

# **THE INDISPENSABILITY OF RELIGION, PEACE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIA**

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## **Abstract**

Most, if not all, religions hold peace as a very essential virtue. But the irony of it all is that most conflicts (antithesis of peace) in the world today have been shown to be connected with religion. And for any society to properly grow and develop, conflict resolution, which leads to peace, is a *conditio sine qua non*. Growth in this context entails positive increment of desirable enablers of life, while development connotes availability of conditions on the material, social, political, economic, educational, spiritual, and other spheres, which lead to the attainment and enjoyment of the good life. Nigeria has known several conflicts associated with religion- many religious riots in the North, Boko Haram, herdsmen attacks, Christian/Muslim/African Traditional Religion skirmishes, to mention but just these. Their social, political, spiritual and economic havocs have been monumental. It is, therefore, apropos to note that both on the global and local scenes, religion must start to play a focal role in conjunction with other organizations and agencies to mitigate conflicts through resolution principles of various kinds in order to attain peace, which will ultimately lead to integral and comprehensive growth and development in the world and Nigeria in particular. This paper employed the library research method and used the tools of deductive reasoning, critical analysis and evaluation. Recommendations include: mutual respect of all the religions, internalization of the import of an almost general belief of all religions in a Supreme Being, honesty on the part of all partners in the quest and process of resolution of conflicts, acceding to the common dignity of all humans.

**Keywords:** Religion, peace, conflict resolution, growth, development, Nigeria

## **Introduction**

Religion is very crucial for growth and development; as in Nigeria so everywhere in the world. This is true also for peace. Conflict resolution is necessary for the attainment of peace so as to reach this goal. Religion, for its part, is essential for the attainment of peace. All religions claim to be purveyors of peace, but it remains to determine how truly committed to this all religions are. Religion as well is crucial in the parley and brokering of peace and pursuance and sustenance of resolution of conflicts. However, it has been discovered that both in Nigeria and the global community, religion has often been enmeshed in several conflicts leading to absence of peace necessary for growth and development. Moreover, Nigeria has known the ravages of conflicts and absence of peace, at least in some regions especially, for many years now. This paper calls for religious order and proactive actions in favour of tolerance, justice, equity and love, for attainment of peace, tranquility and ultimately, growth and development.

**Religion**

Religion, according to Stravinskas (1998), is “a term referring to any social, cultural and institutional form of engagement with the transcendental reality that is believed to embrace the world and human existence” (p. 851). For Madu (1989), religion exerts the greatest influence in man being itself the strongest element in man. It manifests itself in beliefs, rituals, ceremonies, and officiants like the priesthood. It is in this context then that Azuakor (2016) holds that, “Most human activities and behaviours flow from beliefs and convictions. Thus, religion has an overwhelming influence on human convictions, beliefs and actions” (p. 60). If human actions, beliefs and convictions are greatly influenced by religion, therefore, then religion is very crucial in the effort to call human beings to order through decision to opt for peace and to agree to resolve conflicts so as to make ready an enabling environment for growth and development.

**Nigeria**

Nigeria is a geo-political entity situated in the West of the African continent; bounded in the North by Niger and the Lake Chad. To the South, it is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean; to the East it is bounded by Cameroun; and to the West by Benin Republic. Nigeria has an estimated population of over 180 million people; made up of over 250 ethnic groups and with as much languages. The dominant religions are Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion (African Traditional Religion which is currently experiencing a resurgence). Wikipedia (2018), however, holds that about 5% of Nigerians are non-religious, and there are also other Oriental religions in Nigeria. Most Nigerian Muslims belong to the Sunni sect while most Christians are Protestant (broadly speaking), but about 25% of the entire Christians are Catholic. And for CIA World Factbook (2013), following a 2011 report, more than half the total population (51.6%) of Nigerians is Christian with Islam close to that. So, Islam and Christianity are very fundamental to conflict resolution in Nigeria.

**Conflict Resolution and Peace**

For Azuakor (2013), “Usually, the psychological, religious and cultural contradictions are the root of conflict. This may be regarded as the psycho-cultural theory of conflict” (p. 52). Though there is need for there to be tension for growth and development to take place, tension is not the same thing as conflict. Though the roots may be related, but so to say, conflict is full-blown tension. Thus for Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff (n.d.), “Tensions often precede and always accompany the outbreak of conflict” (p. 139). While tension might engineer growth and development, however, conflict would hinder them and so for this, conflicts must be speedily resolved. And the resolution of conflicts brings about peace. For Azuakor (2013), “Resolution of conflicts implies the removal of the causes of conflicts in order for peace to reign” (pp. 52-53).

We have principles that are necessary for conflict resolution. For Oyeshola (2005), the following constitute principles to be adopted so as to resolve conflict: mediation/reconciliation, diplomacy, negotiation, and ‘peace process’, which involves peacemaking, peacekeeping, peace enforcement and peace building. The conflicting parties reach some compromise following these processes. Then the steps to be taken for actualizing this entail: (i) the initial introduction where the role of the mediator is clarified, the process explicated, and the rules declared (e.g. non-interruption of speakers, respect, confidentiality); (ii) Clarification of perception- perceptions of the relationship, self, other party, and the conflict. The social forces desirous of resolving the conflict are mobilized after articulating the problems generating the conflicts; (iii) the hearing of the mediator of the stories of each combatant, being careful to be neutral and unbiased. To achieve such neutrality, the mediator could draw more details into the matter without concurring with any side’s criticisms by using open-ended questions such as: “can you tell us more?”, “could you be more explicit?” or “how does that make you feel?” This procedure can really bring about peace.

According to Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia (2012), “Peace is a state of harmony characterized by the lack of violent conflict and freedom from fear of violence”. Nigeria through its rough history has not been free from fear of violence, in fact, currently, the fear is rife. We can then better appreciate the reason why Nigeria is not yet developed and grown to the stature it ought.

### **Various Forms of Conflict in Nigeria**

Azuakor (2013), demonstrated that the various kinds of conflict in Nigeria include: the religious, political, economic, social, and the ethnic. Under the ethnic are subsumed the linguistic and cultural. Oftentimes these shades of conflict do not appear in isolation but are very usually intertwined.

#### **(i) Religious Conflicts**

Religious conflicts started a very long time ago in Nigeria. In fact, according to Uchendu (2010), “The imperial hands of the colonialists could be found in the foundation of religious conflict in Nigeria” (p. 1). They, for economic reasons allowed the Emirs of the North not to allow Christian missionaries into the North for evangelization purposes; this created the gap between the North and the South till today in the level of Western education. Building on that ideology, Muslim fanatics in the North have fought on many occasions to wipe out all “incursions” of Christianity in the North. Many religious riots have led to the killing of Christians and burning of Churches for decades up till today. It is common knowledge that Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Premier of the then Northern Region, enjoined Muslims to ensure the dipping of the Quran into the Atlantic Ocean; he used public funds to build Quranic schools and Mosques and recognized the imposition of *Sharia* legal system on all. It is on this backdrop that the Governor of Zamfara State- Ahmed Yarima, in 2000, during the Obasanjo regime, through a state legislative act and in defiance of the Nigerian secular constitution,

inaugurated the implementation of *Sharia* as a criminal law in the state. Many Northern states like Niger, Sokoto, Yobe, Jigawa and Borno soon followed suit not minding the other religions especially Christianity in their midst. When Kaduna attempted it, it was resisted by the large Christian population in the state, but this led to serious religious cum ethnic and political turmoil. According to Akpangbo (2000), never in the history of Nigeria, save in the time of the 30 months civil war, has there been such bloodletting and violence, which assuming the Hobbesian brutality and ruthlessness led to much destruction of lives and property in Kaduna State together with the attendant reprisal actions in the Southern cities of Aba, Onitsha, Owerri, Umuhia and Okigwe that year. The present governor of Kaduna State, Mallam El Rufai has been stoking up the embers of religious conflicts by the government's treatment of Muslim herdsmen's murders of Christian farmers in the state and for currently presenting a Muslim/Muslim gubernatorial ticket for the governor and his deputy in the 2019 elections, in a state where the Christian population is large and the practice has always been a mixture of the two religions. Many are already criticizing that.

Christians have also been known to invade African Traditional Religion's (ATR) shrines in a bid to "cleanse" the land and rid it of evil. The traditional religionists have resisted sometimes leading to loss of lives and property. ATR members have also meted out destruction on Christian lives and property where there had been resistance to pagan practices by especially Christians. For example, Ofoegbu (1997) reports on how pagans and some white garment church members together with some dissident "Catholics" in Nanka, Anambra State, killed Mr. Augustine Ezeh and Miss Scholastica Nnolim, injured many other faithful Catholics, and destroyed properties for resisting an obnoxious, oppressive pagan custom that debarred a woman from seeing the husband's corpse or risk bloating and death, but which in actuality was meant to give room for confiscation of late husband's property and reduce her to a sex toy. All of the above brew conflicts and retard development.

### **(ii) Ethno-political cum Religious Conflicts**

It is argued that the colonial masters also enhanced the development and growth of ethno-political cum religious conflicts in Nigeria. For their political (cum economic) interests, not minding that the colonialists brought with them Christianity having annexed Lagos in 1861 and penetrating the Sokoto caliphate afterwards, and noticing that the North was predominantly Muslim and the South predominantly of African Traditional Religion, they preferred to employ their divide and rule system of exploitation along the lines of ethnicity and religion. This became ingrained in the minds of the people and has continued till today. A principle of harmonization would have been right, but no, it would not profit them maximally, politically. Hence, the land and native right ordinance of 1910 which was the brainchild of the colonialists aimed at the separation of the northern ethnic groups from those of the south and discouraged southerners from moving to the northern parts. But with the eventual amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914, restriction

of movement across boards could no longer be sustained, yet southerners who moved to the north were made to live in *Sabon-Gari*, that is foreign quarters. This pleased the north (in whom the colonialists had special interest). In 1928, the British directed the *Oonis* and *Obas* to resettle the Hausawa previously living happily in Oyo, in *Sabo* quarters. The Igbo had to establish *Garki* for the Hausawa which literally means where livestock sleep, a place for the Hausa/Fulani to duck their livestock until the Igbo merchants and consumers buy them. This continues till today. Thus, Nigerians are made foreigners in their own country. For Azuakor (2013), “This arrangement of separation can be likened to apartheid; it means underdevelopment of the said ‘foreign’ quarters and prevention of cultural, filial and social integration and hence the ignition of conflict”. (p. 54). Any wonder if xenophobic tendencies are sometimes exhibited by some Nigerians against each other over political, economic and religious control based on this faulty foundation? The preferential treatment given the North by the British government has also ingrained in the minds of some Northerners the false belief that they are born to rule and the others born to serve. This is a serious ethno-political, religious conflict factor.

### **(iii) Socio-Economic/Political Conflicts**

The economic conflict in Nigeria has often been connected with the control of oil, the major foreign exchange earner for the country. The government has not been fair in the distribution of ownership and management of the oil blocs; the oil has been exploited outside internationally accepted best practices much to the detriment of the ecosystem of the host communities. And the use of the gargantuan revenue has often not been channeled to the development of the projects and infrastructure of the immediate communities of the exploration, but often based on ethnic and political considerations- a case of robbing Peter to pay Paul. According to Vaknin (2005),

When the Ogoni protested against the environmental ruination wrought by oil drilling - nine of them were hanged in 1995. But this brutality did little to quell their complaints, including the fact that almost none of the \$7-10 billion in annual oil proceeds was re-invested in the region's economy. This largely economic conflict (brewing since 1993) has now, inevitably, become inter-ethnic and inter-religious. It is now an integral part of the national politics of a Nigeria fracturing along ethnic and religious (Christians vs. fundamentalist Islamist) fault line (p. 2).

General poverty and mismanagement of the resources has given rise to social malaise in the guise of emergence of certain groups of young men and women seeking change of the situation, correctly or wrongly by their approaches, such as Boko Haram, kidnapers, Niger Delta Avengers, Indigenous People of Biafra, etc. These put together have caused unrest, conflicts and crises in the society leading to much spilling of blood and destruction of property.

### **Growth and Development**

Growth is quantitative and qualitative increment in the size, being and structure of an organism, body, institution or phenomenon. The increment could be negative or positive. But in this paper, the growth referred to is of the positive type.

Meaningful development, in the thinking of Dudley Seer, as presented by Okeke (2001) must ensure the realization of the human personality potentials. And a developed society must satisfy the following basic needs: food (nutrition), employment (something worthwhile doing) and then elimination of inequality, which is the cause of poverty. Continuing, Okeke states that the United Nations Copenhagen summit of 1995 based development on three areas, namely, eradication of poverty, creation of productive jobs, and then enhancement of the social fabric. This agrees almost entirely with D. Seer.

### **The Role of Religion in Peace and Conflict Resolution**

True religion makes the religionist to be like God the object and end of religion. Talking about the coming of the Judeo-Christian Messiah, the book of Isaiah denotes him as the Prince of peace (Is. 9:7). In sending out of his disciples Jesus told them to greet their hearers with the wish of peace (Matt. 10). After his resurrection, Jesus' greeting to his disciples was always "Peace be with you" (John 20). The Jewish religion would always greet *Shalom lekah*, that is, 'peace be with you'. The Islamic religion would always dish out *Salam alekun*, which also means 'peace be with you'. Since all these major world religions are this engrossed in peace, it should come natural to them and their adherents to broker peace if indeed the adherents have imbibed the spirit of their religions. For Eboh (2015), "Alienation from God and His Commandments encourages acquisition of material things which in turn breeds envy, greed and war. Peace comes only when human beings return to God and embrace His Commandments" (p. 124). Al-Afkar (2017) holds also that Islamic religious education is supposed to produce individuals who are obedient to Allah and live peaceably and harmoniously in society. In fact for Al-Afkar, (2017), "religious education lays down sound foundations for individual, family, and social life to produce good citizens in a society" (p. 1). Of course, good citizens obey rules and regulations, are peaceful and do not cause confusion and conflict, but collaborate with others in developing the society.

But in spite of all of the above, religion has rather been seen to be at the centre of crises and conflicts in Nigeria and elsewhere. Thus for Iwele (2018), "In different parts of the world today, religious differences remain major sources of conflict. This cannot be detached from the role and influence of religion in the political activities, participation and decision making during election" (p. 110). Azuakor (2015) sees this coming in the form of the following factors, which are closely associated with religion, and their implications: "priestcraft", blind obedience of adherents to religious leaders, indoctrination, and bitterness of one religion against

other religions. But the same factors, Azuakor insists, are also ready tools in the hands of religion and religious leaders for the attainment of conflict resolution if they are directed towards: tolerance, virtues, justice, inter-religious cooperation, honesty in discourse/dialogue, and promotion of religions' points of agreement. Thus, Cader (2017) notes that there are many Islamic models in marketing, leadership and conflict management that are flexible in their application as to accommodate non-Muslims. Cader further investigated generally accepted Islamic principles that are common in majority of Islamic interpretations and extrapolation within a non-Muslim context applicable in international organizations which employ non-Muslim workers together with a majority Muslim workforce. And for Cader, all this is based on the provision of the Quran 49: 13 which stipulates the peaceful interaction of humanity and the management of conflict irrespective of religion or culture for human progress. One of the many models presented by Islam for resolving conflict in society is the SALAM model (Ahmad, 2007; Randeree and El Faramawy, 2011) cited by Cader (2017). It implies clearly **stating** the existence and nature of the conflict (S); all the stakeholders **agreeing** that there is conflict (A); commencement of mediation with the parties **listening** and **learning** the various variables involved in the conflict (L); **advising** each other then follows the communication (A); and then finally, resolution which includes **minimizing** of disagreements that are capable of escalating further conflicts (M).

### **Religion in Growth and Development**

With the advent of Europeans into Africa and Nigeria in particular, bringing with them their Christian religion, certain forms of development entered into our clime. The Christian Churches brought Western education, a key factor for development and progress; reading and writing was introduced, certain forms of backward superstitions died, architecture improved, certain forms of professions such as the medical, nursing, teaching, legal, priestly, engineering etc, came into our clime leading to improvement of people's lives. For Okeke (2001), "The missionaries also contributed immensely in the art of medicine. It was reported that Dr. A. A. Harrison lectured the boys in Anatomy, Physiology, Botany, Zoology, and Mathematics" (pp. 78-79). All this is growth and development. The Islamic religion had of course impacted on the social, political, educational and economic life of the people ever before the advent of Christianity to Nigeria. The African Traditional Religion which was there before the advent of the first two, to the extent it had norms, rules of morality and equitable dispensation of justice, security of life and property and the maintenance of the social order, always making reference to the wishes of the Wholly Other as a guide to human conduct, presented and ensured a level of civility in the society- this is also development. However religion (especially through antagonisms of one religion against the other(s) has equally brought about retrogression and anti development). In Nigeria for example, there have been several religious riots that have destroyed people's lives and property truncating development; there has been Boko Haram (an Islamic terrorist group that is anti Western education and civilization) abduction of school

children in both Chibok and Dapchi with monumental infrastructural, human and social destruction. In this vein, Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, CSN, (2012) notes: “In the name of religion, ruthless and horrible crimes are being meted out on innocent citizens, leading to tragic destruction of churches and mosques, killing and maiming people, along with unjust displacement of people from their homes or business premises” (p. 14). Between 2009 and 2013 this religious group had killed about 3000 to 4000 people, destroying in addition to churches and mosques, state institutions and the United Nations building, vowing to Islamize the land via terrorism. For Nwozor (2013), “The Nigerian state is caught in the crossfire of national insecurity arising from the insurgency of various rogue groups. The most prominent of these groups, and one whose activities have had far-reaching destabilizing effect on the polity, is the Boko Haram sect” (p. 1). Despite the efforts of government through the years to eliminate this terrorist group, it remains extant and operational till date, though with dwindled potency and frequency of operations. This kind of situation negates development for it does not only destroy lives and properties, it also scares investors of all sorts.

Of late, the most menacing religiously, ethnically cum economically driven terrorist group of destruction is the marauding Fulani herdsmen who have become a national tragedy in traversing the length and breadth of the nation unleashing wanton destruction of lives, destruction of farmlands and feeding farm produce to their cattle, raising houses and churches with fire, raping women and occupying Christian “enemy” territories in their wake as the federal government in charge of the army and police “helplessly” watch in tacit and albeit culpable inaction. The man at the helm of affairs, of course, is their brother in every ramification. The Fulani herdsmen, for Azuakor and Onebunne (2016),

have been seen to be armed to the teeth, carrying sophisticated weapons like AK47 in a country where carrying such weapons is a criminal offence, yet they have not been stopped by the nation’s security systems. Their killings recently in Agatu, Benue State and the more recent killings and rapes in Nimbo, Enugu State, among others, have created unimaginable fear and worry among the populace. Many see their boldness as heightened by the fact that the present President of the country is their kin. (p. 95).

No nation grows and develops when the populace is hungry as a result of their farm produce being devilishly destroyed. And any nation in the modern era whose supposed fellow countrymen constitute themselves into a crude army of occupation while the ruling government turns a blind eye is anachronistically in the modern era; it really belongs to the stone age. In Nigeria, as for Nkwopara, Okoli, Igata and Okutu (2015):

Incidents of killing, robbery, rape, maiming and kidnapping by cattle herdsmen have inflicted pains on most



farmers, even as farm produce have been drastically affected. Farmers, leaving in fear, have scampered to safety in desperate bids to avoid being hacked down by the rampaging herdsmen. (p. 1).

The news media are awash with the continued occurrence of this kind of misnomer till date. Yet, non-fanatical Muslim positions teach on the need for peaceful co-existence between even Muslims and non-Muslims in their existence in society or even in their work places.

### **Evaluation**

Religion, in Nigeria and elsewhere, has instigated and advanced growth and development in many ways such as through education, creating of jobs, involvement in peace processes and sustenance, etc. But religion has also instigated and at times advanced conflicts which have marred growth and development. The influence of religion in world affairs can never be overemphasized. We already noted that about 95% of Nigerians are religious. So the influence of such a percentage in conflict resolution for peace cannot be neglected. Religion has led to so many riots in Nigeria. Religion is used as excuse by some fanatics for meting out of injustices, killings, discriminations in Nigeria which have negatively affected the strides of development and this must be checked.

The principles of conflict resolution as already described in this paper promote impartiality in addressing economic, social, religious, ethnic and political disagreements and conflicts all of which are rife in Nigeria. This impartiality entails open mindedness, love of justice, inclusiveness and collaboration. This must be imbibed and implemented for any meaningful progress in Nigeria. So, the various religious groups, in their internal dialogues and in their dialogues with other religions, during meetings for resolution of the conflicts rife in Nigeria, must religiously, meticulously and honestly adhere to and apply the contents of these principles (which are even inherent or implicit in their religious traditions) and transmit same to the members of their own religious groups who unflinchingly look upon their religious leaders for guidance. This will induce a tremendous atmosphere for human and social development emanating from a peaceful society.

All human beings are essentially equal, same in origin, rational and capable of goodness. The problems of man both in Nigeria and everywhere are bias, prejudice, ignorance of the truly essentials, greed and exploitativeness. All these play out in the suppression of peoples intra-rationally, inter-rationally, intra-nationally and internationally, as well as inter-ethnically and inter-religiously, etc. Nigeria has had its share in this anomaly and has suffered underdevelopment as a result. This situation must therefore be squarely addressed. This can be addressed through committed patriotism on the part of leaders in various sectors of the country; such committed leaders will not fall from the blues but must, in part, be the products of

a consciously established and nurtured moral and pragmatic educational system that must hinge on truth, inclusiveness and love of comprehensive progress. It is not as if the leaders will pass through an educational system different from that of the generality of the people, but they would be the shining examples of the possibility of imbibing such an education, and being placed in appropriate positions, have the capacity and possibility of influencing the generality to follow suit. This of course will demand a measure of sacrifice on their part. Religion has a crucial role to play here too.

Local and international investors do not invest in localities or countries ridden with the insecurities to life and property that uncontrolled and unresolved conflicts engender. For this reason, many multinational companies have been scared in general to come into Nigeria, but especially the North East of Nigeria because of the unfortunate phenomenon of the ravaging Boko Haram. This has been hampering Nigeria's development. The politico-religious, economic and ethnic reasons for that "virus" must be resolved by Nigerians for the love of God, love of humanity and for patriotism's sake. The various religions have some roles to play in making this possible. Religious instructors who have to instruct students in their formative years must be people who are properly trained, who are convinced religionists worth the name and who must live out the tenets of their religions. This will help them impart on their students, by their exemplary life, necessary virtues for promoting good human relationships, cooperation, attitudes and actions that produce progress and development. It is in this context that Madu (2017) outlined certain contents that must be imparted in religious instructions to include the following: (i) engendering among people the spirit of harmonious relationship, (ii) development of such virtues as humility, honesty, unselfishness, spirit of sacrifice and kindness, which makes for nobility of character, joy in living and steadfastness in conduct. It is clear that this stated disposition has not been happening among Christians and Moslems in Nigeria. But this should start happening already if we wish to come out of the social decay already plaguing Nigeria, springing from the actions of some religious fanatical groups albeit it with some economic cum political undertones.

The lack of honesty, love, sense of equality, sense of justice and fairness, open-mindedness and love for truth, as well as ingrained biases even among those involved in previous interreligious, interethnic and inter-political dialogues, and the failure of the leaders as well as members of these various groupings to internalize these mentioned positive virtues (that have been lacking) have made conflicts to continue in Nigeria irrespective of efforts already made at interreligious, interethnic and inter-political dialogues. But this does not mean that religious dialogues should cease, rather, dialogues should continue but must be anchored on honesty, truth, justice and brotherly love, for we all have God as our one Father after all. This will bring peace, which will lead to local and international cooperation for the attainment of growth and development.

## **Conclusion**

Nigerians are religious, but the problem is whether they are truly spiritual, for if they are, there will be religious tolerance, justice and love in the land. There would also be love of neighbor, peace, patriotism and mutual collaboration irrespective of the multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-political ideological composition of the country. The imperative of working with the recommendations discussed hereunder so as to eradicate political, religious, ethnic, economic and other conflicts so as to enshrine peace in the land is crucial. Again, the contribution of all the religions in the land, the political leadership and every Nigerian is crucial for the attainment of this goal. If all this is done, Nigeria will indeed begin to make growth and developmental strides.

## **Recommendations**

(i) Education: Socrates believed that individuals did evil because of ignorance. He believed that if people knew the good they would not choose to do evil. However relatively true this may be, it follows logically that moral/ethical education and citizenship education (if imbibed by the recipients) will go a long way to reducing conflict tendencies and enshrine peace. Schools and religious organizations have a serious part in this regard.

(ii) Dialogue: there must be more dialogues along religious, ethnic and political lines to douse tensions and conflicts in Nigeria. The religious leaders of Islam, Christianity, ATR and other religionists must have a forum or forums for peaceful discourses. Such dialogues must now be genuine unlike the dialogues of the past. The dialogues must adopt the principles of conflict resolution discussed in this work and more; they must also recognize the equality of all parties, be open to justice and fairness and must expunge illogical biases and prejudices. Benedict XVI (2011) sees dialogue on the religious level as one which must regard persons of other religions as a brother to be loved, and within one's religion as a truth that avoids syncretism.

(iii) The media: the media- print, electronic (audio and visual) as well as the social types must be employed by all and sundry, but especially the religious groups to harp on the virtues of inclusiveness, justice and peace, and to denounce the ills of unnecessary conflicts or uncontrolled conflicts. All this will enhance cooperation and peace and lead to development.

(iv) Job/Employment: suffering and poverty predispose people to being instruments of manipulation for violent conflicts and destructions. Thus, John Paul II (2002) notes: "the recruitment of terrorists in fact is easier in situations where rights are trampled upon and injustices tolerated" (n. 5). The government, the private sector (especially the religious groups, in this context) must accelerate the possibility and actual provision of employments for the youths, which will kill restiveness, proclivity to crime and conflict and induce development.

(v) Justice: John Paul II was known to declare: “If you want peace, work for justice.” There must be, in Nigeria, justice and fairness in admissions and placements, in distribution of resources and in locating of socio-economic infrastructures. This will impact on the mentality of all Nigerians and provide even development. This is not the case at the moment.

(vi) Open-mindedness as against bias and prejudice: the churches, mosques and society in general must teach and demonstrate that all human beings irrespective of their religious persuasions, tribes or religious leanings are essentially good and capable of goodness; that anybody’s quality or ability or even inability is not to be pre-conceived, but must be ordinarily demonstrated.

(vii) Patriotism: all Nigerians, in the churches, mosques, schools, homes and society at large, must be made to love Nigeria and work for its growth and development, together and as one people. Such an attitude will engender cooperation, love and peace and development ultimately.

(viii) Morality: religious leaders are supposed to be embodiments of morality. If they truly become this they will make tremendous impact on virtually all Nigerians who look to them as models, since we have shown in this work that at least 95% of Nigerians belong to one religion or the other. Such a moral environment would largely impact positively on peace, work ethics, reconciliation, love, truth, justice, etc and bring about Nigeria’s growth and development.

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