

Religious Pluralism and National Development in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Religious pluralism has always posed a problem to national development in Nigeria determining the level of religious crises and violence over the years. This study evaluates the trend and its implications on national development. Although the author condemned unilateral and arbitrary amalgamation of January 1st 1914, the belief that a real dialogue can solve and repeal the mistakes of the past since all religion preaches peace. Data for the study was collected mainly through secondary sources. It adopts historical and descriptive method of analysis for optimal results. The paper recommends among others that tolerance and accepting of individual religious differences is a key to peace and harmony. Religious leaders should emphasize the integrative aspects of religion. Religious education should be made compulsory at all levels of primary and secondary schools to expose the students to the ideals of other religions. Finally, politicians should not use religion as a language of power but rather emphasize its role of achieving social needs that affect the well-being of the people.

Keywords: Religion, Religious pluralism, development, national development.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria as a nation is passing through developmental crisis. Contemporary events in the country seem to suggest that religious pluralism appears to be the greatest challenge to sustainable development and unity of the nation. Nigeria's religious diversity is evidenced in the three main religions; African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam, which are widely practiced in the country. These religions dominate the daily lives of their practitioners and because their adherence tends to be ethically oriented, they have generated intolerance and deadly violence that threaten the corporate existence and development of Nigeria as a nation.

Religion is fundamental to man as there is hardly any human society without some form of religion. Irrespective of its form, religion has made and continues to make recognizable and far-reaching impacts on the political, physical, social, moral, spiritual and economic affairs of both the ancient modern societies. The high premium placed on religion "is portrayed by the diverse manner through which it is

practiced in many societies" (Anyacho, 2005). Religion has served as a guide and control of human behaviour. The most important aspect of religion is its capacity to shape human personality and values (<http://www.exampleessays.com/viewpaper/26173.html>). However, as observed by (Ekwunife, 2005), "religion can be both an integrative and divisive factor in any society. When the divisive elements of religion are not handled and brought under control, they create tension and unrest in the society. Often, these manifests themselves inform of religious riots and intolerance". This is the case with Nigeria with serious effects on the development of the nation. Thus religious diversity in Nigeria has had the unintended consequences of riots, killing, and maiming of individuals, destruction of properties and disruption of peace and unity of the nation. This intolerant situation is mainly witnessed between two dominant religions in the country; Christianity and Islam, with Islam dominating the Northern part while Christianity is predominant in the South.

Nigeria by virtue of the amalgamation event in 1914 becomes an embodiment of diverse ethnic and religious groups. This makes the country a pluralistic society. National development in a pluralistic country like Nigeria "has been a problematic issue since the attainment of independence in 1960" (Ker, 2003). Whenever religious crisis in Nigeria is mentioned, what really comes to the mind of some people would be the destructive activities of religious extremist groups and the violent clashes mostly between the two dominant religious-Christianity and Islam. Such activities no doubt do not only have devastating effects on peaceful co-existence but impinge on the development of the nation. Some Nigerians caught up in the violent crises recorded loss of property and live. Others have been maimed and terminally injured. The ensuing conditions of rife, mutual suspension, suffering and soon have no only become issues of national discourse that demand emotional response but a reality many Nigerians directly or indirectly have to grapple with.

Nigeria as a "giant" of Africa has not lived up to its expectations due to religious pluralism and its attendant problems. This has made the task of building a united nation out of the heterogeneous ethnic and religious group's one of the greatest challenges facing political leaders. As a religiously pluralistic society, the place of religion in addressing national issue appears evident. According to (Imaekhai, 2010)," it is part of the fabric of people's lives and strongly tied to their cultural identities". Thus, Mbiti (1996) rightly observed that "Africans are notoriously religious". Of what benefits is this position to Nigerians? This has made religious issues play roles in crisis generation and resolution. However, Manson (1985) has observed that people's attitude about the role of religion varies. To him," there are those who wish to put an official religious stamp on all political and social institutions, like the Muslims. Also there are those who would want to

see the role of religion as providing the conscience of the nation and the nuisance of its leadership". This is a view shared by many Christians.

The challenges of religious pluralism are manifest in various ways such as political instability, disunity, distribution and participation in the political process. Ejeh (2007) opines that as a result of these factors, "Nigeria has never been an integrated nation and this has demonstrated a high propensity for religious conflicts in the past". Christianity, Islam, and Africa Traditional Religion are in constant struggle and in an unhealthy competition. Also worrisome is the manner schisms and rivalries that exist among them. In an attempt to fulfill spiritual obligations or whatever conclusion/premise is sanctioned by their religious idiosyncrasies and/ or dogmas, many Nigerians treat others not within their group as *persona non grata*. Thus, the incidents of hostilities in different parts of the country have shaken the very foundation of peaceful disposition, and a threat to national development. The goal of this work was to examine the various ways religious pluralism have impeded on the national development of Nigeria. Besides, various ways of curbing the crisis caused by religious pluralism were also reflected.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Development

Development as a concept has a wide connotation. "It encompasses man, environment, material as well as infrastructure with man as the most important resource in the development of a nation" (Ejizu, 2012). According to Rodney (1981) development in human society "is a many sided process. At the level of individual, it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being. At the level of social groups, development implies an increasing capacity to regulate both internal and external relationships." Bassey (1985) states that development "must aim at creating the appropriate environment for the individual to live a happy contented spiritually meaningful life". Therefore, for development to be achieved in any nation there must be social harmony, peace and tranquility. National development is concerned and connected with the development process of a nation like Nigeria. Hence, national development refers to Nigeria's gradual growth effort to become more advanced and stronger.

Nigeria government since independence is encouraging the development of science and technology through research. National development refers "to the ability of nation to improve the lives of its citizens. Measures of improvement may be material, such as an increase in the gross domestic product, or social, such as literacy rates and availability of healthcare". Rico (2014) sees National development can also be defined as the "ability of a country or countries to improve the social welfare of the people example by providing social amenities like quality education, potable

water, transportation, infrastructure, medical care, etc. For Tolu & Abe (2011:238) national development is the “the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political as well as religious advancement of a country or nation.” Religious conflicts have a lot of contributions to make the development of any community. When there is peace, infrastructural and intellectual development continue to be the order of the day. But, when there is war, rancor, and strife, it halts developmental plans.

Religion

Ethnologically, religion is derived from the Latin words namely; *Ligare* (meaning to bind), *Relegere* (meaning to unite or to link), and *Religio* (meaning relationship). Hence, the etymology of the word ‘religion’ shows that it is essentially a relationship, a link established between two people namely, the human person and the divine person believed to exist. It is something that links or unites man with a transcendent-being, a deity, believed to exist and worshipped by man (Omonegbe, 1993). In the opinion of Kalani (1998) he states that religion is “the relation of man to that which man regards holy---the system by which man recognizes the existence of super-human controller of love and obedience which ultimately leads to practical piety and morality”. According to Ejizu (2012; 1) religion is “man’s experience of the holy and ultimate reality as well as the expression that religion involves believe in supreme-being and expression of such believe in our practical life situations”.

Religious Puralism

Pluralism describes the existence of diverse cultures within the same society. Pluralism according to Laguda (2013) “suggests divergent views”. A pluralistic society therefore, refers to one in which there co-exist more than one ethnic or religious group and there are some degrees of recognition by all the groups concerned.

As the most populous country in African continent, Nigeria realistically has “374 ethnic groups” (Nnoli, 2008), “with a variety of customs, traditions, languages and dialects” (Unrechue, 1971). This number is opposed to the number of 250 ethnic groups often found in several literatures. (Otite, 1990). Okonkwo (2009) has argued that ethnic groups as well as the attendant problem of ethnicity in Nigeria is a creation of the colonial masters. According to the author, “the colonial government helped to develop ethnic groups through their uniting of villages into regions” hence extreme regionalism became the major characteristic of the first republic.

Religious pluralism connotes the existence of many religions in a particular society. In this situation the tendency for unhealthy rivalry cannot be ruled out. Idowu-Fearon (2009) says religious pluralism “is a situation where people of different religious and faith live together and interact at all levels without fear or prejudice”. It is an attitude regarding the diversity of religious belief systems co-existing in

society. It therefore, enables a country made up of people of different faiths to exist without sectarian warfare or the prosecution of religious minorities.

Nigeria, like other African states is one of the most religiously diversified with the people practicing three main religions: Christianity, Islam and Traditional religion (African Traditional Religion). Thus, the two most dominant religions Islam and Christianity with their arrival establish themselves by dislodging the traditional religions of the various communities and also imposing their ways on the indigenous peoples (Kukah, 1999). However, the challenge the country had faced over the years is that of religious violence between Muslims and Christians. The nexus between the two have been one of mistrust and suspicion. This has led to incessant religious crises due to different perceptions of the ideal society and the conflicting strategies of power and posturing which has made the ideological gap impossible (Masou, 1985). Between the 1980's to the present, there have been more than 50 religious crises recorded in 30 years in the Northern part of Nigeria only which have left political, social, economic and psychological losses and pains on the affected people and area (Abimboye, 2009). According to Umejesi (2011), the following examples are illustrative of this trend: the Zaria crises 1980, Maitatshine riots in 1980, 1982, 1985, 1987 and 1994, the Ilorin crises 1986, the Kafanchan crisis 1987, the Shite religious riots in Katsina 1991, Bauchi crisis 1991, Kaduna crisis 2000/2001, Maiduguri crisis 2006, Jos crises 2000/2009, Adamawa state riots 2004, 2005 and 2006, etc. The Boko-haram religious sect, a group opposed to Western education and values in place of full implementation of the Sharia law poses a challenging crisis in the country.

THE INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY

The word Christianity was first used in the New Testament at Antioch where the disciples of Jesus were first called Christians meaning the followers of Christ (Acts 11:26). Christianity is based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. The first contact of Christianity in Nigeria was through the activities of a set of missionaries from Portugal in the 15th century (Ryder 1969), and was first preached in Benin and Warri (Omotoye, 2010). Unfortunately, the attempt failed partly because of the introduction of Atlantic slave trade. The Second attempt to plant Christianity in Nigeria "took place after the abolition of slave trade in 1807 by the British parliament. Immediately after the abolition, some ex-slave from Britain, America, Brazil and Nova Scotia were taken to Sierra-leone for resettlement. From there some of the ex-slaves who were already Christians found their work to Badagry and other towns in hinterland" (Omotoye, 2010). According to Ajayi, (2000) "the year 1841 was particularly remarkable in the history of missionary enterprise in what is today called Nigeria. It was the year of the first Niger

expedition which marked the beginning of the missionary movement to re-establish Nigeria". In spite of all the difficulties encountered by the missionaries," by the beginning of the 20th century, Christianity has been planted in most parts of the Southern Nigeria" (Okwueze, 1995). The tenants of Christianity are recorded in the book of Christians called the "Holy Bible". The arrival of Christian religion like the Moslem religion in Africa has a far-reaching effect on the society. Thus, the successful plantation of these two foreign religions brought in different cultures and values to Nigeria which interrupted the existing socio-cultural order.

THE INTRODUCTION OF ISLAM TO NIGERIA

Islam was introduced first into the kingdom of Kanem-Borno about the 10th century and to Hausa land about 14th century. Islam as a religion was founded by Mohammed (Anyacho, 2005:221). The propagation of Islam was peaceful from inception through commercial activities and Muslim Cleric. The situation "changed in 1804 as Usman Dan Fodio, a Fulani Muslim Cleric came with the idea of purifying the religion. He waged a successful war known as Jihad from 1804-1810 which led to his conquering and Islamizing the Hausa states" (Omotoye, 2010).

The consequence was that it brought great changes which had far reaching effect on the religious, cultural, social, political and economic lives of the people (Onwubiko, 1973). Islam is both a religion and a culture. It "claims total control of all aspects of life of its adherents both as individuals and as a group" (Iremeka, 2005). The word "Islam" means submission to the will of God. The tenets of Islam are written in the holy book called Quran/Koran

AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION (ATR)

African traditional religion is the indigenous belief system that has been handed down from one generation of Africa to another by their forefathers. It originated from the African soil. It is a tolerant, accommodative and peaceful religion that fights those who attack it. The above views were expatiated by Onyeidu (1999) when he observed that the Traditional African Religion is a tolerant and non-missionary religion. Its adherent was not converted but members of the society born into the religious propaganda or bigotry. Before the advent of Islam and Christianity, the traditional religion has sustained Africans for generations. Some common features of African Traditional Religion include: belief in God (theism), a system of worship (cult) prayer, sacrifices and the clear distinction between the holy (sacred) and unholy (profane). In the traditional African society, instruments of social control include: taboos, vows, secret societies and the meticulous observation of customs and traditions.

OVERVIEW OF RELIGIOUS CRISES IN NIGERIA

Before the advent of Christianity and Islam in Nigeria, the traditional religion had kept the people together. A major challenge that has confronted the country over the years is that of religious violence between Muslims and Christians. The relationship between the two has been of mistrust and suspicion and this has led to incessant religious crisis. This is because "of their different perceptions of the ideal society and the conflicting strategies of power and posturing which has made the ideological gap impossible" (Mason, 1985). Between the 1980's to the present, there have been more than 50 religious crisis recorded in 30 years in the Northern part of Nigeria only which have left political, social, economic and psychological losses and pains on the affected people and area (Abimboye, 2009). It was also observed by Ibenwa and Ngele (2010) that in 1928, the church missionary society was driven out of the Zaria city, a site they have occupied since 1905 following complaints by the Emirs that the mission was abusing the privilege given to them. Lamenting on this, Uka (2008) opined that "though Britain was supposedly a Christian community, yet it hindered the spread of Christianity in the north to the advantage of the Muslims" He noted further that these "were the genesis of the unhealthy ethnic politics and mutual distrust among the various cultural religions, linguistic and ethnic groups in Nigeria and the main cause of Nigeria's ethnic and communal conflicts". Collaborating with this view, Ekwunife (1992) contended that the seed of religious intolerance in Nigeria was "quietly sown through the agencies of colonialism, Islam and Christianity". This could be said to be the origin of perennial religious crisis in Nigeria which has continued to cripple national development. Here are some cases of religious riots in Nigeria from 1980-2010 by Ibenwa and Ngele (2010 and Sampson 2012)

SOME CASES OF RELIGIOUS RIOTS IN NIGERIA FROM 1980-2013

| s/n | Date | Town/state | Grievances/cases | Number of casualties |
|-----|---------------|------------|---|---------------------------------|
| 1 | December 1980 | Kano | Abubakar Rimi, former Governor of Kano Issued quit notice to Muhammed Maitatsine to lecture his kingdom in the heart of Kano. | About 4,117 people were killed. |
| 2 | April 26, | Bauchi | Mohammed | More than |

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| | 1985 | | Maitatsine under disguise of the same quit notice attached Muslims in Gombe. | 100 people died after about ten hours of fighting. |
| 3 | March | Kaduna | Muslims attacked Christian students who organized a crusade at college of education Kafanchan. | This led to the killing of people and burning of churches and mosque by moslems over nations. |
| 4 | 1990 | Kano | Triggered by an Igbo Christian, Gideon Akaluka who was alleged to have defecated on the Koran. | Many people died and properties were destroyed. |
| 5 | October 1991 | Kano | Triggered by moslem fanatics who claimed to be protesting against the Christian religion crusade of evangelist Reinhard Binnke. | Lives and properties worth of millions of naira were destroyed. |
| 6 | May 1992 | Zangon-Katat riot Zaria, Kaduna | This simply arose as communal feud between Kata Christians and Zango Muslims (Hausa). | This equally led to the loss of lives and properties. |
| 7 | 21-22 Feb. 2000 | Kaduna | Riots over the introduction of Sharia. | An estimated 3000 people died. |
| 8 | 28 Feb. 2000 | Abia | Religions riots in Aba, and minor disturbances in | Over 450 persons killed in Aba, Abia |

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| | | | Umuahia. | State, as reprisal for the Kaduna crisis. |
| 9 | 12 Oct. 2001 | Kano | Religious not in Kano in protest to US invasion of Afghanistan over Osama. | Over 150 persons were killed. |
| 10 | September 7 th -17 th 2001 | Jos, Aba, Owerri and Umuahia | A Christian woman attempted to cross a barricaded street. This led to a scuffle between her and a group of Moslems. | The fight spread to Bauchi, Lafia and Nassarawa. There was a reprisal attack at Abia, Owerri and Umuahia 3000 people were mourned to death, 2700 internally displaced. |
| 11 | 16 th Nov. 2002 | Kaduna | The miss world crisis in which Muslims attacked Christian and churches. | The crisis was triggered by an article authored by Isioma Daniel in this day News paper, alleging that prophet Mohammed would have loved to have |

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| | | | | the girls. Over 250 people were killed and several churches destroyed. |
| 12 | 8 June 2004 | Adamawa | Religious conflict between Christians and Muslims in Numan town caused by the location of the town's central mosque close to Bachama paramount rulers place. | Over 17 persons killed. |
| 13 | 22 March 2007 | Gombe | Muslim pupils killed their Christian teachers, Mrs Oluwatoyin Olusesan . | The pupils claimed that their teacher desecrated the Quran while attempting to stop a student from cheating in an examination hall. |
| 14 | November 18, 2008 | Jos | Alleged rigging of local government election by PDP against ANPP. | More than 100 people killed, over 1000 vehicles, houses, mosques and churches burnt. |

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| 15 | 26-30 July 2009 | Bauchi, Kano, and Yobe | Religious unleashed by the Boko haram sect on Christians. | Over 700 persons, 3500 persons internally displaced, 1264 children orphaned, over 392 women widowed, and several properties destroyed. |
| 16 | January 17, 2010 | Jos | Crisis by Mosque youths who had gone to attack worshippers in Nassarawa Gwon on Sunday 17 th of January 2010. | Over 100 lives and properties worth of millions of naira were wasted. |
| 17 | 7 th March 2010 | Jos | Attacks by Fulani Moslems on Christian dominated villages of Dogo Nahawa, Shen and Fan in Jos | Over 500 people mainly women and children were killed. |
| 18 | 16 th June 2011 | Police headquarters, Abuja. | Suicide bomb attack at the police headquarters, Abuja by suspected Boko Haram Islamists. | Authorities said 6 persons were killed and 73 vehicles destroyed. |
| 19 | 5 November 2011 | Patiskum, Damaturu and Maiduguri | Coordinated attacks on churches and police stations by suspected Boko Haram Islamists. | More than 90 persons were reportedly killed, several children and police |

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| | | | | stations touched. |
| 20 | 25 December 2011 | Madala, Niger State, near the FCT | The bombe were alleged to have been planted at the church's parking lot. | About 45 persons were killed over 80 persons were injured. |
| 21 | Jan 20, 2012 | Kano | Book Haram Islamists sect taught a series of police facilities in Kano | About 185 people were reportedly killed in the attack. |
| 22 | 25 December 2011 | Bauchi State | Boko Haram attack. | About 185 people were destroyed, two military personnel, a DPO and eight civilian also killed. |
| 23 | Feb, 26 2012 | Jos | Book haram Islamist sect bombed church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN). | 4 people were killed and 38 people injured. |
| 24 | June 3, 2012 | Bauchi state | Book Haram sect attacked the living faith church in Yelwa. | 13 people were killed. The blast also led to the collapse of a wall of the nearby Harvest Field church of Christ, leaving three people in critical condition. |

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|----|-----------------|-------------|---|--|
| 25 | 25 Nov, 2012 | Jaji Kaduna | Suicide bombers suspected to be Boko Haram members attacked St. Andrews protestant military church. | 11 people were killed while some were injured. |
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Another challenging crisis is from the Boko-haram religious sect that sees western education as sin and vow for the full implementation of the sharia law in the northern states: Zamfara state, Bornu, Yobe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Niger, Bauchi, and Gombe. Adesoji (2010) opines that the outbreak of Boko haram uprising in the country in July 2009 “reinforced the attempts by Islamic conservative elements of imposing a variant of Islamic religious ideology on a secular state”. Several of such are identified as source of these religious conflicts.

One of such is religious intolerance and fanaticism. Onimhawo & Ottuh (2007) affirmed that in Nigeria “the most prevalent problem confronting relationship between the religions is the absolute claim to religious faith especially between Christians and Muslims”. Efforts to interpret and impose the various doctrines by the various religious group resulted in religious riots. According to Ezeh (1999) oral or written statements made by the religions lead to conflicts. Religious events in the northern states show this tendency. The Muslims in Nigeria have been demanding for the application of the sharia law. To accept this means the state support Islam which violates its secular status. Where it exists, its application affects both Muslims and Christians. Minority groups or Christians are sometimes forced to change to Islam or they are tried in sharia courts (Eze, 1999).

Religious intolerance is also found within the various denominations. For example, Muslim against Muslim brothers whom they call infidels. The same frame of mind is shown by other protestant churches against orthodox Catholic Church and so on. Religious intolerance has become a very big problem to nation building in contemporary times. The Muslim sect like Boko Haram have ignored the provisions of the 1999 constitution which states that “every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom (either alone or in community with others, and in public or in private) to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice or observance”. These are meant to protect individual’s religious freedom and secularity of the nation but rather taken up arms against the federal government with the aim of establishing a theocratic state.

Isirameh (2010) is of the view that poverty or deprivation provides empowerment for religious violence. "A condition where there are widespread social, economic, religious insecurity, corruption, injustice, youth unemployment and absence of good governance among states in the north could serve as catalyst for religious violence (Gbenga, Inusa & Livinus, 2015). Unemployed youths especially the "almayiris" are used as war machines to carry out violence in the northern part of the country. They receive their impetus from a promise of a ticket to heaven, should they die in the process. In Nigeria to state the obvious, positive gains of pluralism are being frustrated due to fanatical tendencies among the various religious groups.

IMPLICATIONS OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The attendant conflicts of religious pluralism have continued to create division, hatred, unhealthy rivalry between peoples making their coming together difficult. The two main religions in the country- Islam and Christianity have not be able to co-exist peacefully for decades. This situation leads to the division of Nigerian Christians and Muslims as most of the Christians live in the South and Muslims in the North. Religious crisis which have claimed many lives in the country have left people to ask questions if Nigeria is truly one nation? In the opinion of Oguche (2009) "many find it difficult to imagine why the Southern Muslim or Christian should be killed in the name of religion in his or her own country". Cases of retaliation killings in Southern part of Nigeria are here with us.

This polarization strengthens ethnicity which is another divisive social ills within the country. This position is buttressed by Nnoli (2008) when he said "Ethnicity in Nigeria is a creative of the colonial and post-colonial order. The colonial created ethnic differences and division." According to Madiebo (1980), "the important aspect of this system is that it laid emphasis on the differences among people, while encouraging unhealthy rivalry among various people of Nigerian. The result is that national integration which is an ingredient for national development was negatively affected.

Rampart religious crises and conflicts have affects the country's survival as a nation. Enejor (2000) affirms that "conflict or war is one of the most serious threat to national development because it has a bearing on the county's socio-cultural, political, science and technological development". However, crisis resulting from religious pluralism has continued to weaken national development. This is due to the fact that human lives are lost while properties worth millions of Naira are destroyed as well. For instance, activities of the Boko Haram insurgency "has left millions of Nigerians homeless and others living as destitute without adequate health, good shelter and territorial inclusions being peer- perpetrated by members of the same

group in the Northern part of the country" (Orji, 2015). In fact, across Nigeria there have cases of lynching and killing of people as a result of religious pluralism. Women, children, the elderly and the physically challenged are often targeted (Selma, 1992, Mcveigh, 2007). The socio-economic contributions of the aforementioned individuals cannot be denied. Many children who were lynched or left to die could have in their later lives become useful and contributed to national development. Also, it is a fact that many old people look frail and incapable of doing certain physical activities. Nonetheless, some of them despite the challenges associated with old age are capable of doing great works with the residue of knowledge and wealth of experience. These skills are wasted without any thought to their impact on the development of the society.

People are lazy and unproductive. Experts disagree to agree on the concept of laziness and unproductiveness among Nigerians (Oshisada, 2015). However, a good number of Nigerians seems to be lazy and unproductive. Religious pluralism has contributed to this. Success in academics, business and any other endeavor is measured with the amount of God's grace and favour and not hard work and competence. Sometimes, it is postulated that successful individuals draw inspiration and assistance from the occult world. Hard-work will only provide one enough to eat but great wealth comes from God. This kind of conviction could make some persons lazy and unwilling to engage in certain ventures that could make them wealthy and successful.

Due to religious pluralism, there is wrong diagnosis and treatment. It is common for an average Nigerian to assume certain diseases as stroke, heart disease, epilepsy, and madness and so on are spiritually machinated. To this end, instead of seeking orthodox medical diagnosis and treatment, alternative solutions become the viable resort. Christian "prayer houses" and the traditional healing homes have turned to hospital and psychiatric homes. In turn, people who supposed to be well and healthy are wrongly diagnosed and treated thereby contributing less or nothing as the case may be to national development.

Scientific innovation is not encouraged. Scientific innovation in Nigeria is at its low ebb when compared with the in the western world. Religious pluralism, no doubt has contributed negatively to such innovations. For instance, assuming there is a break failure that resulted in a fatal car accident. Hardly will anyone try to find the root cause of the accident, to advance a better/efficient break system. Obviously, scientific innovations are vital ingredients for societal development. Lack or poor scientific innovations have really affected Nigeria's development.

It will not be an over statement to say that Nigeria is the strong hold of religious pluralism. This condition has continued to tarnish the country's international image as no foreign investors or corporations would want to do

business in an unreceptive environment. Every investor would like to do business where there is security of lives and property. But in the case of Nigeria, the story is different. This affects national development in the country.

The mixing of religion with politics as experienced in Nigeria has not really helped the cause of governance. At the national level, many of Nigerian political officials are selected or elected on the basis of religion. A good number of the electorates vote not on the competence of those vying for political offices but on religious sentiments. Part of the reasons why some persons voted for the former and incumbent President of Nigeria Goodluck Johnathan and Muhammadu Buhari is religion (Banjo, 2016). This sets a wrong precedence in the sense that individuals who are not qualified for a job may at some point be elected. And when it occurs, the leadership style of whoever is the leader would lead to under-development. Religion which should have been a unifying factor has been manipulated to cause division and hatred. Political leaders have continued to exploit the country's religious and regional diversity to consolidate political base of support. The result is that Nigeria today is a deeply divided society in terms of religion.

RELIGIOUS PLURALISM AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT WAY FORWARD

Every religion promotes moral values such as peace, tolerance, honesty, justice, humility, brotherhood and love. Instead of manipulating religion for selfish interest, people should imbibe such positive principles and teachings of religion, as these can serve as a beginning to achieving peace and social harmony in the society. Peace and social harmony provide enabling environment for national development.

Politicians in Nigeria should learn to stop the use religion as a "language of power." Its role should be on fulfilling social needs that directly affect the well-being of the community.

Perpetrators of religious violence should be punished according to the law as this will act as a deterrent to others.

Religious education should be made compulsory at all levels of primary and secondary school of our educational system. Such curriculum should seek to inculcate religions tolerance and to discourage religious indoctrination. This the author suggest will expose youth to the ideals of other religions, reduce religious fanaticism and encourage religious virtues that promote national unity and national development.

Inter-religious dialogue must be encouraged among the different religions in the nation to curb incessant ethno-religious conflicts that have besieged the county till date. This will promote peaceful co-existence which is an important factor for national development.

The law on secularism must be implemented to the later. The government should take measures to ensure that it is obeyed by every citizen. The issue of some states operating a different law from the federal government should not obtain at all. Every state is under the federal government and the governor must abide by his oath of office of upholding the constitution of Nigeria. As a matter of fact any governor that goes contrary to this has to be removed without delay and a sole administrator will take over his duties.

All religious groups must be registered with the ministry of religious affairs. Any religious group that is not registered should not be allowed to operate. The activities of all religious organizations must be strictly monitored by security organizations. The security report of their activities must be sent to the office of the chief security adviser for scrutiny and action from time to time.

Government at all levels should organize conferences, seminars and workshops periodically to educate her citizens on the importance of unity in diversity to enable them come to terms with the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious nature of the Nigerian society. Demonstrating the importance of unity in diversity, the quotation of by Mahatma Gandhi remains apt for Nigeria. According to him, "the need of the moment is not one religion, but mutual respect and tolerance of the devotees of the different religions. We want to reach not dead end but untying diversity. The soul of religions is one, but it is encased in a multitude of forms. The latter will persist till the end" (cited in Nigolian 1975: 1).

CONCLUSION

It will not be an over-statement to state that religious pluralism has generated insecurity and instability in Nigeria. Religious conflicts have been recorded by the two immigrant religions (Islam and Christianity) in the country and this has led to waste of human and natural resources. To enhance national development in Nigeria today, peaceful practice of religion with respect for other people's religion is a pre-requisite. Muslims and Christians should as a matter of urgency emphasize their area of similarity and de-emphasize divergent features of their religion. They must seek a basis of unity that brings them together without destroying their differences as far as religious integration is concerned. It therefore becomes pertinent to recommend that for peaceful co-existence and sustainable national development to be achieved there must be respect among members of the different faiths. However, the secularity of the nation must be respected by all to maintain social stability which in turn enhances national development. It is also imperative that religion should always play its spiritual role as a source of ethical and moral hope in Nigeria.

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