

# RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE: IMPLICATIONS FOR NATION BUILDING

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## **Abstract**

*Religious violence in Nigeria has devaluated our national economy. Any interested observer of the Nigeria socio-political structure is all too easily aware of the multiplicity of voices and the diversity of cultures within the one nation. Nigeria has one of the highest ethnic nationalities to be found in one single nation in the World. Religious pluralism in Nigeria has been disrupted by religiously motivated conflict. And to add to this is also Colonial policies towards Muslim and Christian communities which has institutionalized racial and religious differences with far-reaching consequences before and after independence. Religious fundamentalism, intolerance, fanaticism and local rivalries among Christians and Muslims noticeably emerged in Nigeria during the 1970s. Most of Nigerian's inter-religious forums have responded to religious conflict only after it has escalated into violence. This paper confirms that this is a cankerworm that impeded nation-building. Based on this recommendations are made.*

## **Introduction**

Religious violence has devaluated our national economy. If there is any role sociologists expect religion to play, it is to unite mankind. But one doubts whether this is the case in modern societies. Mankind existence is threatened more by religious violence than any other institution. The civilization that man has built centuries may be destroyed by religious violence. It is unfortunate to state here that violence has been characteristic of religion. Religion has been identified as one of the major causes of inter-group conflicts of Israelites and Canaanites, of Christians and Roman Empire, of Muslims and Jews, of Sikhs and Hindus, of Reformers and Catholics. When it is not based on the perception of the truth of each religion, it is based on the historical origin of the religion, in some cases it is prophetic revelation, mystical experience or rational apprehension of ultimate reality. Most of the world religions teach the unity of the mankind, but historical incidents cast doubt of their seriousness over their claims. The dominant motif of the history of religions is that of intolerance and violence. More wars have been fought; more persecutions have been initiated and executed.

Religious violence is a term that covers phenomena where religion in its diversity is either the subject or object of violence behaviour. Religious violence is specifically, violence that is motivated by or in reaction to religious precept, texts, or doctrines. This includes violence against religious institutions, persons or objects. Religious violence like all violence is an inherently cultural process whose meanings are content dependent.

In Nigeria, the main religious persuasions include Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion (ATR). For convenience, this work will survey religious violence in Nigeria within the context of Muslim/Christian relationship. Within the last two decades, Nigeria has witnessed a variety of disturbances, some of which have threatened the existence of Nigeria as a nation. Some of these disturbances could be described as intra-religious while others are inter-religious (This is the area this paper will dwell hence it is going to examine issues concerning Christianity and Islam). There are others that are more of politico-tribal oriented than religious even though some people may see them as religious simply because each group involved come from a different religious persuasion. This paper examines religious violence in Nigeria. The history, cases and the implications of religious violence are examined. The paper concludes with immediate causes of religious violence and recommendations.

### **The Origen of Religious Violence**

Nigeria, most populous country with over 140 million people and until recently the largest oil producing country in the continent has witnessed numerous violent conflicts between Christians and Muslims. Though Christianity and Islam co-existed for approximately 170 years in Nigeria, the mistrust and competition between them deep-rooted Nigeria's oft-noted (Boer, 2003). Nigeria's oft-noted religious pluralism has been disrupted by religiously motivated conflict, including killings, destruction of property and total social upheaval. These religious conflicts can be traced largely to religious issues, colonial administration, poverty and unemployment and recently the introduction of sharia law etc.

In the medieval period during a sermon at Claremont in South 232 East France, Pope Urban 11 urged all Christians of all denominations to join hands to recapture the Holy land of Jerusalem from the invading force of Islam. The Christian response to this clarion call marked the beginning of Christian-Muslim confrontation over the control of that area (Balongun, 2003). Since then, intolerance among individuals and sects (religious and political) has been theoretically based especially when they are powerless and feeble, but as soon as they get stronger, they assert their positions against any force, wishing to supersede. This is when tolerance shifts position and gives way to persecution.

Another factor of religious intolerance has its source in conversion campaigns. These generated a lot of pressures which were typical of political change as evidence in cases of religious expansion made manifest in the Jihads. Closely tied to this is the acculturation process which normally accompanies conquest as was the case with most of the pre-colonial expansion of kingdoms in Africa, and in general colonial conquest and expansion.

Indoctrination, yielding religious fanaticism is a corollary ideological force accompanying this development and processes as has been exemplified in both Christianity and Muslim religions where children go to school to primarily receive either of the two educations. This enhances the brainwashing of the children even at this level where evangelical work takes the form of each trying to assert its supremacy by debunking the claims of the other and further arguing that salvation rests only within its ambience. Products of this socialization and education grow up to discriminating and actually ready to be at war and discord with other religions. Projection of their religion as a force to be decolonized with manifests in terms of staff recruitment, policy making, decision taking, admission of students into educational institutions etc, the resultant effect and consequence always counter-productive.

The amalgamation of the northern and southern regions of the country by colonial masters in 1914 renewed the Muslim sense of insecurity that heightened as the decolonization process started. The effort to maintain a coherent Umma within a Federal structure placed religion at the centre of political life of the nation.

However, the situation in the Northern part of Nigeria was quite different from that in the Southern part. Prior to colonial conquest, Islamic structure had established a feudal oligarchic structure with a relatively more stabilized and organized system of governance. Impressed by this, the colonial government saw as the gateway to political stability in Nigeria, the adoption of Islamic feudalism in Northern Nigeria as a government model for the entire country and British West Africa. This was embedded in this indirect rule system.

To convince the Northern emirs and sultan of the commitment of the colonial government towards maintaining the socio-religious and political status quo, it became a matter of colonial policy not to interfere with the functioning of the existing institutions. In effect, the British denied political participation to the so called pagan tribes and imposed on them alien Muslim rulers under British and Christian communities institutionalized racial and religious differences with far-reaching consequence in the period immediately before and after independence.

In recent times, the growth of unemployment, poverty, military intervention, human rights violations of the ethnic clashes have added to the flame. The socio-political experiences of the immediate past and present in our nation have made a number of young people to throw hope overboard. Many of them have taken to drug and crime and even made themselves available to be use by leaders in antiquity to perpetuate religious disturbances. By given into despair, many are surrendering to a death-wish. As a result of this widespread death-wish, the culture of violence reigns in the land.

### **Cases of Religious Violence in Nigeria**

The way in which both Islam and Christianity were introduced into Nigeria made for a competitive and conflictual relationship between the two. Having been introduced at different times and historical epochs, they all fitted into the different world views born out of their historical experience of antagonism and hatred towards each other. The regions question though, unresolved never blow open in the colonial era. This was because the ideological holds of the competing religion remain a dominant and exclusive feature of the regions. This situation continued right into the early part of the neo-colonial state as the struggle for power among the regional based political parties was accentuated by need to mobilize maximum support for effective dominance.

One of the hottest Nigeria's Muslim-Christian conflicts was in October, 1982, when the Muslim students' society protested against an Anglican Church in Kano City that was locating too close to a mosque. Although the Anglican Church was protected by the police, other Christian churches were destroyed and about 44 people were killed (Isichei, 1987). On March 1987 violent between Christians and Muslims occurred in Kaduna State, when a disagreement between Muslim and Christian students in a College of Education in the semi-urban town of Kafachan snowballed into a crisis that engulfed much of Northern Nigeria. Initially, Muslim students attacked their Christian counterparts in an attempt to stop a convert from Islam a preacher at an open air evangelistic meeting from quoting from the Qur'an. The conflict spilled into the town where the majority of Christian population rose in defence of the Christian Students. The situation deteriorated as indigenous Christians in the area vocalized memories of British population in the north during colonialism. News reports of the conflict reached the state capital, Kaduna and other cities mobilize Muslims for radical attacks against Christians, against their properties and their churches. Over a hundred churches and five Mosques were destroyed, hundreds of people were killed, and there was significant social disruption in Kafachan and other cities. Describing the impact of religious riots in Kaduna, Iwe (2000) observes that through their nefarious activities, the fundamental rights of innocent citizens are often grossly and flagrantly violated; properties and lives are wantonly destroyed and place of worship desecrated and burnt.

Similarly, in the third week of October 1999 Muslims resorted to violence, looting property, destruction and burning of Christian churches and business centres in an attempt to prevent a German Christian Evangelist, Reinhard Bonnke from holding an open air evangelistic programme in the city of Kano. In reaction, Christians for the first time mounted a response. Igbo Christians mostly from southern Nigeria counter attacked rioters and other Muslims in an attempt to protect their businesses (Kukah, 2001). The Christian Association denied planning this retaliation and insisted that it was a spontaneous response by threatened people. Thereafter, it was not uncommon for Christians to fight back when attacked by Muslims. News of similar religious disturbances most of them occurring in the North and widely reported by the press has become routine. Between the 1980s – Mid 2000 roughly 48 cases by religious violence were reported. Elaigwu summarized 19 cases of violent religious incidents in a table in this way.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Principal Actors</b>
May 1980	Zaria (Kaduna State)	Disturbances in Zaria during which property to mainly Christian were destroyed.
December 18-29 1980	Yan-Awaki Ward in Kano (Kano State)	Riots by Maitastine sect, 4,177 people died, extensive destruction of property
October 29, 30, 1982	Bullumkutu, Maduguri (Borno State)	Kala kala and Maitastine sect, 118 people died, extensive damage to property's
October 29, 30 1982	Kano (Kano State)	Muslim demonstrations burnt down churches.
February 27, March 5, 1984	Dobeli Ward Jimelo, Yola (Gongola State)s	Maitatsine sect 586 died, wanton destruction of property's
April 26, 28, 1985	Pantoma Ward, Gombe (Bauchi State)	Maitastine sect, 105 died, extensive destruction of property.
March 1986	Ilorin (Kwara State)	Muslims and Christians clashed during a Christian procession at Easter.
May 1986	University of Ibadan (Oyo State)	Demonstrations by Muslims in which they burnt the figure of the Risen Christ in the Chapel of Resurrection, University of Ibadan.
March, 1987s	(a) Kafanch (Ibadan State)	Clashes between Muslims and Christians at the College of Education Kafachan loss of some lives and the burning of some mosques by Christians and native Kajes.
	(b) Katsina, funtua, Zaria, Gasau and Kaduna (Kaduna state)	Wave of religion riots in which Muslims burnt down numerous church buildings, and damaged property belonging to Christians, many lives were lost.

February 1988	Kaduna, Kaduna Polytechnic (Kaduna State)	Religious violence spearheaded by Mallam Yahaya, leader at the fundamentalist Shite sect in Katsina. It was a protest over a blasphemous publication of fun. Time several lives were lost and property destroyed.
	(a) Tafawa Ballewa (Bauchi State)	Started as a quarrel between a Fulani man and a Sayawa meat seller in Tafawa Ballewa. escalated into a full blown violence.
October 1991	Kano (Kano State)	A peaceful process initiated by the Izala sect to halt Rev. Reinhard Bonnke from having a crusade in Kano. Later degenerated into very bloody religious violence. Thousands of lives were lost and property valued at millions of Naira was destroyed.
May 1992	Zangon Kataf, Zaria, Kaduna, Ikara (Kaduna State)	A communal feud between the Katafs and the Hausas later took the dimension of inter religious war between Muslims and Christians in other major cities of Kaduna State. Several lives and property were destroyed.
January 1993	Funtua (Katsina State)s	The Kalakala religious sect assaulted the village head and burnt down a Police vehicle. Lives and property were also lost.
Feb. 2000	Kaduna	Conflict engulfed the city between Christians and Moslems over the implementation of Sharia law. Thousands of lives and property worth millions were destroyed.

q'dt (cited in Gofwens, 2007)

### **Boko Haram Incidents**

In the current situation, the recent development of violence and terrorist tendencies in Nigeria, one can hardly conclude what is most current in any write-up concerning Boko Haram incidents. This is because anyone is unsure of tomorrow with regards to this Islamist sect in Nigeria. However, with two most recent incidents in Damaturu and Potiskum, all in Yobe State, one can still speak of the latest spectre of terrorism, violence, vandalism and religious bigotry in the country until further occurrences over take it.

In June 2009, members of this sect had a clash in Maiduguri with members of the operation flush (a joint security outfit of both the army and mobile policemen). As the story goes, the sect had gone to bury, one of their members who had died and were moving about in a very rowdy and lawless manner in Maiduguri. Operation Flush apprehended them and the ensuing fracas left a member of them dead. On July 23<sup>rd</sup> 2009, the sect issues a warning letter to the state government informing them of their intension to strike. The same July 2009 on the 24<sup>th</sup>, there was serious tension in Maiduguri. People were warned not to stay out late. Saturday, July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2009; a bomb went off in a building close to the Maiduguri Flour Mills, off Baga Road, eight people including the bomb maker's wife, were arrested. There were also reports of bombs being found in possession of some people in Biu, a town of 2 hours drive from Maiduguri.

On Saturday July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2009, the day started out normally, people move around doing their normal business but by 10 p.m Boko Haram launched their attacks burning some Police Stations, the house of the Commandant of the Police College and had killed some policemen including the Deputy Commandant of Mobile Police (MOPOL). They had also broken open the Maiduguri New Prisons and freed a number of Prisoners. The Police vehicles were burnt. The terrorists had completely vandalized GSM facilities and communication was completely grounded. There was also no electricity, a situation that had persisted the entire duration of the crisis. The EYN church and nearby National Evangelical Mission, NEM which shares a wall with the EYN were completely raised down. In the case of National Evangelical Mission 50 members who were for a night vigil were killed. The sight of burnt and mangled bodies was described by an eye witnessed account as “something that would haunt a memory for a long time”. Its Pastor was set ablaze along with another man resident in the church. All of them were murdered in cold blood. The Deeper Life Church within the same vicinity had also been destroyed beyond repair.

On Thursday, July 30<sup>th</sup> 2009, the glorious news that the fundamentalist and the leader of



Boko Haram had been captured. The government of Maiduguri went on air once more to officially announce that the Boko Haram uprising had been quenched and people could go about their normal business. On the 9.00 clock news, it was announced that Mohammed Yusuf had been killed, and people prayed, sang songs and wept. The Mayhem in Maiduguri was finally over and people could sleep fitfully that night (Isidore, 2012).

Evidence is now pointing to the fact that Boko Haram spearheaded the attack on Christians in Borno State on February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2006 where 54 churches were burnt down with number of people destroyed. Yusuf is reported to have as much as eight hundred million naira (N800,000,000) in one of his accounts and has travelled extensively to some Middle Eastern countries which are no doubt, evidence of some foreign sponsorship. He had a fleet of exotic cars with which he drove around, including three unmarked Toyota Camry cars, of 2009 model. Yet he moved about like a warlord without any questions by those in authority (this is where government proved weakness (2007).

Suspicion and conflict have characterized Christian – Muslim relations in Nigeria since the colonial era. This condition has indeed impeded our nation-building. Foreign investors could not find it safe to invest in Nigeria. Fear of terrorism, kidnapers and tendencies of building today and destroying tomorrow turned to be the image of Nigeria as a nation.

### **Causes of Religious violence in Nigeria**

Many factors are responsible for religious violence in Nigeria which includes: Religious fundamentalism, Religious fanaticism, local rivalries, incitements and Religious intolerance.

### **Religious Fundamentalism**

Fundamentalism refers to any sect of movement within a religion that emphasizes a rigid adherence to what it conceives of as the fundamental principles of its faith, usually resulting in a denouncement of alternative practices and interpretations. There are fundamentalist sects in almost all of the World's major religions, including Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Judaism.

In Christianity, fundamentalists are “Born Again and Bible believing Protestants, as opposed to mainline, modernist, Protestants, who from a fundamentalist perspective, represent churchianity. In Islam they are Jama'at (Arabic religious enclaves: with connotations of close fellowship) self-consciously engaged in Jihad (struggle) against western culture that suppress authentic Islam submission) and the God-given (Sharia) way of life. In Judaism, they are Haredi Torah-true Jews. And they have their



equivalent in Hinduism, Sikhism and other world religions.

These groups insist on a sharp boundary between themselves and others, and finally between a sacred view of life and the secular world. The fundamentalists direct their cliques towards (and draw most of their converts from) the larger community of their religion, by attempting to convince them that they are not experiencing the authentic version of their professed religion.

Fundamentalists believe that God articulated His will precisely to His followers and that they have a reliable and perfect record of that revelation. As a result people are obliged to obey the word of God in strict sense. The appeal of fundamentalism is its affirmation of absolutes in a world that seems to have lost any sense of right and wrong. God has provided through his scriptures the proper values for the good life, fundamentalists have God's favour because they alone are true to his word, while everyone else is bound for ruin.

People like Martin Luther and his associates who almost had turned the entire Christendom upside down by 1517 during Reformation episode. Reinhard Bonke – a German Christian radical crusader and Michael Yusuf an American evangelical who described the Islamic extremist terrorist in this way; The house of Islam and the house of war. This is few examples of Christian fundamentalist.

The major problem the World is facing today is that these fundamentalists before they died had trained and recruited followers who take after them.

### **Religious Intolerance**

The word intolerant according to Hornby(1999) means disapproving or not willing to accept ideas or ways of behaving that are different from your own. Intolerance also implies unwillingness to let other people act in a different way or hold different opinion from you. Its synonyms include bigoted, prejudiced, arrogant, fanatic and small-medal while its antonyms are; understanding, humble liberal, lenient and tolerant.

From the general meaning of the word intolerance one observes that intolerance is an ill wind that blows nobody any good. When it comes into politics there would be tensions, crises, war and rigging of election. When it comes to religion it is seen by scholars as the greatest gift to mankind but it has turn to worst enemy to humanity. The present researchers agree with Nwaiwu(1999) as he observes that no peace among the peoples of the World without peace among the religions. No peace among the religions, without dialogue between the religions, and there is no dialogue between the religions without accurate knowledge of one another.

From the above quotation, one can see that Nwaiwu(1999) suggested that inter-religious dialogue and the spirit of tolerance is the only force that will foster

understanding, peace and harmony in Nigeria. The spirit of intolerance as it implies disapproval, bigotry, prejudices, arrogant and fanatics are the major causes of religious violence in Nigeria.

This paper strongly advocates that Nigerians should replace intolerance with tolerance in their religious persuasions. This can be achieved through heart to heart religious dialogue. In this context dialogue means more than conversation between persons to include exchange of religious experience.

The exchange of ideas, view or opinions, an effort that demands respect for the identity and integrity of other religion(s) faith, Relationship to expose as well as resolve misunderstanding and break down barriers, hostility and conflict for peaceful co-existence (Umaru, 2012) Inter-religious dialogue involves sharing of ideas from, different religious traditions with the aim of enriching one's knowledge of other peoples religion and appreciate the value of other peoples religious belief and be willing to co-exist with them.

Another cause of religious violence as we mentioned above is religious fanatic. We will now briefly highlight religious fanatic.

### **Religious Fanaticism**

When you refer to a person as fanatic it means someone who is extremely enthusiastic about something. Or a person who holds an extreme or dangerous opinions, belief or behaviour, especially in connection with religion or politics. Its synonyms includes: Over enthusiastic, over-zealous, fervent and paranoiac. While its antonyms are: liberal, secular, tolerant, open-minded etc. From the above scholarly search, one observed that intolerance has almost the same meaning with Fanatic (Hornby 1999). Iwe gave a precise definition of religious fanaticism when he expresses that, "Religious fanaticism is an irrational attitude to religion which leads the religionist to the practice of religion beyond the bounds of reason and therefore, without moderation.

From the above definition, it is obvious that religious fanaticism is essentially a negative and vicious attitude to religion, characterized by exaggeration and immoderation, manipulation and exploitation, excesses and a breeding ground for religious violence. Iwe, went further to list about twelve causal factors of religious violence which include; Psychological disequilibrium, cognitive poverty, disinclination to change, religious ignorance, spiritual arrogance, religious triumphalism, paucity of experience, social maladjustment, vested material interest, material poverty, poor-secular leadership, poor ecclesiastical leadership. Invariably, religious fanaticisms have universally and at all times been negative and repressive, disintegrative and counterproductive, violent and disastrous for humanity.

### **Local Rivalry and Incitement**

Every religion has its characteristic features and peculiar principles which constitute its tradition. By and large, such a tradition determines not only the mode of worship in a given religion but also the instruments needed for the performance of the worship. The operative word in this discussion is the instrument of worship in which the unhealthy rivalry between the Muslims and Christians manifests. For instance, while the Christians may require benches or some sorts of furniture to perform worship in their church, the Muslims do not need the same set of furniture to perform Salah in the Mosque. If, therefore, Christians ask for governments assistance on the provision of furniture. It will sound unreasonable for the Muslims to make a request for the same set of furniture. This scenario describes vividly the attitude of both Muslims and Christians in seeking government attention and assistance towards performing their religious rituals. Their requests are usually born out of the spirit of what is good for the goose is good for the gander. This is a reflection of an unhealthy rivalry.

The government is always placed in a difficult situation for it must not say no to any such request even when it is glaring that the request is made out of jealousy. Hence such request are usually backed up with press conferences and paid advertisements for the purpose of publicity and incitement.

The second republic witnessed some of the most dangerous forms of incitement as the Shagari administration was accused of favouring Muslim. One of the cases of favouritism cited was the allegation of ten million naira given to Muslims to build a Mosque in Abuja. The same administration was accused of an intention to create an Islamic Board in the presidency. Both allegations were calculated to create tensions and religious chaos in the country. This state of affairs in a way is the culmination of the sore relationship that has been fermenting over the year and now has matured into a full-blown violence between Islam and Christianity.

### **The Implications of Religious Violence in Nigeria for Nation Building**

The key to the success of nation building is predicated on the extent to which people of various diversities are willing to accommodate others through underlined principles of give and take. But religion has within this context, come to serve as a disintegrative force that undermines the entire process and structure of nation building in Nigeria. The catalogue of events of religious conflicts between 1980-2000 and beyond in Nigeria, can be best summarized as the quagmires which have threatened to destroy the fabric upon which the entire nation rested.

The resultant implications and effects of religious conflicts of Northern Nigeria on nation building are complex and varied in diverse ramifications. Religious conflict

which is a by-product of intolerance breeds mutual distrust, discrimination, perpetual sense of insecurity among communities etc. Philosophers like Max Weber have theorized that most universal religions have positive attributes which thrive best under an environment of religious tolerance. In an environment of religious intolerance, the positive attributes of various religions cannot be implied, and by implication their salutary effects on national development are lost (qd't Hobon 2007). Where one group dominates the other, conflict emerges and democracy is endangered. Where democracy suffers, the tempo and process of national development is retarded.

As evident from all the cases treated in this work, an accompanying fact about every crisis is the wanton destruction of lives and properties. Arising from these losses is the fact that the nation is deprived of much needed manpower; affected families have lost either breadwinners or economically-useful members, educational or vocational pursuits disrupted etc. All these have negative consequences on the socio-psychological and economic wellbeing of the nation in general. Apart from the loss of lives, there were widespread disruptions of economic activities, accessioning loss of manpower, which have negative effects on productivity. A conservative estimate to these losses in addition to the cost damaged properties and economic structures run into billions. The huge sum, which the nation is compelled to sink into replacing the damaged properties or paying compensations, would have been profitably invested to develop the nation, build industries and create job opportunities for the youths.

Religious conflicts as identified also exert a sense of uncertainty and insecurity on both local and foreign investors, thereby discouraging investments in the growing economy. Cases abound where international and local business concerns have pulled out of certain areas considered trouble and unsafe. A manifest effect of this is the amount of time and resources spent by the leadership both at the national echelons, making overseas trips and placing adverts to win back the confidence of investors who have since left. This is further made manifest in the frequent appeals, by governments of affected states, to small scale investors who had fled as a result of the crises to return. These are indicative of the immediate negative effects of such disturbances on investment.

Socially, the cordial relationship among religious groups often gets eroded, giving way to mistrust and discontent. A disturbing feature is the unhealthy patterns of community settlement and residence, which in the cities affected and prone to religious violence, have become clear-cut along religious lines. Thus, citizens are now becoming stranger to themselves, within the same nation, as certain areas and businesses are designated enemy enclaves. This widens the gap and undermines the cement requisite for national integration.

A worrisome aspect is the fact that history shows that all democratic efforts in Nigeria have always been followed by demand on the state which among other things include

religious demands. This is evidenced from our experiences, the (197-1979); 1989 transition programmes and projects had the religious question to grapple with. Also, all democratic experiments projects had the religious question to grapple or demand to content with. This has not only served as actual threat which has undermined cohesion of the nation state, but remain the major potential threat to democracy as manifested in all the demand for sharia and attending consequences of its implementation in Northern Nigeria. Most importantly within a country like Nigeria that is diverse both in territory and compensation of groups and practice federalism, the threat from religion crises have always been accompanied by a massive return of people back to their state of origin as certain places become “no go areas”. This undermines the principles of federal character.

### **Conclusion**

Man is fundamentally religious. But his religiosity should be aimed at promoting a sound spiritual relationship with his creator and his fellow man. He can attain to this goal by upholding values of justice, love, and fairness in his dealings with others; the sincere effort to achieve this lead to mutual understanding and tolerance, especially in a multi-cultural and multi-religious society like Nigeria.

The two world religious tradition in Nigeria can and should coexist because both preach love and peace. The Muslims contend that Islam is the way of peace; it is the community of peace which has surrendered to the will of Allah. The Christian witness invites all people into an experience of God's peace. True peace cannot be said to exist, unless there is the experience of a right and joyous relationship with God and man. When such atmosphere is created, development at all levels of national life can be ensured.

Again the two religious traditions emphasized the importance of love and compassion. These virtues flow from the very nature of God. Islam calls God the “compassionate, the Merciful”. The Quran calls on men to rely on the grace and mercy of God, for these are better than the worldly riches they amas” (Suranlo, 2005). God's infinite compassion towards humanity is also a central teaching of Christianity. In his miracles, parables and eventually in his death on the cross Jesus exemplifies in practical deeds Gods loving disposition towards man. (1 John 4: 7-12 demands from believers: “My dear friends, let us love one another, since love I from God and anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. Whoever fails to love does not know God, because God is love. According to John pope II, those who profess for peace should remove the element that could cause war”.

Moreover, the 21<sup>st</sup> century has proved to all and sundry that reasonable way to achieve a global community of sustainable development is to enhance peace and harmony. This

is where Boko Haram gets it wrong in its sustained attack on every segment of the Nigeria society. The ideology of destruction, whether as a religious motive to achieve a political advantage or any other reasons cannot bring anything good to the country and humanity in general.

### **Recommendations**

*Finally, the paper wishes to make the following recommendations:*

1. The effort at nation-building will only be successful when there is esprit-corps with the religious traditions. The two faiths should recognize the authority of secular powers in its totality as belonging to God and sovereignty. Therefore the religious groups Islam and Christianity, must work together to foster national development, stability of the economy, political and social progress. And since difficulties in relations between Christians and Moslems arise when they fail to distinguish between region and politics, the paper recommends a respect for secular nature of our constitution. Religious laws cannot surpass municipal laws in a secular state like Nigeria.
2. Tolerance for respect for human right can initiate good relationships between Muslims and Christians on the ground of informed apprehension, critical appreciation and unbiased judgment of one another's basic beliefs. Tolerance means no religious traditions should attempt to impose its way of life on the nation in a situation where the relationship people of different faiths and ideologies is extremely complex. Therefore, historical circumstances make it necessary and urgent that the church and mosque must continue to exist for a better Nigeria.
3. There is nothing wrong with Islam and Christianity to exist together in Nigeria. The Federal republic of Nigeria has recognized the importance of religions as a vital force for nation building and tried to bridge the gabs of religion conflicts by forming associations, of religious peace talk such as the National Association for religious tolerance (NARTO) and the advisory council on religious affairs (ACRA). These associations affecting the nation with a view of fostering unity and national development. The paper recommends the creation of such commissions for interfaith dialogue on the local levels. primary place can be given to what is called “the dialogue of life”, which demands the eloquent, yet silent, witnessing of the adherents of both traditions to the reality of the kingdom of God within human societies.
4. Finally, interreligious relations have become an issue not only for international politics but also for civilization dialogue. if this fact has been recognized in the

agencies of international organizations like the United Nations and world economic Forum, so also should our policy-makers and political commentators should avoid perpetuating misconceptions and stereotypes that risk promoting the clash of civilization in the country.

If the nation is to avail itself of the best means for effective conversation between religious, ethnic and political interest groups, it needs to nature sensitivity to the groups; it needs to nurture sensitivity to the variety of traditions and the multiplicity of voices in this nation. The existence of Christian and Moslems in Nigeria is not an accident of history, but part of God's providential plan to uplift the nation. And so we must affirm the common responsibility of the two religious traditions in the arduous task of nation-building, as well as their invaluable achievements with in the national history. A collaborative dialogue between them is indispensable for the development of 'common ground', which means a common culture and a common commitment of moral values. Through this collaborative dialogue the spiritual resources and witnessing of the two world religious traditions can contribute in no small measure to the moral, political and upliftment of our nation Nigeria.

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