Peace and Reconciliation: Hallmarks for Social Justice in Nigeria.
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Abstract

Time after time people of different ethnic extractions in Nigeria have expressed sentiment on deep-rooted grievances exemplified in the abandon property saga, the June 12 annulment, inequitable derivative formula, electoral fraud, poor funding of research institutions, unjust retrenchments, corruption, unlawful retirement from Nigeria Armed Forces and ethnic conflicts. They have displayed the need to either change or improve their societal conditions which may be in form of economic crises, socio-political chaos and upheaval for the better. Their reactions might come in different ways such as mute indifference, silent resignation, vocal utterances and dauntless violence against groups and the leadership. Most of these reactions do not seem productive for a number of reasons: we seem to take the hood for the monk. This explains that we have not tackled the real problem of our society, because we do not seem to labor enough and conscientiously too to discover the roots of people and reconciliation as hallmarks for social justice in Nigeria. The search for the diagnosis and prognosis of the ailment is what I have set out to do in this work through primary and secondary sources of data. The paper identifies the worth and pride of peace and reconciliation play as panacea for cultured people committed to peaceful co-existence, social justice and sustainable Nigerian development.

Introduction

Globalization and technological advancements have their tools on the way and manner people respond to others from different background and situation. The strong feeling of supremacy associated with the giant socio-economic developments explains not only class struggle, but the desire by the bourgeois to exploit, dehumanize, degrade and suppress the poor, the less privileged and the weak. The conditions that made Marx and Engel (1971) to state that "the history of hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle". (p.29) is still here with us in Nigeria. Kolawole (2007) states that "though, I recognized the inevitability of conflicts in human integration, but such conflict wherever it arises should be managed effectively". (p. ix). Historical past events seem to have militated against social justice and development in Nigeria. Authentic Nigerian identity has been dulled by slavery, poverty, slave trade, trafficking in human persons, prostitution, obnoxious cultural practices, and conflict of cultures in Nigeria. Western civilization has a corroding influence on Nigerian cultural values

and norms. This is based on the fact that western value systems manifest what Nnonyelu (2007) describes as "Eurocentric cultural arrogance and fall into the trap of western-centered ethnocentrism". (p.159).

Nigeria has witnessed a lot of conflicts over the years because of apparent disunity on one hand, on the other, the various processes of sustaining and maintaining peace through dialogue, counselling and prayers are not put in place. Consequently, constructive engagements of reconciliatory tools are far from reality. Resorting to violence as a means for resolving political and social problems is dangerous. War destroys, cripples and retards development. War does not build up; rather, it weakens the moral, economic and social foundations of Nigeria and creates further divisions and long lasting tensions. These have brought untold hardships including death and loss of properties.

This paper, therefore, seeks to appraise the new emphasis and insistence on peace and reconciliation as hallmarks for social justice and development in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general. The paper will achieve this purpose by focusing on the functional role of peace and reconciliation as sociological index for measuring and promoting co-existence, tolerance, integration and respect for the differences of ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. Development, therefore, goes beyond material structures. It includes attitudinal change in habits, norms and values. A critical look at the need for social injustice in the face of harmful cultural practices in Nigeria, and the way forward will promote the right to peace which will ensure respect for all other rights, encourage the building of true humanism in Nigeria. It is observed that if the above are religiously adhered to, Nigeria will be a model for the promotion of peaceful co-existence the world over.

Conceptual Clarifications

Concepts worthy of definition include peace, hallmark, reconciliation, social justice and development.

Peace: - Peace is a household name in the family, Christian Church, non-Christian bodies and societies. Yet, there are variants of peace in the literature. Thus, its full meaning is under contention.

In Old Testament Edom refers to peace which signifies completeness, and well-being. In the books of Genesis (63:27), Exodus (4:18) and Judges (19:20), peace is used when a person asks of or prays for the welfare of another. Similarly, the books of Joshua (9:15), 1Kings (5:12), Psalms (122:6) and Jeremiah (29:7) are rich in associating peace with harmony, the good of a city, material prosperity, physical safety, and spiritual well-being. The books of Psalm (85:10) and Isaiah (48:18, 22, 57:19-21) say it may be the associate of righteousness and truth.

Peace is God's gift. The messianic hope was of an age of peace, or of the advent of the prince of peace. The Gospel of Luke (10:5; 2:14,29f) says that in Christ, peace has come and by him it is bestowed and his disciples are messengers. Douglas (1963) says that "peace has the full content of spiritual connotation as linking with such key-words as grace, life, righteousness and from its use benediction". (p. 956).

Mairi (1998) defines peace as "freedom from or absence of war, a treaty or agreement ending a war, or freedom from or absence of noise, disturbance or disorder, quietness or calm, freedom from mental agitation, serenity". (p.1014). Peace as positive ethical symbol compliments the precious aspect of responsible citizenship.

Iwe (1991) opines that "peace is the resultant effect of balance and harmony among the constituent elements and forces of an organism for man as an individual moral being, it is the price of righteous and good will". (p. 95).

In socio-political environment of man, peace may be seen as the highest political good which tends to consist in the harmonious operation of the forces of his social life. Peace remains an empty word except it rests upon that order that is founded on truth, built upon justice, nurtured and given life by charity and brought into functional effect under the auspices of freedom.

This paper adopts Okere (1974) view which articulates peace as the resultant effect of the acknowledgement and harmonious exercise or living truth, justice, love and freedom from sin and its enslaving burden on man. These social values of man lead to the reign of peace when man submits to the rule of law.

Peace precedes conflict and it is the natural state of being. The New Webster's Dictionary (1991) says peace is a noun and defines it as:

> The condition that exists when nations or other groups are not fighting; the ending of a state of war, the treaty that marks the end of a war, friendly relations between individuals, untroubled by disputes, freedom from noise, worries, troubles, fears, public order and security. (382).

Peace is not given to fighting, or quarrelling but connotes calm, quiet, untroubled, undisturbed especially by noise, worry, fear or anxieties. Other related terms associated with peace include a peace maker who fosters or cements friendly disposition. The peace of God is above all other states of peace, hence pleasing to God.

Hallmark

Mairi (1998) explains hallmark as "an official series of marks stamped on gold, silver and platinum articles to guarantee their authenticity". (p.605). It refers to any mark of genuineness or excellence. This paper accepts hallmark as a typical or distinctive feature especially of quality.

Reconciliation

As with peace, reconciliation is also a highly contested term. It seems a very complex process that may be understood in different perspectives: religious, theological, spiritual, ethical, moral, social, historical, psychological and other nuances. It is a deeply differentiated phenomenon that embeds continuous processes and patterns of interaction in diverse areas of socio-religious activities.

Douglas (1963) says "reconciliation properly applies not to good relations in general but to the doing away of an enmity, the bridging over of a quarrel". (p.1077). It implies the people, societies and parties who were formerly hostile to

one another, in enmity, opposed to each other. In religious circles, the books of Romans (5:10); Colossians (1:21), and Joshua (4:4) state that sinners are enemies of God. He is neither close nor drawn near to God. He is opposed to God and is therefore in the other camp.

In every religion, reconciliation takes different patterns. In African Traditional Religion, it takes the form of sacrifice, worship, appeasement, atonement and propitiation. In Islam, fasting and elaborate ritual sacrifices are emphasized. Christianity stands out for the meaning of reconciliation which Douglas (1963) states thus:

> Christ died to put away our sins. In this way, He dealt with the enmity between man and God. He put it out of the way. He made the way open for men to come back to God. It is this which is described by the term 'reconciliation'. (p. 1077).

There is substance in appreciating that man needs to be reconciled with his neighbour and God. This is because man's sin has caused the enemity within, between himself and God. It should be dealt with in order to promote social justice.

Social Justice

Social justice is at the centre of development efforts of successive administrations in Nigeria. The word social justice provokes a wide response of interest by scholars. A wide range of definitions, their modifications by scholars and the controversies they generate explain the varieties of opinions. As a catalyst of peace and reconciliation, social justice is approached by looking at social justice exclusively. Social relates to human society, living in communities enjoyed or taken in company, relating to or designed for social activities and relating to rank in the community. Ademola (2007) maintains that "social relations are basically sets of expectations which define rights and obligations, as well as status and roles". (p.40). It is important to note that men and women irrespective of their cultural background participate in social life. This participation enables them gain more ideas on the nature of social relationships.

According to Nzomiwu (1999) justice applies to whatever tends to produce and preserve the happiness of the community. It is the unity of the whole system the morals or incorporates the primary values of human action and is the very measure of civilization. Justice explains quality of any human society. Rawls (1971) explains justice as "fairness". (p.16). This means fair opportunities for all citizens, directing that inequalities in wealth and social positions maximally to benefit the least disadvantaged. Otto (1967) defines justice as "rendering to each what is his or her own or due by right". (p.10).

The insight from the two concepts defined above has reduced the confusion in defining social justice. It deals with the economic well-being of social groups. Social justice demands a proportionate distribution or share of the benefits or of the fruits of their labor. This makes no individual or group to be cheated. Social justice is a specific habit of justice that is social in the sense that the skills it requires are those of inspiring, working with and organizing others to accomplish together a work of justice. It could be said that these skills are the elementary skills of civil society through which free citizens exercise self-government by doing for themselves what needs to be done. Mick (1993) defines social justice as being entitled to the same rights and services as all other citizens. The question is, why are these rights difficult to achieve for a section of the society?

Reasons for Peace and Reconciliation in Nigeria.

The genuine desire to put an end to the chaotic life which came as conflicting parties on one hand, between the sinful or casual man and his creator are the focal points of peace and reconciliation. Nigeria has witnessed according to Nnonyelu (2007) deep-rooted grievances. It is observed that these stood against Nigerian's sustainable development. These deep-rooted grievances include the abandon property saga, unlawful retirement from Nigerian armed forces, unjust retrenchment, the June 12 crisis, election results without voting and corruption.

The delay of redress for justice and the continued trampling upon and the violation of human rights, the marginalization of groups and communities such as

Ife-Modakeke, in Osun state, Zangon- Kataf in Plateau State, Tiv- Jukun in Benue State, Aguleri- Umuleri in Anambra State build up anger and frustration.

The need to do away with enemity brings about good relations, sustainable peace and genuineton repentance. Hostility, vigorous opposition, and crises are negative ethical symbols which do not portray fruits of repentance. The work of salvation does not seem to be appreciated unless we display determined reconciliation.

The way to reconciliation lies through an effective grappling with the root cause(s) of the enemity that exists among men and with God. People who have defaulted may apologize for their misconduct, pay the stipulated fine, and make reparation or restitution. But Douglas (1963) states that "Christ made the way wide open for men to come back to God". (p.1077). This is free but demands a broken and contrite heart which the Psalmist says "God will not despise". (51:17).

Being despised is a curse which brings about disappointment and explains man's predicament. It is seen as a barrier to God's holiness and uprightness in man. The confusion of man is made clearer by forgetting that what "man, left to himself according to Douglas (1963) is content to let bygones be bygones. He is not particularly worried by his sin. Certainly, he felt no hostility to God on account of his sin". (p.1077).

There is a barrier in man's life despite the free gift of reconciliation because God demands holiness in man. This explains that reconciliation is both man-ward as well as God-ward. The God-ward is not a change of God's love for man, the wrath of God which is no longer exercised.

On the socio-political scene, reconciliation encourages deep soothing of deep wounds caused by the renewed and various conflicts which are certainly sources of concern. The dysfunctional nature has sensitized non-governmental agencies, governments and other institutions to rob minds in order to find ways of curbing, curtailing and stemming the ugly tide. Peace may not be achieved without reconciliation. The importance of reconciliation to Nigerian development is an

intellectual socio-religious contribution aimed at focusing on issues that induce differences and conflicts in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general.

Reconciliation remains an index for promoting and measuring peace in man and society. The consensus among patriotic Nigerians is that it is an ideal requirement for the pursuance and sustenance of peace. It promotes joy, love, patience, freedom, fairness, and social justice. Reconciliation demands from God and the society the above fruits of repentance. It negates the abuse of fundamental human rights, social injustice and oppression. There is need to provide in man and his society a fertile heart, conducive environment devoid of social vices and pursue other noble goals, or moral values.

Little progress is achieved by man because of lack of meaningful reconciliation. A troubled mind is not at peace with itself and succumbs to subterraneous psychological forces which are out to assiduously undermine peace efforts in him.

Issues that call for Social Justice in Nigeria.

A number of issues call for social justice in Nigeria. They range from what Nigerian face in the society in order to equip or reinforce their knowledge and understanding of cultural inheritance. This is in line with genuine employment, good health, a life of choices and opportunity free from discrimination.

Discrimination makes these rights difficult to achieve for women, children and minority groups in Africa. Their spiritual life seems denied, ridiculed and other long history of social injustice. Similarly, discrimination is associated with a history of cultural ignorance, misunderstanding over the value and practice of traditions and customs, foul play in the interpretation of cultural norms and values. Uche (2009) says discrimination is relational to harmful cultural practices such as widowhood that calls for social justice. This is a racist assumption of an ingrained sense of superiority by unbridled capitalists who exploit the minorities and women. Environmental despoliation, an justifiable reliance on private property

rights, lack of charity for the poor, the weak and the less privileged also call for social justice in Nigeria.

The concern to study these handicapping conditions that are improper to the rights and obligations to the Nigerians are not left out. The promotion of academic freedom, university autonomy, the right to pursue knowledge with an open mind, work to abolish traditional slavery, promote mutual interdependency win voting right for women and champion the needs of the poor and the need to create a continent in which each nation have the opportunity to flourish on the basis of equality of the human persons.

Peace and Reconciliation as Hallmarks for Social Justice

Jemilohun (2007) states that "at no time is the importance of peace felt more than when there is war or a time when war or conflicts end and there exists a calm or quiet state free from disturbance". (p.15). This premise serves a guiding principle to peace and reconciliation as hallmarks for social justice and development in Africa. The various interests of people, groups and parties notwithstanding, passivity, mute indifference and cold complexity to communal conflicts are unafrican and could be dangerous in conflicts between individuals or communities in Nigeria.

It is observed that in the genuine spirit of Nigeria brotherhood, the non – warring parties had taken upon them the responsibility of bringing an end to the conflict and fostering peace. In this singular act of restoring peace, the interest and welfare of the conflicting parties are not only promoted, but the reserve or a passive looking on may allow the conflict to escalate and engulf other surrounding areas.

Uche (2009) maintains that "conflicts of different shapes, kinds and sizes abound in human culture". (p. 5). Similarly, Pirages (1976) says "throughout history, conflict, violence, bloodshed and warfare have been enduring characteristics of organized societies". (p.1). In Africa, nations like Nigeria, Sudan, Mozambique, Angola, Congo, Cote d'lvoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and

others have experienced conflicts related to political, economic, social, religious and psychological challenges. One or two cases will be insightful here. Political conflicts could be based on electoral fraud, unlawful detention in police cells, political killing, and clampdown on opposition, coup d'état and violent civil disturbance. Social conflicts include riots; demonstrations, civil disobedience, and detention without trial, religious intolerance, fanaticism, bigotry, priest- craft and indoctrination are closely associated with religious conflict. Economic conflict has corruption, fraud, nepotism, favoritism, poverty, slavery, human trafficking and bribery. In spite of the above, cultural conflict has obnoxious cultural practices such as genital mutilation, ascribed social status, human sacrifice, ritual murder and rigidity in tradition. These conflicting situations and conditions of man in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general call for a continuous exercise, a harmonious search for and the promotion of basic Nigerian values of social life which will improve the reign of truth, justice, love and freedom. It is observed that under the umbrella of peace, and reconciliation, Nigeria values are better realized. In the vital hallmarks of peace and reconciliation lie order, patriotism, loyalty, humility, unity, self discipline have remained Nigerian sound moral character which are essential tools in promoting social justice and development in Nigeria. Iwe (1979) puts peace succinctly as "order that would permit the citizens to carry out their tasks, fulfill their duties, claims and enjoy their rights without inhibitions or molestations". (p. 86).

Peace and reconciliation are indispensable elements of mature citizenship whose crave for peace must work for justice. The paper observes that all the unjust, social vices and harmful cultural practices militate against social justice and development in Nigeria.

Recommendation

In a globalized emerging economy like Nigeria, the belief according to Kuka (1995) that justice is a commodity that is at best a cash and carry commodity, or at worst an a auction that goes to the highest bidder explains the

serious jeopardy Nigeria's political stability, economic wee-being, the rule of law and other chains in Nigeria socio-religious system. Like the late Sunny Okosun would ask: why way Nigerian?

There is need for a collaborative research into peace and reconciliation studies. This may be carried out cross-cultural level and could be aimed at creating greater awareness on the negative effects of the injustice which have promoted extortion, Godfathers, mediocrity, favoritism, victimization, discrimination and marginalization a section of Nigerian Nation.

The above awareness will enlighten Nigerians in accepting that justice will restore broken relation hip by ushering harmony and inspires hope for a better or progressive Nigeria. The mitigation of strength with wisdom which fox (1970) articulates will have positive bearing on efforts to stem the tide of pervasion of justice, denial of inalienable human rights and oppression of the poor in Nigeria.

Leadership by example is recommended to those in authority. This will make them to provide top security which will discourage poverty, unemployment and hunger in Nigeria of importance is to institutionalize measures to reward excellence, hard work, filial piety, patriotism and new social order amplified in open government, respect the rule of law, human rights, equity in revenue formulation and investment in human resources. It is hoped that these measures will give strength to peace and in econaliation as hallmark of social justice in Nigeria.

Prayer for the nation is recommended as the motive force for genuine reconciliation. It is fervently hoped that the recommended prayer will make Nigerian leaders rule or lead in justice to ensure peace harmony. Kuka (1995) believes that this is the basis of the legitimacy of a government and for political stability in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Peace and reconciliation are seen as complimenting one another in promoting social justice and development in Africa. They are latent in man and

become a life of commitment. The various situations in Africa conceptualize peace and reconciliation as functional in manifesting observable characteristic features which are hallmarks for social justice and development in Africa. It is the height of hypocrisy to work towards peace and reconciliation and not to downplay huge investment on weapons of mass destruction. As conflict management strategy, peace and reconciliation offer freedom from war, a calm and quiet state free from disturbance which facilitates African development. Respect for inter and intra Ethnic groups in Africa engenders peaceful co-existence, improved understanding, remove confusion, ignorance, selfish, defense and reckless propaganda that have hundred social justice and development in Africa.

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