RELIGION AS A TOOL FOR PEACE AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
Religion, which is as old as man itself, has been destructively criticized and is still passing through criticism due mainly to the sufferings and devastating situations humanity has passed through over the years as a result of many violent crises caused or justified by religion. Though the actions that threaten peaceful co-existence, stability and development of humanity exhibited by adherents of the various religions in Nigeria has made the place of religion in addressing national issues become questionable, religion is still one of the recognized factors that can enhance peace and human development in any nation at any given period of history. This inquiry focused on religion as a tool for peace and human development in Nigeria. The principal religions recognised in Nigeria are Islam, Christianity and African Traditional Religion. Each of these has deep roles to play in enhancing peace and sustainable development. To achieve this objective, three approaches - historical method, social analysis and expository analysis were adopted. Data were collected from observation, review of extant literature, journals, articles, textbooks, internet sources and magazines to sift multifarious views on the subject. Findings indicated that although religion has been seen as a source of worry to humanity, it has played and can still play enormous role in the development of humanity. The study recommended that: religious leaders should as a matter of urgency and commitment review the tenets and creeds of their religions and get rid of anything that tends to erode their cherished values of peace and human development and focus more on their works of civilizing humanity, religious sentiments should be stamped out and proper tenets of religions should be taught and practiced, government should check the activities of religious leaders, also review the act that established religion as a social institution in order to pave way for unity, peace and progress in the Nigeria.

Keywords: Religion, Peace, human development, Progress, Unity.

Introduction
It is generally believed and accepted that religion is very deep in human mind. “It is ipso facto a way of life. It is practiced by two third of the world population which indicates the significant role it plays in the affairs of many nations” (Ojoajogwu, 2014). The impact of religion in people’s daily lives can therefore never be overemphasized; it helps in the area of unity, peace and progress; and, it is very rare to find anyone without religious belief, affiliation or relationship. Even with the
violent, murderous and devastating situations humanity has passed through in the hands of religious sects like Maitatsine and Boko Haram in Nigeria, religion can still be used as tool for peace and human development. Instances abound where religion was used as indices for settling differences among people, such as family, community, associations, political functions and other areas of human endeavour. Religious leaders have been used as government functionaries, they have served as special advisers to governments at different times and levels, and political offices have been shared among peoples based on religious affiliations.

But in the current dispensation, religious activities have generated a lot of controversy because of their perceived negative contributions to society, such as indoctrination, false prophesy, duping, rape, suicide bombing, terrorism and other anti-social activities. A lot of lives have been lost and many properties destroyed as a result of religious upheavals. According to Umejesi (2011), “the dimensions of these crisis especially between 1980 Maintatsine religious crisis through the 2000 Kaduna sharia religious crisis and the 2008/2010 Jos religious crisis into the present Boko Haram insurgency indicate that much is left to be desired from the potentials of religion.” These crises have led to loss of human and material resources needed for sustainable and viable nation building that would have been a model for developing nations such that it has become a source of regret on both national and international scenes. “The image of the country has been battered in the comity of nations, as a crisis ridden place, where the citizen, foreigners, investors and their investment are not safe. Indeed, the image of Nigeria is synonymous to religious crisis” (Umejesi, 2011).

Governments has expended a lot of effort in attempting to ameliorate the crisis of religion in Nigeria especially the issues of Boko Haram menace where billons of naira and materials organizations donations from countries like United State of America and other non-governmental bodies had been spent to cater for people that were internally displaced, the IDPs.

**Conceptual Clarification**

It is a generally accepted postulation that scholars are yet to reach a holistic consensus regarding a universal definition of Religion. Scholars from various fields of study have their definitions and views of religion; hence, religion is one thing to a sociologist and another to a psychologist, an anthropologist, a philosopher or a theologian. However, “in spite of the differences surrounding the root of the word “religion”, authors are in concord that religion connotes the association and
relationship between the creature and its creator, the finite and the infinite, man and God” (Idowu 22-24).

An overview of some definitions of religion at this stage becomes pertinent. Etymologically, the word “religion” is derived from the Latin noun, “religio”. The common verbs are “religere” to “turn to constantly” or “to observe conscientiously.” “Religere” to “bind oneself back”. It can therefore be safely assumed that most common definitions of religion appear to be etymological derivatives of the above verbs. Predicated on this assumption, Obilor (2002) defined religion as, “the whole complexes of attitudes, conviction and institutions through which we express our deep fundamental relationship with reality and not excluding the created order.” Gilbert (1980) states that, “religion describes any system of values, norms and related symbols and rituals, arising from attempt by individuals and social groups to affect certain ends, whether in this world or any future world by means wholly or partly supernatural.” For Ojoajogwu (2014), religion is “a collection of cultural systems, belief systems and world view that establishes symbols that relate humanity to spirituality and sometimes to moral values.”

Odumuyiwa (2006) aptly captures the transcendental perspective of religion by defining it as, “man’s effective desire to be in right relationship with a sacred transcendental order, controlling human destiny and events, either a prescribed system of rituals and or belief” Omoregbe (1993) viewed religion as essentially, a relation.” He stated that, “religion is the recognition of all our duties as divine ship, a link established by the human person and the divine person believed to exist.” According to Kant, “religion is the recognition of all duties as divine commands.” For Echekwube (1999) religion is, “an expression of faith and belief; the conscious and sub conscious response to the ultimate source of existence”.

Alao (2019) on his part defined religion as, “our absolute acknowledgement of dependence on the supernatural Being who sets and controls the entire affairs of life and the universe, hence attracting our reverence and obedience.” It can be deduced from these definitions that, religion conveys the following information: first, features of a Supernatural Being; second, the belief in that Being; and third, a feeling of awe and mystery in response to the command of that supernatural Being. Religion is the experience and expression of faith. Learning about religion and learning from religion are important for all adherents.
Onovughe and Mordi (2017) saw it as, “a set of belief and worship system whose aim is to unite man with the divine. In this sense, religion is understood as a relationship between man and the divine.” This relationship is sustained by the acts of worship and praise, devotion and sacrifices. Uche (2011) noted that, “religion has twofold functions ...a set of beliefs, practices, norms and values relating man to God and to his neighbours...” Nwachukwu (2008), in the same vein, conceived of religion as “having two dimensioned relationships: the vertical relationship - between man and God, and the horizontal relationship - between man and man.” Religion in its characteristic features is unique and the uniqueness of its features is manifested in its articulated belief systems, practices, norms and values, ceremonies, rituals and festivals.

Furthermore, Iwe cited by Ugorie (2017) summarized the definitions of religion into four basic points of view, namely: ‘subjective, objective, moral and institutional.” He posited his subjective point to mean “man’s natural and innate consciousness of his dependence on a transcendent Supra-Human Being and the consequent natural and spontaneous propensity to render homage and worship to him.” He viewed his objective perspective as, “a complex or configuration of doctrines, laws and rituals by which man expresses his loyalty to a transcendental Being - the Absolute God”. An enduring quality, a habit, which disposes him who has it to pay, steadfastly and well, the debt of honour and worship to God is what Iwe saw as a moral perspective. Finally, he interpreted his Institutional to mean a religious institution possessing its own definite system of beliefs, system of activities and system of values like any other social institution. In this sense, world religions such as Christianity and Islam represent religion as institution and in these institutions people observe and appreciate their submissions to supernatural being. Religion as an institution is also referred to as organised religion.

It is on the institutional premise of religion that this study is anchored and it is limited to Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion which are the three largest religious communities in Nigeria. In this inquiry the researcher seeks to ascertain how religion can possibly contribute to the peace, development and enhancement of humanity.

**Concept of Peace**

The Latin word *Pax*, means “freedom from civil disorder”. This is the basis upon which the English word “peace” came into use. According to Alao (2019), “peace is the concept of harmony and the
absence of hostility. In a behavioural sense, peace is a lack of conflict and freedom from fear of violence between individuals and heterogeneous social groups.” Peace is a state of harmony characterized by the lack of violent conflict. Commonly understood as the absence of hostility, peace also suggests the existence of healthy or newly healed inter-personal or national relationships. It reflects a calm, serene and meditative approach to societal relationships that avoids quarrelling and seeks tranquillity. It is an absence of disturbance or agitation. Okpe (2006) posited that, “peace, a key social value is based on the belief that to promote life is to promote positive relation with others by consensus decision making.” It implies negotiations, mediation, and reconciliation in order to enhance the right and original state of nature by which man is in harmony with himself, his neighbour and indeed the environment in which he lives. Peace goes hand in hand with justice. Religiously viewed, all people share a common humanity and therefore have a right to equitable treatment, support for their human rights and a fair allocation of community resources.

In the contemporary context, peace has been, and is being churlishly relegated through various destructive machinations within Nigeria. It is believed that the colonizers deliberately entrenched a very bad and humiliating hatred among the believers of Islam and Christianity in Nigeria thereby dislodging them from their ability to understand one another, to live in harmony and use peace as the bedrock of establishing prestigious socio-political and moral institutions which could serve as guiding beacons for the transformation of Nigerian into a greater society. The route to Nigerian peace can only be reached if the Nigerian religions and society realize that they are bound by common destinies and interests and are also able to retain their dignity and sovereignty at an aggregated level of justice and fair play to all sides of religious belief. Paradoxically, Nigeria with all its divisive tendencies and negative forces, still maintain a fragile unity in religious diversity against all odds. Therefore, it can be summarized that, “peace is a gift and value necessary for creation to be at unity within itself” (Okpe, 2006). Without peace, no meaningful development can take place.

**Religion**

Religion is one of the social institutions of the society. It is equally understood as predating any society hence it is conceived as a GIVEN’. It is one of the human endeavours that have tremendously influenced the life of many nations of the world. It has recognizably impacted on
the political, physical, social, moral, spiritual and economic affairs of the modern world. Literature suggests that it is embraced by about two third of the world population which is an indication of the significant role it plays in the affairs of many nations. The high regards given to religion is portrayed by the diverse manner through which it is carried out in many societies. Those who face the east to pray five times daily (Muslims), those who commune with their ancestors (Traditionalists), those who approach the supreme daily through a divine mediator (Christians), and those who assume specific postures and undertake some austere practices of self-discipline as aids to mediation, reflection and enlightenment represent different forms through which man attempts to satisfy his religious desires.

Religion has also come to include faith as well as rituals and ceremonies which are basically the means of communication and communion with the supreme deity or whatever man conceives as the transcendental reality. Religion is a collection of cultural systems, belief systems and world view that establishes symbols that relate humanity to spirituality and sometimes to moral values. Many religions have narrative symbols, traditions and sacred histories to give meaning to life or to explain the origin of life or the universe. Most religions have organized behaviours, including clerical hierarchies, a definition of what constitutes adherence or membership.

Durkheim cited in Ojoajogwu (2014) states that, “the development of religion has taken different forms in different cultures.” According to him, “some religions place emphasis on belief while others emphasize practices. Some focus on the subjective experience of the religious individual while others consider the activities of the religious community to be most important.” In many places, religion has been associated with public institutions such as education, the family, government and political hierarchies. Religion is a stabilizing force in the society which bound the community as a social force in the social glue. It is a major force for social and moral changes. “Religion is a social institution concerned with beliefs, actions and inactions of a society through which the values, norms, ethics and traditions are defined, embedded and expressed within the cosmology of the people. It is a major factor that influences the activities of human” (Adebirigbe and Aiyegboiyin, 1997).

In all these, religion remains a broad concept generally difficult to define in a specific direction. Religion is perceived according to the individual or collective approach (Buroe, 1914). Thus it has come to occupy a centre stage in both our consciousness and even academic discourse. According
to Kant, “religion is the recognition of all duties as divine commands.” This can be interpreted to mean that religion is a form of behaviour, process or structure of which orientation is at least partially supernatural. At the Farm House Dialogue (1994) on religion and society in Ota - Ogun State, Nigeria, participants reasoned that there are no two persons with exactly the same concept of God and religion. As such, religion was seen as an expression of faith and belief; the conscious and sub conscious response to the ultimate source of existence (Echekwube, 1999).

**Types of Religion in Nigeria**

Nigeria is home to a variety of religions which tend to vary regionally. Several religions in Nigeria exist, helping to accentuate regional and ethnic distinctions. Nigeria is a religiously pluralistic state or multi religious society. The three basically practiced religions in Nigeria are Christianity, Islam and African Religion. The country could be seen as having a dominant Muslim north, a mixed Christian and Muslim South West and Middle Belt, a non-Muslim, primarily Christian South-East and South-South with each as a minority faith in the other region (Abogunrin, 1999).

Statistically evidential literature suggests that Nigeria is nearly equally divided between Christianity and Islam, though the exact ratio is uncertain. According to a 2001 report from The World Fact book by CIA, about 50% of Nigeria's population is Muslim, 40% are Christians and 10% adhere to local religions. But in some recent report, the Christian population is now slightly lesser than the Muslim population. A 2012 report on religion and public life by the Pew Research Centre stated that in 2010, 48.3 percent of Nigeria's population was 'projected' Christian, 48.9 percent was 'estimated' Muslim, and 2.8 percent were followers of indigenous and other religions, or unaffiliated.

The 2010s census of Association of Religion Data Archives reported that 47.5 percent of the total population is Christian, slightly bigger than the Muslim population of 45.5 percent, and that 7.0 percent are members of other religious groups. The Pew Forum in a 2010 report compared reports from several sources. The 1963 Nigerian census found that 38% of the population was Muslim, 36% Christian, and 26% other; the 2008 MEASURE Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) found 53% Muslim, 45% Christian, and 2% other; the 2008 Afro barometer poll found 50% Christian, 49% Muslim, and 1% other; Pew's own survey found 52% Muslim, 46% Christian, and 1% other.
Islamic Religion

Islam was introduced to the northern part of the country as early as the eleventh century. The Islamic religion in Nigeria has been well established in the northern state, with central mosques in most state capitals as at the 16th century. It grew popular to even the middle belt and several parts of Nigeria. At some point, Usman Dan Fodio had to establish a government based on Islamic Religion before the advent of colonialism when the government was infiltrated by the British.

Christian Religion

Christianity is the most popular and most advertised religion in Nigeria. It was introduced in Nigeria in the middle of the nineteen century by devote missionaries from British. Christianity was one of the things introduced into Nigeria by British among many others things. The missionaries came preaching the message of Christ, ministering to the people and also healing the sick, this was what actually pulled the crowd to them in the first place. They started from the eastern part of the country which is populated by the Igbos, they infiltrated the village councils and chiefs, who gave them lands to build local churches.

Before the 80s the Christian religion had spread to the southern part of the country, to the Yoruba’s and the middle belt (Benin) As at the year 2005, there are over 50 million Christian in Nigeria, we have the Protestant which strongly believe in the power of the Holy ghost as well as the Catholic, Baptist and Anglican churches.

Traditional Religion

We have the traditional religion in Nigeria, as much as the message of Islam and Christianity may have taken over the major part of the country, the previous indigenous worship could not be properly annihilated. These indigenous religions are simply the worship of inanimate objects, the worship of rocks, trees, or some mysterious animals like lions or a huge python which they believe to be their source of strength or spiritual guide. Before the advent of the modern religions (Christianity and Islam) these gods (as they are called) were seen as guides and the sovereign authorities. In any village or town, they speak to the people through a mediator (Priest), and they go by so many names Amadioha, Iku, Urashi, Ogwugwu, Ikuku, Ogun, Obatala. One thing so mind wrenching about these gods is the fact that, they cannot go without blood sacrifice.
Religion as a Social Institution

Austin (2017) states that, “religion as an institution is a powerful organization which impacts on our socio-economic and political activities.” Religion deeply reflects in the socio-economic and political activities of many people whether as Christians, Muslims or African Traditional believers. Christianity and Islam are foreign religions in Nigeria; they were introduced between 13th and 18th centuries by European and Arab people respectively. Michael (2014) in the unexpected subject matter of religious studies; method and practice in the study of religion, states that since virtually all societies have some forms of religion, it is a universal human institution. Vexen (2013) believes that, “religion is best described in terms of the beliefs and practices of the bulk believers.”

Religion varies from place to place. Religion can be traced back to the days of early man as he sought to respond to the unknown forces of nature in their various localities. Religion has generated a lot of controversies among people of diverse opinions in Nigeria. Time had been set aside for religious activities no matter the condition, Christian with different denomination engaged in prayers, likewise Muslim and traditional religion; they practice their festivals without chaos.

When we imagine the misdeeds in many Churches and Mosques, we may come to the conclusion that despite the disappointments people may have experienced from adherents’ despicable acts such as duping, fraud, rape, money ritual etc., the religions are still very relevant in achieving peace and human development in Nigeria. It seems there is no difference between religion institution and private organization, the same set of innovations such as codes of conduct including dressing, time allocation, and titles that exist in private organizations are now dominating religion institutions to which the members must adhere strictly in order to remain in the domain. Clark (2009) opines that, “religion in Nigeria plays a major role in the life of the people; to some, it is their candle light, it gives them insight, wisdom and knowledge, and faith is increased through the study of scripture, books and prayers.” He maintains that, “the religions help adherents remain in line and stay focused. A religious leader is feared, respected and loved. He could mediate in situations that defy several means.”

Religion also promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of individuals and of groups and communities. In particular, religion education offers adherents self-confidence and awareness, enables them understand the world they live in as individuals and as members of groups, bring their own experiences and understanding of life to bear on others, develop positive
attitudes towards others, respect their beliefs and experiences, reflect on and consider their own values and those of others, and deal with issues that form the basis for personal choices and behaviour.

Religion and Unity in Nigeria

Ole (2011) sees religion as, “a world view” ideology, an organization, an attitude, a set of values, as moral and motivational, or an ethnical disposition.” Professor Shella Coulson from Oslo University in Norway however claims to have proof that, “modern humans started performing advance rituals in African 70,000 years ago. She discovered making oldest known ritual in Ngami land region of Botswana; here our ancestors performed advanced rituals, worshipping the pantheon” (Andre, 2009). It was the early man then that found themselves in unworldly circumstances due to their engagement in difference activities and discovery and invention by that time, starting from fruit gathering to hunting, from hunting to domestication of animals. The more they discovered the more they arrived in more complications through their exploit of nature.

The consequences of their exploitation led to many things such as sickness, and other unexplainable conditions. Through all these they realized that where they were, it may be that the owner was not pleased with them. With this view, they develop the ideas of placating, appeasement and persuasion with the unknown spirit. The identifiable objects around them that they exploited were water, hills, mountains, trees, and forest spirits. This response was based on the idea that, if they worshipped them all those calamities will not befall them. But by continuing in these activities and nonstop exploitation of nature as civilization proceeded, they continued to experience the same things.

Another noticeable was the case of Australian Aborigines around 60,000 years ago; it was later cited by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and Oedipus complex (father-figure neurosis). Religion has been used as a tool for unity in Nigeria in many ways, such as through preaching by religious leaders, sharing of political offices among the politicians, also to settle ethnic differences in many regions in the country. Religious leaders were also given different roles to contribute to nation building.

Some of the Problems Associated with Religion in Nigeria
The country is undoubtedly struggling with a long list of religious issues. The government currently has a lot on its plate, so the responsibility of solving religious problems partly lies with the citizens. Lambora, (2009) believes that, “many people believe that a single person can change the world, and if a group of people understand that something is wrong, they should be able to do something to change it for the betterment of the country.” Some of these issues are:

**National Identity Problem**

Religion has been used as a tool for unity in Nigeria, but some negative aspect of it has impeded the progress of the nation. Fadeiye (2010) argued that, ‘religion promotes unity in the society, particularly among people of the same belief or faith. Religious intolerance is one of the problems facing Nigeria as a country’. It has been used for personal gains by religious leaders. Nigeria is a relatively young country because it gained independence only 59 years ago, in 1960. It was also created in an artificial way after gaining freedom from its colonial masters. There are a large number of tribes in Nigeria, and this is one of the important issues being faced, because to this day the country still has problems with gaining and voicing a national idea. The main purpose of this idea of nationality is to unite all the social, religious and ethnic groups within one country and make them identify as Nigerians despite all their differences. Besides, there are some conflicts with other nations that create unnecessary tension among Nigerians.

**Poverty of the Population**

This is without any doubt, a large social issue which does not portray Nigeria in the best light. Poverty causes a lot of problems in the society, and while the population of the country is huge, a large part of it does not have access to the basic needs for comfortable living. Statistical data shows that about 70% of the country’s residents live below the line of poverty, and there are a lot of people who are forced to survive on just $2 per day, which is a critical situation. The population is rapidly growing, and soon, even more people will be under the risk of living in poor conditions without money, poverty had led many people to religious centre and the consequences are not favourably, some had been raped, molested and duped.

**Corruptions**
Ajayi (2000) observed that, “corruption by political and civil officials manifest in diverse dimensions such as misappropriation and embezzlement of public funds, inflation and indiscriminate re-evaluation of contracts and collaboration with contractors who later pay kickbacks and percentage commissions to relevant officials which invariably leads to failed contracts and abandoned projects.” Nigeria is known as a country with a high level of corruption amongst its government representatives. Reports show that some people in government offices earn as much in a year, as the average Nigerian could earn in 65 years; this shows that they definitely have other sources of income apart from their official salary. In all honesty, the governmental system in the country is corrupt and there is a clear lack of justice.

**Religion and Human Development**

Fundamental to the human development approach is the concept of capabilities. Capabilities (that is, what people can do and what they can become) are the tools one has to pursue a life of value. Basic capabilities valued by virtually everyone include: good health, access to knowledge (education), political freedom, guaranteed human rights, and sustainable standard of living. Other capabilities essential to a fulfilling life could include the ability to take part in the decisions that affect one’s life, to have control over one’s living environment, to enjoy freedom from violence and to have societal respect. Human development is interrelated with human rights and the goal is human freedom. Therefore, in pursuing capabilities and realizing rights, this freedom is vital. People must be free to exercise their choices and to participate in decision-making that affects their lives.

Human development and human rights are jointly reinforcing and helping to secure the well-being and dignity of humankind. The idea of human development stipulates the need for education, better conditions for work and more choices for individuals. The idea goes with human rights. For instance, the right for education relates to intellectual development, and political rights relates to the level of the political development of that society (UNDP).

Religion as an institution complements as well as motivates human development. It can also obstruct or undermine human development. The avenues by which religion influences developmental activities in different faiths and religions vary from religion to religion and culture to culture. Religious adherents and institutions may be agents of advocacy, funding, innovation,
empowerment, social movements, and service delivery. Equally, religious adherents and institutions can incite violence, model hierarchy, oppose empowerment, repel, and cast aspersions on service delivery (HRDPIP). One therefore, might be tempted to think or imagine based on the negative and unguided aspects generating from religion across the globe that religion is a problem to humankind. Perusing through the annals of ancient and medieval, modern and contemporary history, amid the institutions of society, religion must be recognized as one of the greatest benefactors of humanity.

**Religious Values Exploitable for Peace and Human Development**

The essence of religion is its values in human existence in terms of peace and human development. The history of mankind is replete with the pervasive influence of religion such that the study of religion which involves an attempt at understanding its significance, origins and its myriad forms has become progressively essential in recent times. Religious values entail the high moral and ethical values that all faiths aspire to achieve. In this way, religions can serve as base for the inculcation and improvement of ethical values which are fundamental to achieving correct human behaviours particularly as it relates to peace, productivity and human development.

It has been observed that the three major religions in Nigeria have similarities in their ethical codes and this can be taken to be an encouragement and a possible impetus for the quest towards inter religious harmony in Nigeria. The utilization of religious values by different religious adherents of their respective ethical norms can result in the development of the physical, mental, psychological and spiritual potentials of man in order to facilitate effective nation building in all ramifications. According to Ademu in the Nations Newspaper (2011), “Nigerian religions have a lot to contribute to the development of ethical values which are greatly needed in the decadent contemporary society.”

These religions (African traditional religions, Christianity and Islam) have a divine responsibility to achieve a better and more fully integrated life for their people. Nigerians cannot expect to have self-respect based on self-reliance if these religions do not co-operate with one another. Actualization of religious spirits will go a long way in promoting good actions on the part of the citizens of Nigeria towards the fulfilment of national development. According to Onimhawo (2011:24), “religious values are founded on religious traditions, texts and beliefs. These values are
usually considered to be the values that people of faith aspire to achieve. In contrast to human or personal values, religious-based values are based on the scriptures and or a religion’s established norms.” Some of religious values include Justice, Peace, Love and Tolerance, respect for human life, obedience to laws of transcendent Being, whose representatives are those in authorities and by extension obedience to the laws of the land. Let us therefore inquire into a few religious values which this paper considers relevant to the building of peace and human development in the Nigerian nation.

**Justice**

Justice is a concept of moral rightness based on ethics, rationality, law, natural law, religion or equity along with the punishment of the breach of said ethics; justice is the act of being just or fair. Rawls (1999:3) opines that: “Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought”. For Okpe (2006:11), justice is said to be, “those principles which arise when the constraints of having a morality are imposed upon parties or people with various interests”. This means that justice is thought of as a pact between rational human beings whose peaceful interaction amongst themselves is dependent on the balance of power mainly in the distribution of available good both empirical and otherwise. This implies that justice exists among rational beings (human persons), and their ability to determine an actions properly in order to produce balance of power within which individuals pursue their ends while respecting the right of others. Religions in Nigeria also conform to the idea of justice. For instance, the Muslims set up Sharia courts, while Christians swear with the Bible in the court of law. They also have biblical injunctions that emphasize justice while the traditional religions also have their own judicial systems or ways of administering justice which is chiefly done by swearing by the deities responsible for justice.

**Love and tolerance**

Love is a strong positive emotion of regard and affection. Tolerance is willingness to recognize and respect the beliefs or practices of others. It is a disposition to allow freedom of choice and behaviour. Love is active while tolerance is passive. Love is accompanied by feelings of great affection while tolerance can be a feeling of apathy. Tolerance keeps people at arm’s length in hopes of not offending themselves while love embraces people where they are. The both terms are mutually related and are values that cut across all the religions particularly, the ones practiced in
Nigeria. Love and tolerance are prerequisites for the building of a stable nation. The need for love and tolerance is a necessary factor for a multi religious society like Nigeria.

**Conclusion**

We have seen the dynamism in religion as replicated in the history of Nigeria in recent times. While I submit that religion has created a lot of ill feelings among Nigerians especially when it has been manipulated out of selfish interest, it has also been asserted that there are a lot religion has to offer towards peace and human development in Nigeria. Although, the continuous frosty relationship among Nigerians based on religious inclinations has created a lot of bad blood for the nationhood of Nigeria due largely to the violent and murderous activities of the Islamic sect, Maitatsine and Boko Haram, there are sterling qualities and capacities in religion which could be harnessed towards a purposeful nation building of Nigeria.

In view of the reality of the positive and essential role of religion to human development, this paper recommends that it would be wise and realistic for the multi religious society of Nigeria to look into the common values inherent in the various religions towards a viable and peaceful coexistence capable of enhancing holistic development of the nation. The author demonstrated that the capacity and force of religion, if properly harnessed can facilitate unprecedented nation building that can eliminate the vices and tendencies that affect development and can sponsor disintegration. In this regard religious leaders should as a matter of urgency and commitment review the tenets and creeds of their religions and get rid of anything that tends to erode their cherished value of human development and focus more on their works of civilizing humanity.

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