NATIONAL SECURITY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA: THE HERMENEUTICAL IMPERATIVE

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Abstract: Nigeria is plagued with developmental problems and security challenges. Religion no doubt contributes a significant percentage to insecurity, despite its positives; and portends a grave danger which is highly inflammable. This is why any meaningful discourse on national security and good governance must consider the religious perspective as pivotal. The objective of this paper, therefore, is to examine how religious hermeneutics can contribute to national development, good governance, and security. Data were sourced using the qualitative phenomenological method, wherein the study seeks to investigate the religious lived experiences within the backdrop of religious hermeneutics. This paper adopts the antithesis of the philosophy of orthodoxy that does not present interpretations that fit in with the changed conditions of the world. The methodology of dynamic hermeneutics philosophy submits the findings that individuals or groups in specific historical situations can interpret their sacred texts in a way that facilitates violence and insecurity. The recommendation is that contemporary religious hermeneutics should at all times engender peace, security and good governance.

Key Words: Good Governance, Insurgencies, National Security, Violence and Religious Hermeneutics.

Introduction

Nigeria is a country that is fraught with several security challenges, from Boko Haram insurgency to the activities of armed herdsmen who are in contention with farmers over scarce resources of land and water; to the problem of banditry and unknown gunmen who have turned the nation's landscape into an unsafe haven. Kidnappers are on the loose in every part of the country and highways have been turned into kidnapping zones. Amid this deplorable situation, the number of unemployed youths in the nation is on the increase at an alarming rate of inverse proportion, while the basic development infrastructures and industrialization are comatose. Therefore, it is

ironic why the seventh most populous nation in the world is in court-ship with invincible social sponsors of insecurity:[1] poverty and un-employment, which are the main causes of frustration and anger that result in kidnapping, armed robbery, jihadism, destruction of oil fa-cilities, child abduction/trafficking and separatist insurgency calling for the dissolution of the national project.

These challenges have made security a crucial issue, forcing the gov-ernment to channel other developmental resources to security. That the political, economic, social, and religious resources of the nation are fast diminishing at present is a real sign of insecurity: "The im-plication is that Nigeria now symbolizes an unsafe place of abode and has also been included among one of the terrorist countries of the world."[2]

Twentieth-century sociology scholarship associated "social prob-lems such as crime and banditry with deviant individuals."[3] There-fore, to provide solutions to social problems, people's behaviour must be changed to embrace positive goals. Although some sociol-ogists still adopt this approach today, more progressive sociologists had arrived at a divergent understanding and had made a major par-adigm shift. They move away from an emphasis on individuals to a consideration of the social structures and sub-substructures of na-tional institutions, corporations, governments, and the media for an understanding of the possible factors influencing social imbalances.[4] They have realized that social problems have social-structural causes that require socio-structural solutions. This means that the basic fundamental approach of the sociological perspective is a step forward from the individualistic approach. By demonstrating "that social problems have structural causes, sociologists have helped

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[1] Conrad Hackett, "Global Population Projected to Exceed 8 Billion in 2022," *Pew Research Center*; https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/07/21/global-population [Accessed May 1, 2021].

[2] Purity Ndubuisi-Okolo and Theresa Anigbuogu, "Insecurity in Nigeria: The Implications for Industrialization and Sustainable Development," *International Journal of Research in Business Studies and Management* 6, no. 5 (2019): 7-16.

[3] Maryam Mehrabi et al., "Impact of Social Structures on Deviant Behaviors: The Study of 402 High Risk Street Drug Users in Iran," *Journal of Addiction*; doi: 10.1155/2016/6891751.

[4] William Little, *Introduction to Sociology*; https://opentextbc.ca/ introductiontosociol-ogy/back-matter/about-the-adapting-author-2/gy [Accessed April 21, 2023].

steer the people away from unproductive 'scapegoating' of individuals to an awareness of the need for social change."[5] Therefore, for problems affecting several persons, scholars must now look beyond individuals to examine the social structures: the larger political, economic, religious and social patterns of a society.[6] In conformity with the above paradigm shift, this paper submits that one of the key factors in engendering national security and good governance is the pervading ideological ethos within a given society, which is premised most often on hermeneutical disposition.[7]

Extant literature attests to the existence of religious conflicts and negative sentiments, which have greatly hampered peace and security in the country. These conflicts are caused by suspicion and distrust between the major religions. These religious conflicts are characterized by mutual incredulity, lack of cordiality, fear, and violent confrontation amongst members of one religious group and another, especially between Muslims and Christians.[8] The nation has not fared any better in the achievement of good governance through religious harmony, even under the consideration of the multi-ethnic and multi-religious structure of the nation coupled with the adoption of secularism in the nation's constitution. The persistent religious conflicts between Muslims and Christians are a great security concern facing the country.

Since independence, this country has been bedevilled with religious violence and conflicts. There have been reported cases of religious violence in almost all parts of the country, effectuated by religious identities within the polity; ranging from the activities of *Boko Haram* insurgency to the establishment of an Islamic state in the country, the 'Maitatsine' conflict of the 1980s, the Organisation of the

[5] Little, *Introduction to Sociology*.
[6] Boma Pepple, "The Issue of Insecurity in Nigeria," *The Guardian* (July 08, 2021) https://guardian.ng/opinion/the-issue-of-insecurity-in-nigeria/ (Accessed June 9, 2022)
[7] Cyril Adamu and John Onimhawo, "Engendering National Security and Good Governance Through Religious Hermeneutics," A Paper presented at the 2nd Biennial Faculty of Arts International Conference, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria (14-16 July 2019), 9.
[8] John Paden, "Religion and Conflict in Nigeria Countdown to the 2015 Elections," *United States Institute of Peace* (February 2015) www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR359-Religion-and-Conflict-in-Nigeria.pdf [Accessed April 5, 2023].

Islamic Conference (OIC) conflict in the same decade,[9] the October 1982 Anglican Church House expansion conflict,[10] the 1991 Reinhard Bonnke attempted a crusade conflict, and the 2002 Miss World contest riots. Recently we had the Deborah Yakubu debacle: a Christian student in Sokoto, who was lynched outside her college by a Muslim mob in May 2022.[11] In almost all parts of the nation, religious conflicts have assumed alarming dimensions which are usually disintegrative and destructive to peace, stability, and good governance. Despite the plethora of security measures taken to address insecurity in the country, government efforts have fallen short of the mark. The avalanche of persistent religious crises in the country goes to show that any meaningful discussion on national security and good governance, must embrace a disquisition of the religious perspective.[12]

In proffering a solution to this misadventure, urgent calls for the reinstatement of secularism have reached a crescendo that cannot be ignored. Recent scholarship offers some interesting arguments that secularization is a necessary step in ensuring national security and good governance by establishing boundaries between religion and the state, and the right for individuals to practice their religion freely without coercion and state interference.[13] They argued for the doctrinal separation of religion which upholds secularism on the assumption that this arrangement is the best way to avert the dangers of religious strife.[14]

However, well-intentioned these prescriptions are, this paper suggests that they are premised on an understanding of secularism that admits at once too much and too little to its normative claims. They

[9] Michael Holman, "Nigeria, Politics; Religious Differences Intensify," *Financial Times* (February 24, 1986), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_violence_in_Nigeria (Accessed April 23, 2022).
[10] Jibrin Ibrahim, "Politics of Religion in Nigeria: The Parameters of the 1987 Crisis in Kaduna State," *Review of African Political Economy* 45 (1989): 65-82.
[11] ACN International, "Nigeria: Christian Student Stoned and Burned to Death in Sokoto," (May 13, 2022), https://acninternational.org/nigeria-christian-student-stoned-and-burned-to-death/ [Accessed March 3, 2023].
[12] Adamu and Onimhawo, "Religious Hermeneutics."
[13] Partha Chatterjee, "Secularism and Tolerance," in *Secularism and its Critics*, ed. Rajeev Bhargava (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 345.
[14] Chatterjee, "Secularism and Tolerance," 347.

admit too much in accepting at face value the claim that "secularism is about the banishment of religiosity from the public domain,"[15] and they concede too little by "failing to interrogate secularism's contention that it is the most effective political solution to warding off religious strife."[16] This paper argues that the solution lies not so much in the doctrine of secularism that separates state and religion, or in the granting of religious freedoms, but in the kind of religious hermeneutics within various religious traditions in a given epoch.[17]

Therefore, the purpose of this discourse is the examination of a particular aspect of religion: namely religious hermeneutics and its role in ensuring national security and good governance. The study investigates the thesis that the instigation and perpetuation of insecurity can be encouraged by peculiar interpretations of sacred texts. Understanding that most acts of insecurity have an internal rationale, this paper seeks to examine the contexts from which conflicts have been perpetuated in the name of God. To do so the paper focuses on the inspiration for conflicts from theological traditions and examines how religious texts are interpreted. Furthermore, it studies how adherents take these interpretations seriously and the belief formation processes whereby the adherents come to believe that their acts of violence and conflicts are sanctioned by God. It also argues for a hermeneutics that promotes reconciliation and peace and suggests ways in which sacred texts denoting violence can be re-interpreted within the dynamic hermeneutical paradigm. The objective is to promote a comprehensive rationale by spotlighting pertinent issues in hermeneutical scholarship surrounding the correlation between religious hermeneutics and insecurity. This is important in the formulation of a contextual framework by the practitioners of contemporary hermeneutics.

Conceptual Clarity

National Security

National security is generally regarded as the protection of citizens, the economy and national institutions, which is a task of

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[15] Adamu and Onimhawo, "Religious Hermeneutics."
[16] Adamu and Onimhawo, "Religious Hermeneutics."
[17] Adamu and Onimhawo, "Religious Hermeneutics."

government. Apart from protection against internal and external aggression, national security is now understood to include non-military dimensions like economic security, energy security, environmental security, food security and cyber security. Also, national security may include actions of non-state actors and individuals that threaten the safety of the state. Various governments employ a lot of strategies: both political diplomacy and military power to ensure national security.

Maier defined national security as "the capacity to control those domestic and foreign conditions that the public opinion of a given community believes are necessary to enjoy its own self-determination or autonomy, prosperity and wellbeing."[18] The National Defence College of India described national security as

> …an appropriate and aggressive blend of political resilience and maturity, human resources, economic structure and capacity, technological competence, industrial base and availability of natural resources and finally the military might.[19]

National security is also defined as

> …measurable state of the capability of a nation to overcome the multi-dimensional threats to the apparent well-being of its people and its survival as a nation-state at any given time, by balancing all instruments of state policy through governance... and is extendable to global security by variables external to it.[20]

The Ammerdown Group affirmed that "national security may be understood as a shared freedom from fear and want, and the freedom

[18]Charles Maier, *Peace and Security for the 1990s*, Unpublished Paper for the MacArthur Fellowship Program, Social Science Research Council (May 2, 2022); https://www.osti.gov/servlets/purl/1332164 [Accessed June 10, 2022].

[19] National Defence College, *A Maritime Strategy for India* (New Delhi: India Press, 2002), 265.

[20] Paleri Prabhakaran, *National Security: Imperatives and Challenges* (New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill, 2008), 521.

to live in dignity. It implies social and ecological health rather than the absence of risk... and is a common right."[21]

In this paper national security is regarded as the freedom from fear and want, and the ability to live in dignity within a nation under the protection of all citizens against all forms of aggression, including security from terrorism, violence, and crime.

Good Governance

The syntagm 'good governance' is victim of definitional pluralism as there is no single and exhaustive definition, nor is there a delimitation of its scope that submits to universal acceptance. The term is therefore used with great flexibility, and this presents some difficulty at the operational level. Good governance is a term that is of common usage within developmental institutions. What it means exactly has become problematic. Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan noted that "good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development."[22] Despite this clarity, the definition of 'good governance' continues to remain an elusive objective.

Undeterred by the problem of definitional clarity, good governance could be seen as "an approach to government that is committed to creating a system founded in justice and peace that protects individual's human rights and civil liberties."[23] According to the United Nations, "Good Governance is measured by the eight factors: Participation, Rule of Law, Transparency, Responsiveness, Consensus Oriented, Equity and Inclusiveness, Effectiveness and Efficiency, and Accountability."[24] It could, however, be described as

> how public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources in the preferred way. It assures that corruption is

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[21]Ammerdown Group, "Rethinking Security: A Discussion Paper" (May 7, 2016); www.rethinkingsecurity.org.uk [Accessed June 20, 2019].

[22] United Nations General Assembly, "Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly 60/1: World Summit Outcome" (September 11, 2012); https://www.ifrc.org/docs/idrl/I520EN.pdf [Accessed December 17, 2017].

[23] United Nations General Assembly, "Resolution Adopted."

[24] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, "What is Good Governance?" (June 5, 2012); https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/good-governance.pdf [Accessed 22, 2019].

> minimized, the views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making. It is also responsive to the present and future needs of society.[25]

In this paper, good governance simply means full respect for the rule of law, human rights, multi-actor partnerships, effective participation, transparent and accountable processes and institutions, political pluralism, legitimacy, political empowerment of people, an efficient and effective public sector, access to knowledge, information and education, equity, sustainability, and attitudes and values that foster responsibility, tolerance, and solidarity.

Religious Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is derived from the Greek verb ἑρμηνεύω which means to translate or interpret.[26] However, Beekes suggested a pre-Greek etymology.[27] Etymologically ἑρμηνεία simply means interpretation or explanation; the term entered the philosophical debate through the work of Aristotle Περὶ Ἑρμηνείας, with its Latin equivalent *De Interpretatione.*

Hoy, in his book *The Critical Circle,* places the folk etymology of hermeneutics as Hermes: "the mythological Greek deity who was the 'messenger of the gods' and a mediator between the gods and between the gods and men; who lead souls to the underworld upon death."[28] He is considered "the inventor of language and speech, an interpreter, a liar, a thief and a trickster."[29] These different roles made him an ideal figure for hermeneutics. For Socrates, "Words have the power to reveal or conceal and can deliver messages in an ambiguous way."[30] For the Greeks, therefore, language is made up

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[25] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, "What is Good Governance?"

[26] Elizabeth Klein, *A Complete Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* (Oxford: Elsevier, 2000), 344.

[27] Robert Beekes, *Etymological Dictionary of Greek* (Leiden - Boston: Brill, 2010), 462.

[28] David Couzens Hoy, *The Critical Circle* (California: University of California Press, 1981), 56.

[29] Couzens Hoy, *The Critical Circle*, 56.

[30] Couzens Hoy, *The Critical Circle*, 57.

of signs that could lead to truth or falsehood, which is the essence of Hermes, who was delighted at the uneasiness of his messages.

Therefore, the earliest usage of hermeneutics is within the confines of the divine. It is a divine message with the characteristics of implicit uncertainty and an ambiguity of irrationality which is inflicted on the receiver of the message. The "only one who possesses a rational method of interpretation (i.e., a hermeneutic) could determine the truth or falsity of the message."[31] Hermeneutics has come to be associated with how humans interact with the divine text, which implies some form of methodology or theory. The sacred interpretive tradition is often rich with a long history; with beliefs about the correct interpretation of a text which is referred to as orthodoxy, and the correct application of texts which is called orthopraxy.

Modern hermeneutics is "the theory and methodology of interpretation, especially the interpretation of sacred texts, wisdom literature, and philosophical texts, which includes both verbal and non-verbal communication as well as semiotics, presuppositions, and pre-understandings."[32] In the humanities, hermeneutics has been especially applied in theology, which is today known as theological hermeneutics or religious hermeneutics, as could be found in exegesis or interpretation of scripture.[33] In this paper, the term hermeneutics is used synonymously with theological interpretations.

National Security: The Role of Religion

Prominent reactionaries, like the New Atheists, have advocated for the rejection of religion from the public sphere and sought to marginalize religious beliefs as superstitious and harmful, because of the common knowledge that religion is dangerous and a contributory factor to insecurity. For New Atheists, therefore, "for the sake of peace, religion must be disarmed."[34] Avalos argues "that the reduction of violence should necessitate the eradication or fundamental

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[31] Jean Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1994), 21-22.
[32] Grondin, *Introduction*, 22.
[33] Grondin, *Introduction*, 22.
[34] Hector Avalos, "Explaining Religious Violence: Retrospect and Prospects," in *The Blackwell Companion to Religion and Violence,* ed. A.R. Murphy (Chichester: Blackwell, 2011), 137-146.

alteration of religious scriptures."[35] He further asserted that "involving religion in decision-making and governance is never a good idea if the goal is to eliminate or at least minimize violence."[36]

In a global survey of 'religious hostility' in 2012 alone, Stark and Corcoran assembled 810 incidents of religiously motivated homicides, in which 5,026 people died: 3,774 Muslims, 1,045 Christians, 110 Buddhists, 23 Jews, 21 Hindus, and 53 secular individuals.[37] The assumption is that religion is inherently violent and should be placed in the hierarchies of violence.[38] Solutions must consequently be imposed on the religious majority by the outside secularist minority. These arguments from the New Atheists have gained widespread attention.

However, others have considered their solution to violence in the name of God to be naive or counterproductive.[39] Armstrong asserted that modern society has made a scapegoat of faith, which is not primarily to blame, and that blaming religion allowed the non-religious to ignore their role in creating and sustaining conflict and insecurity.[40] Therefore, scapegoating religion is problematic because violence is not the only or even the dominant, result of religious practice.

The Role of Hermeneutics in National Security

In Nigeria, Islam and Christianity are the two dominant religions largely responsible for religious conflicts and acts of terrorism. There is no doubt that ideologies and practices of all kinds, including the practice of Islam and Christianity, can and do promote conflicts, terrorism, and violence under certain conditions, especially when

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[35] Avalos, "Explaining Religious Violence," 343.

[36] Avalos, "Explaining Religious Violence," 343.

[37] Rodney Stark and Katie Corcoran, *Religious Hostility: A Global Assessment of Hatred and Terror* (Waco, TX: ISR Books, 2014), 42.

[38] Matthew Rowley and Emma E. Wild-Wood, "Religion, Hermeneutics and Violence: An Introduction," *An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 34, no. 2 (2017): 77-90.

[39] Steve Clarke, *The Justification of Religious Violence* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 202; John Teehan, *In the Name of God: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Ethics and Violence* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2010), 198–201.

[40] Karen Armstrong, *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence* (New York: Penguin Random House LLC, 2014), 241.

sacred texts are interpreted to denote violent actions. What seems to be incoherent is that there is something called religion, of which Christianity and Islam are species, necessarily more inclined towards violence than other ideologies and institutions that are identified as secular or non-religious.

Humans are meaning makers and meaning seekers and religious sacred texts help in the process of interpreting reality. Conflict and violence are part of human reality which individuals seek to interpret by the application of sacred texts and beliefs in astonishing ways, either to the benefit or detriment of humanity, either to security or insecurity. It is human actors who, on their own or through the influence of others, interact with their texts, history and beliefs and conclude that, in their circumstances, killing or maiming is justified.

Both in Islam and Christianity, there is continuity and discontinuity in the way religious practitioners across time and space interpret conflict. There has been some level of sameness in the language and interpretation from the time of Constantine, the Crusades, the Jihads and the modern war on terror, based on sacred text, symbols and tradition. However, there are also significant discontinuities in the way modern hermeneutics across time have interpreted and articulated God's relationship to conflict and theological traditions.

This paper argues that the difficulty in explaining violence in the name of God stems from the complex relationship between the sacred text and belief; and the conflicts, violence and killings supported through that text. The question is, why is it that some are motivated to commit violence through the interpretation of a sacred text and others are not through the reading of that same sacred text? Phillip Jenkins comments:

> If Scripture passage X supposedly inspired terrorist group Y, then we need to explain why militants chose to draw on that Scripture and not some radically contradictory text. No less important, we must understand why that same Scripture has had no effect whatever in pushing millions of others toward comparably extreme acts. Some of what we call 'religious violence' may well be

> authentically religious in character, but we must find its origins in places other than the basic texts of the faith.[41]

The argument here is that through religious hermeneutics, sacred text can either be used for conflict and destruction or peace and salvation, depending on the prevailing hermeneutical paradigm. Religious hermeneutics in Nigeria has largely been used for conflicts, mutual suspicion, and retaliations. The major reason for this pervading hermeneutics is that there is no straight line between beliefs, sacred texts, and violence. Most texts, regardless of content, can be used to support killing. During the crusades, Rom. 12:1 was employed to solicit the medieval Crusader to be "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God."[42] The radical Reformation battle flag of Müntzer in the German Peasants' War carried the Noahic covenant of Gen. 9:16–17. The English Civil War flag had both I Cor. 1:27, "God delights by weak things to confound the might," and Rom. 8:31: "If God is with us, who can be against us?"[43]

According to Jenkins the word *herem*, which means 'devoted to destruction' or 'total annihilation,' first found expression in 1 Samuel when God instructs King Saul to attack the Amalekites, "And utterly destroy all that they have, and not spare them." God spoke through the prophet Samuel: "But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey." When Saul failed to do as God commanded, God took away his kingdom.[44] In other words, Jenkins says, "Saul has committed a dreadful sin by failing to complete genocide." This passage has echoed through Christian history and its hermeneutics have often not only been used as license to kill,

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[41] Phillip Jenkins, *Laying Down the Sword: Why We Can't Ignore the Bible's Violent Verses* (New York: HarperOne, 2012), 25.

[42] S.J. Allen and Emilie Amt (eds.) *The Crusades: A Reader* (Toronto: University of Toronto, Press, 2014), 37.

[43] Alan Young, *The English Emblem Tradition, III, Emblematic Flag Devices of the English Civil Wars 1642–1660* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 67.

[44] Phillip Jenkins, "Dark Passages: Does the Harsh Language in the Koran Explain Islamic Violence? Don't Answer Till You've Taken a Look inside the Bible" (May 4, 2009); http://archive.boston.com/bostonglobe [Accessed June 9, 2019].

but that one is violating God's law if he refuses to kill in the name of God.[45] Jenkins notes that,

> …the history of Christianity is strewn with *herem*. During the Crusades in the Middle Ages, the Catholic popes declared the Muslims, Amalekites. In the great religious wars in the 16th, 17th and 19th centuries, Protestants and Catholics each believed the other side were the Amalekites and should be utterly destroyed.[46]

However, Christians and Westerners relying on 'holy amnesia' seem to suggest that it is only Islamic texts that inspire violence and jihad. Graham, a Christian evangelist, maintained that many Qur'anic passages support violence and sanction the killing of infidels.[47] Furthermore, Weyrich and Lind, American conservative Christians, affirmed that "Islam is, quite simply, a religion of war," and argued that Muslims be encouraged to leave the United States.[48] Wilders, a Dutch politician and producer of the film 'Fitna,' requested that the Qur'an be regarded as 'the contemporary' Hitler's 'Mein Kampf.'[49] Even Westerners without an elementary understanding of the Qur'an assume that violent texts shape Islam.

Some contemporary Christians consider Islam to be in opposition to their faith, with the words of the Qur'an in contrast to the Christian scriptures. They believe that the Qur'an teaches violence and warfare, while the Bible teaches love, kindness, and forgiveness. This to say the very least is not the truth as both the Qur'an and the Bible have violent passages. Jenkins in his book 'Jesus Wars, and Dark Passages' asserted that "in terms of ordering violence and bloodshed, any simplistic claim about the superiority of the Bible to the Qur'an would be wildly wrong." Indeed the American theologian Trible states that the Bible "overflows with texts of terror."[50] She further maintained that "the Bible contains far more verses praising or urging bloodshed than does the Qur'an, and biblical violence is

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[45] Jenkins, "Dark Passages."
[46] Jenkins, "Dark Passages."
[47] Philip Jenkins "Laying Down the Sword: Why We Can't Ignore the Bible's Violent Verses;" https://www.goodreads.com/en/book/show/1254204 [Accessed May 5, 2022].
[48] Jenkins "Laying Down the Sword."
[49] Jenkins, "Dark Passages"
[50] Laura Duane, "Violence in the Bible and Qur'an" (March 12, 2009); www.tif.ssrc.org/2009/03/12/violence-in-the-bible-and-quran/ [Accessed May 5, 2022].

often far more extreme and marked by more indiscriminate savagery."[51] The contestation here is not to engage in a disquisition of contest between the Bible and the Qur'an, as to which is more violent, but simply to say that one is as guilty as the other.

However, this is not to claim that the Qur'an is free of violent texts. A quick search of the Qur'an will reveal passages that horrify at first reading, especially when wrenched out of context. Jenkins asserted that it is widely believed that the Al Qaeda handlers of the September 11 hijackers had instructed them to meditate on two lengthy surahs from the Qur'an al-Tawba and Anfal, 8:12 and 9:5.[52]

> When your Lord inspired to the angels, "I am with you, so strengthen those who have believed. I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieved, so strike [them] upon the necks and strike from them every fingertip" (8:12).

> When the sacred months have passed, then kill the polytheists wherever you find them and capture them and besiege them and sit in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if they should repent, establish prayer, and give *zakah*, let them [go] on their way. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful" (9:5).

Furthermore, the Qur'an affirms, "Those who make war against God and his apostle . . . shall be put to death or crucified" (5:33). Some other threatening passages include Surah 47, which begins with "O true believers, when you encounter the unbelievers, strike off their heads." These texts can become extremely virulent when read out of context. For this reason, contemporary Islamic interpreters hold the view that proper hermeneutics of texts to understand and know the historical and cultural context is important for dialogue on national security and good governance.[53]

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[51] Duane, "Violence in the Bible and Qur'an."
[52] Jenkins "Laying Down the Sword."
[53] Ahamed, *Islam101* (January 3, 2002); http://www.islam101.com/terror/verse8_12.htm [Accessed December 17, 2019].

Hermeneutics: A Way to National Security and Good Governance.

Some contemporary Western observers think that Christianity has witnessed a more peaceful disposition than Islam. This paper, on the other hand, suggests that what is responsible for this observed difference in peaceful disposition is not because of the "violent texts" embedded in their sacred scriptures, but the interpretation of such texts. Christianity seems to have benefited from her long history of hermeneutical development, unlike Islam.

The text of scripture always remains the same, what changes is the hermeneutical deposition. Jenkins also affirms that,

> Religions have their core values, their non-negotiable truths, but they also surround themselves with many stories not essential to the message. Any religion that exists over a long period absorbs many of the ideas and beliefs of the community in which it finds itself and reflects those in its writings.[54]

Thus, no matter the textual renditions justifying war, violence and conflict, Dynamic hermeneutical philosophy advocates that such renditions must be made to relinquish the violent elements and believers instead stress peace, love and justice. In the past, some Muslim societies have engaged in jihad, and have found textual justification to do so. But contemporary reformers and interpreters in Islam have moved away from the literal warfare to the inner battle within oneself, a battle for self-purification which is more important than the clashing of swords and spears. That the Jihad fought in the soul should be of greater concern. This conforms to the philosophy of dynamic hermeneutics.

Dynamic hermeneutics amongst modern theologians, thinkers and reformers has enabled the seemingly violent words or texts to fade from interpretative consciousness, even among those who consider themselves fundamentalists or conservationists. It supports the reading and interpreting of scripture within the context of progressive history for human development. Dynamic contemporary hermeneutics advocates that the problems created by troubling texts and doctrines must be confronted, absorbed, and reconciled to the point

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[54] Jenkins, "Dark Passages."

where the perilous interpretations of the texts fade into obscurity and deny the slightest authority in contemporary times. In other words, the perilous interpretations should be made dormant even in times of extreme stress and conflict; with the knowledge that the hermeneutics of texts can live or die. This process of looking beyond the violent words found in a text is a critical question that modern hermeneutics must be willing to address.

The relationship between religious hermeneutics and good governance continues to be an important theme in socio-political philosophy, irrespective of some consensus on the need for some sort of separation between Church and State, and between Religion and politics. Whatever the consensus, the fact remains that religious hermeneutics controls the allegiance of adherents. That is, religion has traditionally held that all people owe obedience to God's will. Thus, within some hermeneutical perspective, it is probably inevitable that religious commitments will sometimes come into conflict with the demands of politics and could be used as a source of social instability and repression. This is why some religious leaders have used hypocritical hermeneutics and teachings to disrupt peace and political stability in a country like Nigeria. This is what many refer to as the politicization of religion. Therefore, the negative effects of religion have continued to endanger peaceful human co-existence and the promotion of sectarian tendencies.

The dynamic hermeneutics philosophy states that religious beliefs and practices should potentially support good governance and should play a central role in the political arena. The incontrovertible connection between dynamic religious hermeneutics and good governance can bring about sustainable political development through the inculcation of a high sense of morality, respect for human lives, duty, selfless service, love of one's neighbour and humanity, public accountability, abhorrence of violence, love for peace, contentment, and avoidance of corruption in the citizens as well as the leaders.[55]

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[55] Joseph Omoregbe, "Religious Ideals and the Question of Governance in Africa," in *Philosophy, Democracy and Responsible Governance in Africa*, ed. J.O. Oguejiofor (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2003), 309.

Any hermeneutical paradigm that fails to inculcate a sense of morality in the people is a bankrupt model that should be discarded for a more progressive one that will bring about good governance and sustainable political development. A well-articulated religious hermeneutics should greatly enrich political activity, because embedded in each religion are the beliefs, ethics and practices that serve as checks for human excesses. Thus, dynamic religious hermeneutics is a viable mechanism for good governance, political stability and development. Adeleye asserts that dynamic religious hermeneutics "breeds an ideal heart in man to be able to be conscious of the need to have a clean heart. By this, he will grow to have a philanthropic or patriotic thought before venturing to lead or represent his people in governance."[56]

Therefore, the ultimate objective of dynamic religious hermeneutics is the promotion of national integration, nationalism, political mobilization, reformation of ethnic identity, peaceful co-existence, and socio-economic and political development. The effect of dynamic hermeneutics on good governance should be value-driven within the ambience of good governance through the participation of religious believers.[57]

Thus to ensure peace, security and good governance, there must be a solid and authentic religious hermeneutical foundation which is not only dynamic but must also have the core objectives of good governance, conflict resolution, national security and the abeyance of terrorism, irrespective of the textuality of violent scriptures.

In light of the above, the study recommends that:

1. Interpreters of sacred texts and religious doctrines should be trained in religious hermeneutics.
2. there should be a form of certification or licensing for those who are involved in hermeneutics, especially in Nigeria.

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[56] M.O. Adeleye, "Religion, Politics and Society," in *Religion and Society: The Nigerian Experience*, ed. S.A. Adewale (Ibadan: Orita Publications, 1988), 75.
[57]Oluwaseun Olawale Afolabi," The Role of Religion in Nigerian Politics and Its Sustainability for Political Development," *Net Journal of Social Sciences* 3, no. 2 (2015): 42-49.

3. contemporary religious hermeneutics must at all times engender peace, security and good governance, irrespective of the textuality of violent scripture.

Conclusion

This paper examined the correlation between sacred texts and their interpretations, especially the Qur'an and the Bible. It raised the question of the textuality of violent hermeneutics in relationship to socio-political circumstances and the use of such texts to justify violent actions. Furthermore, it questioned the assumption that a text by itself proposes violence, and how neutral or even pacific texts have been used to facilitate conflicts and terrorism. It also revealed that the avalanche of persistent religious crises in Nigeria has been due to differing hermeneutical viewpoints. Adopting contemporary religious hermeneutics will engender peace, security, and good governance.

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