enmity and bad blood between the two brothers is a strong case for reference. The situation was saved through the act of reconciliation.

Another case in point is in the story of Joseph and his brothers where his brothers connived and sold him to a foreign land and after many tribulations he rose to the position of the second in command in Egypt. The act of forgiveness and reconciliation helped to restore harmony and peace between Joseph and his brothers. Furthermore, in the story of the prodigal son where the son rose against the father and demanded his "right" against the will of the father; misused his wealth, and came back empty handed to the father; the father seeing the hopelessness of the son coupled with his ignorance opened his arms to reconcile with his son. Most importantly God knowing the need of reconciliation sent his son Jesus Christ to reconcile man to him.

These biblical examples point to the fact that reconciliation is an indispensable action that should be carried out in order to enthrone peace, progress, stability, unity and love between individuals and nations.

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Nigeria as a nation is battling with a lot of problems such as poor leadership, mismanagement of public funds, corruption, insecurity of life and property and restiveness in Niger Delta. This situation presents a serious challenge to the Nigeria nation since these activities bring disharmony and hatred between the governed and the government. The re-branding campaign of Nigeria attests to the fact that there is a gap that needs to be filled especially in the behavioral pattern and attitude of Nigerians. Nwosu (2009) affirming the above assertion, insists that “our attitude and values must begin to change if the industry (nation) must survive this trying time, and this is why government embarked on national re-branding to address the negative perception about Nigeria and Nigerians” (p. 28).

Therefore, this paper sets to examine the place of reconciliation from Pauline perspective in establishing a better peaceful, harmonious and prosperous Nigeria.

### **Reconciliation: its New Testament Understanding.**

To reconcile means to bring back into harmony or cause to be friendly again; also to adjust or settle, as in reconciling differences. In Greek, the words related to reconciliation are derived from the verb *al-las'so*, which basically means “change, alter” (Acts 6: 14, Gal 4: 20). Thus, the compound form *ka-tal-las'so*, while meaning, basically, “exchange”, came to have the meaning “reconcile”. Paul used this verb when speaking of a woman’s ‘making up again’ with her husband, from whom she had separated. (1Cor 7:11) The related term *di-al-las'so-mai* appears at Matthew 5:24 in Jesus’ instructions that a person should first ‘make his peace’ with his brother before presenting his offering on the altar.

In Paul’s letter to the Romans and in several other letters, he uses *ka-tal-las'so* and *a-po-ka-tal-las'so* (an intensified form) in dealing with man’s being reconciled to God by means of the sacrifice of Christ Jesus. Such reconciliation to God is necessary because alienation has existed, a separation, a lack of harmony and of friendly relations, more than that, a state of enmity. This came through the first man Adam’s sin and the resultant sinfulness and imperfection inherited by all descendants. The apostle could therefore say that ‘the minding of the flesh means enmity with God, for it is not under subjection to the law of God, nor, in fact can it be {due to his inherited imperfect, sinful nature}. So those who are in harmony with the flesh cannot please God’ (Romans 8: 7-8). Enmity exists because God’s perfect standards do not allow for his approving or condoning wrongdoing. Hence, even though ‘God is love’ and even though ‘God loved the world that he gave his only begotten son’ the fact remains that mankind as a whole has been in a state of enmity toward God and that God’s love toward the world was love toward ‘enemies’ or mildly put sinners, a love guided by principle (Greek, a-gape) rather than friendship (Greek, phi-li’a).

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Since God's standard is one of perfect righteousness, he cannot view with favor, sin, which is violation of his express, will. He is 'gracious and merciful' and 'rich in mercy' (Ps 145: 8-9), but he does not disregard justice in order to display mercy. Watchtower (1988) citing M'Clintock and Strong's Cyclopedia affirms the above assertion and insists that

The relation between God and sinful man is thus 'a legal one' as that of a sovereign, in his judicial capacity, and a criminal who has violated his laws and risen up against his authority, and who is therefore treated as an enemy. This is the situation into which mankind was brought because of the inheritance of sin from their first father, Adam. (P 760)

Macdonald in Ndulue (2008) describes reconciliation as "to restore or bring back to friendship or union, to bring to agreement or contentment. Reconciliation can also mean the process involved in bringing two warring parties together so that they will regain original friendship and love existing between them" (P. 9)

Wehmeier (2006) defined reconciliation as the process of making two or more ideas, situations agree with each other when actually they seem to be in opposite. It is important to note that some biblical scholars see reconciliation to mean atonement. To atone means to act in a way that compensates for a previous wrong or error. Atonement being a strong religious word in Christian sense means the suffering and death of Jesus Christ to atone for the sins of mankind. In this sense, the need of atonement arises from the universal sinfulness of mankind and our inability to deal with the problem posed by our sin. Thus, in the biblical sense, the word atonement and reconciliation mean the same thing and this is highlighted in Paul's letter to Romans 5 verses 10 & 11 which read:

For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. Not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received our reconciliation. (RSV).

From the above analysis, one aptly sees and understands the concept of reconciliation from biblical perspective as a quality that properly applies not to good relations in general only, but to the doing away of an enmity, the bridging over of a quarrel. It implies that the parties being reconciled were formally hostile

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to one another. An enemy is not someone who comes a little short of being a friend. He is in the other camp.

Now the way to overcome enmity is to take away the cause of the quarrel. We may apologize for a hasty word, we may pay the money that is due, we may make what reparation or restitution is appropriate. But in every case the way to reconciliation lies in effective grappling with the root cause of the enmity. In the biblical perspective, Christ died to put away our sin. In this way he dealt with the enmity between man and God. He put it out of the way. He made the way wide open for men to come back to God. It is this which is described by the term reconciliation.

It is interesting to notice that no New Testament passage speaks of Christ as reconciling God to man. The stress is on man being reconciled. It is man's sin which has caused the enmity. It is man's sin that has had to be dealt with. Man may very well be called to be 'reconciled to God'. Man, left to himself, is content to let bygones be bygones. He is not particularly worried by his sin. Certainly he feels no hostility to God on account of his sin. The barrier arises because God demands holiness in man. Therefore, when the process of reconciliation has been affected, it is impossible to say or assume that it is completely man-ward, and not God-ward in any sense.

Reconciliation in some sense was effected outside man before anything happened within man. For this reason, Paul can speak of Christ '**through whom we have now received our reconciliation**' (Rom 5: 11). A reconciliation that can be 'received' must be proffered and thus in some sense accomplished before man received it. In other words, we must think of reconciliation as having effects both **God-ward and man-ward**.

Therefore, for the act of reconciliation to be meaningful, one must think of it from the point of view of having effects for both the spiritual and the mortal beings. Also it will be considered from the point of view of an important activity between man and his fellow man or in some sense, between the government and the governed. In other words, reconciliation as a concept does not exist in a vacuum or an abstract issue but a concrete phenomenon that aids in development of man both physically, emotionally, psychologically, spiritually and in his environment.

The Nigeria Situation.

Nigeria as a nation gained her independence from the colonial masters in 1960 and became a republic in 1963. Nigeria is a multi ethnic, multi lingual, multi religious and multi cultural society. Nigeria as a nation is endowed with both human and material resources. In the midst of these endowments, the nation is still battling

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with serious problems ranging from poor leadership, corruption, misappropriation of public fund, electoral malpractices, poverty, insecurity of lives and properties, **ethnicity, tribalism**, inadequate infrastructural facilities, injustice and social disequilibrium.

Commenting on the state of affairs in Nigeria, Abia, (2009) opines,

The corruption index between 1960 when the country got her independent and 1999, the starting point of Nigeria's 'pyrrhic' democracy or a certain variation of it, is most appalling. Mr. Oluwatoyin Alabi, Managing Director of De Promise fast food expressed rude shock that the corruption index of Nigeria within the period under review according to the World Bank report is US \$440 Billion. The amount is six times higher than the Marshal Plan money needed to rebuild the divested Europe after the World War 1. And it is equivalent to the country's ten years national budget put together, (P. 38)

The above seriously portrays the condition and effect of corruption and all the likes in Nigeria. The effect is observed in the unpatriotic nature of Nigerians. The above picture is pathetic and needs urgent and practical solutions.

The upheaval in Niger Delta or rather the militancy activities in Niger Delta region of Nigeria also raise a number of questions for Nigeria and Nigerians. A lot of lives, resources and property have been wasted and the image of the nation affected both locally and internationally. Answers will not be fetched outside the concept of reconciliation in order to heal the wounds and bruises that have plagued the nation in this aspect. The recent decision of the federal government of Nigeria to grant amnesty to those of the militants that would volunteer to surrender their ammunitions and disengage themselves from militancy in whatever guise is highly commendable. 4<sup>th</sup> October 2009 was given as the deadline for those who would want to avail themselves of the amnesty. Anikwenwa (2009) commenting on the above noted that

It is gladdening to note that a large number of the militants have surrendered their ammunitions and accepted the federal government's amnesty. While upholding the government of Nigeria and the militants in our prayers, we urge the parties involved to respect and honour fully the terms of the amnesty. Let us therefore, follow after the things which make for peace, and things with which one may edify another. (p. 34)

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Furthermore, Nigeria as a nation has experienced many religious clashes which have claimed a lot of lives and property. For instance, the Denmark cartoon controversy of 2006, the Jos religious clash of 2008, the recent attack of Boko Haram group on 26<sup>th</sup> July to 29<sup>th</sup> July 2009 in Bauchi, Yobe, Borno States that oppose western education and seeks for enthroning Sharia in the national constitution resulted in the huge lost of lives and property. These and more situations create a sense of depression and insecurity among various Nigerians and of which no proper attempt has been made by both the leaders and the led to douse the pains of huge lost of lives and properties.

Other factors that characterize and perpetuate the Nigerian situation include:

**The Nigeria Civil War Effects:**

Nigeria witnessed a civil war in the year 1967. The war lasted for about three years and ended in the year 1970. After the war the Gowon administration declared 'No Victor' 'No Vanquished' concerning the war which was merely in principle not in practice. The aftermath of the war continues to be seen in the running of the nation. For instance, in the south east zone of the country which consists of five states where as other zones are made up of six states despite agitations from the zone something reasonable is yet to be done. There is a notion that some parts of the nation are marginalized which is attributed to the effects of the Nigeria Civil War. This can be observed in the manner in which appointment in the federal level is allotted; the number of federal projects in some of the Nigerian states, the zoning of presidency, to mention but a few. In this regard, the concept of reconciliation must be applied in order to restore some balance in the polity. The application of the concept of reconciliation in Nigeria can be achieved through organization of conferences and seminars by Christian denominations preferably under the auspices of Christian Association of Nigeria (C.A.N) and non governmental organizations like **Ohaneze ndi Igbo** that will address the issue of marginalization with the mindset to implement the outcome of such conference or seminar, allowing some zones of the nation the chance to come on board in the area of administration, making federal presence seen in all the states of the nation

**Quota System:**

Another area where Nigeria will strive to incorporate every citizen especially in the post re-branding era is the quota system. Quota deals with the limited number or amount of people or things that is officially allowed. In almost all the government policy or administration, the quota issue comes to bare. In admissions into the tertiary institution, one who merits admission may be denied that admission due to the quota system. The same is applicable in the recruitment of jobs. The issues of merits more often than not are sacrificed at the altar of quota system. This attitude inflicts the feeling of injustice, negligence, mistrust and all

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the likes in the minds of the masses. There is need to reconcile Nigerians to Nigeria in this regard by giving every citizen equal right of opportunity. Merits should be maintained in order to achieve this notion of the concept of reconciliation in the nation's polity especially at the wake of re-branding campaign.

**Religious Violence:**

No meaningful development and progress will thrive in a place characterized by violence especially religious violence. Religion is an elusive and enigmatic concept which borders on beliefs. This concept cannot be subjected to proof or verification. For this reason any violence that has a religious undertone most times is brutal and bloody resulting to incessant loss of lives and property. The reason cannot be far fetched since adherents of religion believe that they are fighting for their spiritual wellbeing. With this kind of mindset, a lot of destructive acts will be perpetuated since there is the backing of the 'gods'. Be that as it may, Nigeria as a nation always suffers from effect of religious clashes or violence. Lives are lost, properties are destroyed, families are displaced, and many other problems such as hatred and suspicion follow as aftermaths.

In any religious clash or violence in Nigeria, government seems to be paying lip services to it. The investigation into remote and immediate causes of the violence are not properly carried out, even when a report comes out, the outcome of the findings are not implemented. This attitude on the part of the government has its effect on the way the citizens look at the nation. A lot of questions are asked by the citizens and no answers are given. The effect of this on the citizenry is that they have lost hope and confidence in the governance of the nation, since it does appear that the government does not care for their welfare.

There is a general feeling among the masses that their lives are insecure. This situation can be ameliorated when the citizens of the nation believes that their welfare and wellbeing are taken care by the government. How? This could be achieved by reinforcing the spirit of dialogue among religious bodies, by carrying out sensitization campaign against the menace of religious clashes or violence, by implanting the findings of any panel of inquiry into religious upheaval, by providing accommodations, food and health care facilities to displaced persons or families. When this is effectively carried out, the minds of the helpless Nigerians known as the masses will find peace, security, progress, development and happiness which are the hallmarks of reconciliation.

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**Leadership:**

Since the inception of the country Nigeria, the problem of poor leadership has characterized the nation. Out of the forty nine years of independence, the military ruled for about thirty two years with their coups and counter coups. The military ruled with decrees and deprive the citizens their right to partake in the governance. In the present era of democratic rule, a lot of problems are observed in the polity ranging from electoral misconduct like rigging, falsification of election results, thereby depriving the citizens their right to choose their leaders at various levels. The effect of this is observed when the appointed or 'anointed' candidate takes the 'elected' office, he will not have the interest of the people at heart but only be accountable to the individuals known as 'godfathers' that anointed him. Being accountable to the people that anointed him involves misappropriation of public funds, embarking on white elephant projects to siphon public fund, and so on. The effect of these is observed in poor democratic dividends to the citizens ranging from bad roads, inadequate power supply, low manpower development, poor housing scheme, etcetera. These conditions breed a state of hopelessness, frustrations and low life expectancy on the citizens.

Nigeria needs a pragmatic step to give the citizens a sense of belonging in the running of the government by making each vote count. The born to rule mentality should be de-emphasized especially in the wake of re-branding process. The citizens should be given their right to choose their leaders. In turn, leaders (politicians) will know that their calling is to liberate the citizens from the shackles of poverty. There is no gainsaying the fact that the big problem of African (Nigeria) is the problem of leadership. President Obama's visit to Africa (Ghana) in the month of July 2009 made it clear that the problem of Africa is that of leadership. The African report (2009) quotes Obama thus;

Africa's problems go back to colonialism and also to poor governance after independence. Just as it is important to emerge from the control of another nation, it is even more important to build one's own...development depends on good governance. (P 18)

What more can be said other than that good leadership produces the right result for development. Development being a progressive growth thrives where there is peace, unity, love and understanding. All these are products of reconciliation. Thus reconciliatory process breeds needed development to a people or a nation such as Nigeria especially in the wake of re-branding campaign.

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## **The Place of Reconciliation in Nigeria Today**

Having sketched what Nigeria as a nation looks like even after many years of independence and the much celebrated ten years of democracy especially in the wake of re-branding campaign, an attempt is made to locate the relevance of the concept of reconciliation for proper development of the nation. Today in Nigeria, almost every citizen and non citizen alike feel injured or marginalized. In the political circles, the political parties accuse the other of electoral rigging and misconduct of various degrees; Nation states like the South-East, Niger-Delta, Middle-belt regions allege marginalization, corruption and various ‘unjust’ practices on them by the nation. Situations such as these need the healing of reconciliation.

Christianity and other religious tenets especially with regard to the concept of reconciliation need to be incorporated in the constitution if people are to be really reconciled among themselves. From our analysis and understanding of the concept of reconciliation, we have come to understand that the concept of reconciliation then becomes very useful in removing structures and sources of disharmony among different ethnic groups and peoples of Nigeria. We then can see ourselves as people of common historical and geographical heritage. The result of this will be:

**Equitable distribution of natural wealth and resources:** Nigeria as oil driven economy base its income and expenditure on oil. The sharing of the proceeds of oil from federal government to state government is highly criticized by some states that allege that the sharing of the revenue is inequitable. Part of the crises in the Niger-Delta region is as a result of this mindset or feeling. Also, part of the Nigerian problem is attributed to misappropriation of public fund by the leaders and government officials that oversee the affairs of the nation. The nation’s wealth is not equally distributed. The rich continues to amass wealth while the poor wallow in poverty. Understanding the Pauline concept of reconciliation will remove selfishness and enthrone selflessness in distribution of national wealth and resources by those in authority just like Christ denied himself all the heavenly pleasures to reconcile man with God.

**Justice in governance:** The judiciary as the third arm of the government is saddled with the responsibility to deliver justice to the citizens of the nation. The judiciary in the recent times is living up to her role as the last hope of the common man. The recent ruling of Bode George who was chairman of the board of directors of the Nigeria Ports Authority (NPA) from 2001-2003 over some corrupt practices is an eloquent testimony to prove that justice in governance can actually make the citizens to have faith in the nation. Reacting to the judgment on Bode George, Aturu, (2009) opines,

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I want to join all Nigerians who are incensed about corruption in the country to salute the bold and well-reasoned decision on Chief Bode George. The decision is not about Chief George but rather about our nation and the possibility of fighting using the limited instrumentality of our justice system. The judge, Honorable Bunmi Oyewole, has made a very bold statement that it is possible for the judiciary to help rid our country of corruption. This is the type of judge we should celebrate. (p 20)

**Fairness in our political dealings:** Reconciliatory process in the present Nigeria will promote fairness in the political system of the nation. Over the years politics is seen as a ‘do or die’ affair which has defaced the nature of what politics is all about. With the knowledge of the concept of reconciliation from Pauline standpoint, politicians and citizens of the country will appreciate and embrace political dealings with the spirit of sportsmanship for the development of our country. Also the Nigerian nation will live up to expectation of conducting a free and fair election where each persons vote counts.

**Establishment of conflict resolution, truth and peace commission:** The government should strive to establish conflict resolution, truth and peace commission that will be saddled with the responsibility of settlement of (religious and tribal) conflicts and sensitizing the citizens on the need for tolerance, accommodation and forgiveness which promotes peace.

Furthermore, the Nigeria Universities Commission (N U C) will ensure that studies on peace initiatives, conflict resolution and management are compulsorily made a steady course of study in our universities.

**Conclusion:**

The concept of reconciliation has for a long period been viewed only in religious sense when its import can be incorporated in the area of governance. Nigeria being a large nation can chart a new agenda. Samples from the biblical concept of reconciliation could be enshrined into the nation’s polity. It is important to note that the concept of reconciliation is a give and take exercise that involves two or more parties. Therefore the issue of lording it over others whether inferior or superior will stifle the concept of reconciliation. The time to act is now. Therefore all hands must be on deck in other to heal inadequacies of the nation with the spirit of reconciliation especially in the wake of re- branding the nation.

To promote ‘the re-branding’ and thus development, there must be **Peace**. It is a noted fact that reconciliation breeds peace-not just peace as defined by “the absence of war” or some détente, but as an atmosphere of tolerance, harmonious co-existence and mutual development; an atmosphere where peoples are not only

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aware of their differences but are also understanding and willing to live and work together.

And so, just like Jesus who reconciled us with God, Nigeria needs seasoned activists that will promote reconciliation and peace that will change the negative aspects of the country and agitate for positive improvements in our social, religious, political, economic interactions amongst the different peoples and geographical entities of the country. Nigerian leaders will act like the father figure in the story of the prodigal son to accommodate any erring son who wishes to come back. The amnesty gesture to the militants in Niger-Delta region is a wonderful milestone in our political history. When this is well understood and implemented the re-branding process will be more appreciated and *the joy and gains of reconciliation will be reaped.*

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