Appraisal Of Religious Intolerance In Nigeria

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Abstract

Crisis, whether political, ethnic or religious is gradually becoming a permanent feature of Nigeria communities. Consequently, the assurance of quality needed for development in twenty first century Nigeria is becoming elusive and a mirage based on occurrences of religious crisis in Nigeria. Religions connotes socio-political, cultural and spiritual phenomenon with overriding influence in individual and community life of most members of the Nigeria population, and has been often suspected and accused of anti-social activities. Many people have lost their lives and properties worth billions of naira destroyed. The perpetrators of religious crisis have been fomenting terror out of selfish ambitions. The study adopts historical, sociological and theological research approaches and data collated were sifted, critically analyzed and presented descriptively. The study showcased that various religious crises in Nigeria had causes and adverse effects on the well being of Nigerians and the development of Nigerian society at large. The findings include that the quality needed for peaceful co-existence of Nigerians, and development cannot be guaranteed. The findings further intoned that solutions proffered after each crisis had no lasting grip on the Nigerian society to assure uninterrupted development of the country. The study stressed that religious tolerance, dialogue, and government provision of employment opportunities would generate

mutual understanding, forgiveness, spirit of live and let live in the arbitration of religious crises in Nigeria.

Introduction

Religion by its nature is supposed to enlighten, inspire and unify people in any society. It is an irony that it often engenders strife, intolerance and hatred among the religious groups in Nigeria today. The danger posed by religion has assumed a frightening dimension under which no meaningful development can endure. According to Okoro (2008:105), religion in some quarters and her institution are suspected to be major causes of violent, crises and conflicts not only in the contemporary history but down to the history of development of human society. Agi has said that;

> The problem of religious violence in Nigeria is very complex, not only have Nigerians to contend with inter and intra-religious or (sectarian) violence, they have perforce to contend with Northern and Southern variants on the one hand, and reckon with the charging face of religious violence from one era with another on the other hand. For example, manifestation of the phenomenon in the pre-colonial period differs from colonial, both differ severally from the post colonial era, and all three differ from the contemporary period. (1998:24)

There are a number of disturbing phenomena in the society arising from religion. Religious organizations have sometimes exerted discriminating influences which have often generated disaffection, apathy and separation among people in the society. Tension and incessant killings always grip non-Muslims in Northern Nigeria due to intolerance among religionists in the society. Religion has often caused the disruption and disintegration of domestic unity as homes and fragmented churches into protestant, Roman Catholic; Pentecost and orthodox, Presbyterian as well as Brotherhood of the cross and star. Social discrimination sometimes follows denominational differentiation and legacy of denominationalism has often led to serious interdenominational competition, hostility, and discrimination. Critically appraised, many of the educational, economic, medical and social welfare services rendered by various Christian groups may have

divisive and competitive purposes. Denominational differences have often led to interdenominational crises and conflicts as a result of intolerance (Ekechi, 1972:50-51).

Against this background, Okoro maintains that, religion is therefore a contentious issue in the world history. This is because, where eternal salvation is at stake, compromise can be difficult and may be considered sinful. Hence religion instigates conflict because as a central part of many individuals identity, any threat to ones belief is considered a threat to ones very being. Therefore religious fanatics take a serious consideration of the society, as they see human existence in the society as a struggle between the forces of good and evil. Definitely it is difficult to justify compromise with the devil, hence, any sign of moderation or toleration is always seen as selling out, more importantly as abandoning the will of God or the gods. (2008:106).

Whichever way the above assumption may be viewed there is still the other side of the story. Agi (1998:50) observes that the contribution of religion to the creation and exacerbation of social conflict can never be disputed. Still, it is to be noted, however, that a conflict does not become religious by the mere fact that it is referred to as such. According to Scholz (1959:70) underscores that "the error of attributing to religious motives what may well only be an expression of a purely secular and political stand point abound". Some of what conventional wisdom tags as religious violence in Nigeria has nothing to do with religion, or at best has only tangential relations with it. The issue is that certain violent acts have been perceived by Nigerians as 'religious violence', and they have reacted in that light.

Be this as it may, it is the position of this research work that religious intolerance should not be the life style of Nigerians. The focus of the religiosity which Nigerians display brazenly will have no meaning in as much as they do not appreciate the religion of others. The spirit of live and let live should guide Nigerian populace. This paper examined, general perspective of religious intolerance, survey of Nigeria religious landscape, religious intolerance and Nigeria experience and proffer possible lasting solutions to religious crises in Nigeria.

General Perspective of Religious Intolerance

Religious intolerance is conterminous with religious extremism which Iwe has descriptively defined as:

An irrational attitude to religion which leads the religionist to the practice of religion beyond the bounds of reason and therefore without moderation. Those who perpetuate intolerance in the practice of religion are fundamentalists and they come as sects and fashion out extreme literal myopic and selfish interpretation of their scriptures to justify or give credence to their radical and often violent religious activities (2000:20).

Fundamentalist arose in the protestant American during late 19th century and later in Islamic states mostly after those countries have gained independence following the Second World War (Lawrence, 1989:4). In the same vein Gold Thorpe (2000:197-8) cited in Nnanna that further criticized fundamentalists movement saying that:

They have arisen through the world and within virtually all the major religions, most notably in Islamic societies and among protestants in the USA together they represent an ideological movement of comparatively recent origin (2003:22-24).

Unlike other movements however, fundamentalism represents a directly hostile response to the great Western transformation, modernization and indeed has become a kind of code word for all that fundamentalists abhor and fear. The modern rational secular state tolerates different moral convictions, political opinions, scientific theories and artistic expressions; and relativism, individualism as well as, immorality and depravity (Nnanna, 2004:15). In their quest to attain their selfish goals, fundamentalists intolerant of other faiths and movements. As far as they are concerned, no other group or movement deserves to exist alongside with them not even the original body from where they grew or split from. In extreme cases they normally resort to violence in order to assert their selfish desires. Religious intolerance is manifested in several ways by the fanatics who perpetuate intolerance in varied manifestations categorized in the following order:

(i) Overt Religious Fanaticism

This group does not hide their feelings and actions, the members normally display their violent, often than not, (unreasonable enthusiasm in crude form) publicly, usually associated with rustles illiterates instance of Maitasine and Boko-Haram sects.

(ii)   Hidden Religious Fanaticism

The fanaticism associated with educated and diplomatic elites who indulge in religious prejudice, subtle and in surreptitious manner.

Those fanatics exhibit their level of intolerance in different ways displayed through hatred and intolerance openly without pretension. They go to any length to prove that their views override the views of other adherents and that everybody must do their bidding and if they *are* resisting, they will take to arms and embark on widespread destruction of life and properties. The other groups of fanatics do not openly display their intolerance. They are non violent but not friendly. They use any opportunity that comes their way to vent their anger on people of other faiths. If this category occupies position of authority, their worst would be to discriminate against people who are not of the same religion with them. Linda and Smoker cited in Okoro say that:

> The religious fanatics or the fundamentalists are any religious group or sect, which adopts purely a literal as opposed to metaphorical or mythical interpretations of their holy scripture and who deny the validity of interpretations of other religions traditions and assume that religious truth resides with their own perspective. Actually, fundamentalists in any religious tradition turn their belief System into dogma by giving exclusive and particularistic literal interpretations to their scripture. Often they build their dogma by using one verse or even sentences or even phrase from their scripture without taking cognizance of the historical or circumstantial context in which the original speaker made the statement. By these means, the fundamentalists miss the subtle levels of meaning as well as analogies with the teaching from other world religions and as such present lopsided message to their membership and the society (2008: 108).

Obviously the fanatics stress more on their uniqueness and specialty and on how they are peculiar and different from other religions and from other sects within their own religion. The fundamentalists in order to substantiate their assumed uniqueness status, de-emphasis the commonalities they share with other religious traditions and sects. The implication of this religious posture is that the fundamentalists enter

into an error of thinking that their 'faith and perception of reality is only the correct one, while everyone else is wrong (Okoro, 2008:108).

The role of religion in making a good citizen out of the individual cannot be overemphasized. Anyanwu (2009:162) said that religion reminds it's adherents that they have dual citizenship, the earthly and heavenly citizenship (Iwuchukwu, 1990:5) Religion contains values that promote human rights, human relationship and human virtues (Uka, 2007:165). It is religion that also reminds members of society that they are duty bound to respect legitimate authority and cooperate with them for peace and progress (1 Peter 2:13-17).

Religion enjoins every member of society to be a good and patriotic citizen. It sees the government of the land as divinely sanctioned institution, and considers morality to be the paramount important in society and so expects all her faithful to be champions and image of good morality in their society (lwuchukwu, 1990:6).

In other words, intolerance is a blind refusal to understand and respect views or positions that are opposed to one's cherished views. Religious intolerance is an expression of a blind and fixed mental and psychological negative attitude towards religious beliefs and practices. Such negative attitudes exhibit themselves in situations whereby leaders or groups in any society blindly refused to understand and respect contrary religious views and practices except the ones they consider to be true. There is religious intolerance when members of the self acclaimed true religion proclaim in practice that persons they consider to be in error have no right to live, no right to legitimate political, social and economic amenities unless they renounce their error and be converted to the supposed true religious views and practices. There is religious intolerance when political leaders or the ruling class overtly or covertly collide with some citizens on purely religious grounds. Under such a situation some citizens are denied their fundamental rights to religious liberty, liberty of religious beliefs and practices. Often, this refusal to understand and accept contrary religious views and practices is accompanied by series of violence and destruction (Gianfranco, 1960:3).

A Survey of Nigeria Religious Landscape

If one accepts Arendt Lijphart's thesis that "a country is classified as 'homogeneous' if 80 percent or more of its population belong to the same religion or the same language" then one must

perforce concede that Nigeria is by no means a homogeneous society. Rather, Nigeria is not only a plural-ethnic society, it is also *one* made up of diverse and 'sects'. Within religious groupings in Nigeria are: African Traditional Religion (ATR). Christianity and Islam (Lijphart, 1984:42)

Idowu in defining African Traditional Religion says:

> There is a common Africanness about the total culture and religious beliefs and practices of Africa. This common factor may be due either to the fact of diffusion or to the fact that most Africans share religious practices. In certain cases, one could trace specific cultural or religious elements which are common over wide areas. Which lies proximate to one another, and often there are elements, which jump over whole territories to reappear in several other scattered areas on the continent. With regard to the concept of God, there is a common thread, however tenuous in places, running throughout the continent. Whatever outsiders may say, it is in fact this one factor of the concept, with particular reference to the 'character' of deity, which makes it possible to speak of religion of Africa (1973:103).

It is in this context that the use of the term, African Traditional Religion, when discussing Nigeria's indigenous religion becomes relevant. If for nothing else, it is African in the sense that it has not been imposed from outside. A.TR and its manifestations had their days in pre-colonial times. The then congruence between the political and religious subsystems was high. The gods of the group guaranteed or represented its values and the roles of the citizens and believers could not be separated. As Ayandele (1977) pin pointed, scholars of African religion and the anthropologists agreed on the fact that religion is central to the life of the Africans. It bound the king with divinity and awe, permeated the life of the individuals from birth to the grave, subjected the lowborn to their superiors and because of the fear it instilled, formed the basis of secular authority. Remove religion from an African society and it would be deprived of its very life; its moral and political systems would collapse at once (Mbiti, 1980:263).

The creation of the modern state has greatly weakened the political force of ATR through its influences on individuals and events have been quite considerable (Idowu, 1973:94).

Christianity
In Nigeria, although Roman Catholic Missionaries arrived in Benin as early as 1516, and remained until 1688, their efforts failed to make any significant or lasting impression. Nearly two centuries elapsed before Nigeria became a target for renewed missionary enterprises. During 19th century Christian missionaries from Europe and America penetrated interior of what is now Nigeria either shortly before or simultaneous with colonial occupation. Christianity expanded rapidly in first half of the century through the joint efforts of missionaries and their African converts. Scholars pointed out, political significant aspects of Christian doctrines that are impossible to summarize, but in all monotheistic religions, ultimate allegiance is owed not to the sovereign but to God, whose kingdom is not of this world. The supreme guiding principle in individual's life is personal salvation, which is God's sole purpose in the creation of any individual soul, and this must therefore be put before all worldly cares (Roger, 1998:15).

Secondly, charity is the font of virtue and pride is the font of sin. This doctrine requires the belief of the miseries of others, and a reluctance to pursue worldly glory to power (except as a means of exercise of charity and the worship of God). A policy of concern for and identification with the under privileged - sometimes advanced as "the imitation of Christ" - has often seemed to flow from that. (White, 2003: 18).

Thirdly, the doctrine of the incarnation, that God is identical with Christ and dwells among us, as a suffering and redeeming presence, reinforces the belief that man in his compassionate aspect is nearer to God, whereas man in his pride is cast out etc (Agi, 1998: 16).

Islam
Classical Islam is intensely socio-theocratic. In principle, all human behaviour is under divine order, and that social law and theology are fused. In its integral vision of reality, Islam tends to identify the social conglomerate with religious group, the community with the state, and therefore is inclined to formulate rules for social life according to its religious ethics. Islam trailed the path of Arab traders, and is reputed to have arrived the North of what is today Nigeria about the 9th century A.D but it was only from the beginning of the 19th century that

its impact over most of Northern Nigeria became established fact (Agi, 1998:16).

As indicated above, there are two processes which have created the present religious 'map' of Nigeria. The Fulani conquest and the accompanying "purification" of Hausa Islam as well as the penetration of the South of Nigeria by Christianity and its relationship with the subsequent establishment of colonial rule. Not surprisingly adherents of Islam are concentrated in the former Northern region as well as the former Western region including Lagos. Islam had begun to make in road into those later too even before the imposition of colonial rule. In the former Eastern region even today Islam's following is marginal yet frightening.

Christianity can with qualifications, be said to be the religion of the South, particularly the South-east where it has deeply penetrated. It is to be noted, however, that Christianity seems to have a very large following in the middle belt, and quite a good number of adherents all of the rest of Northern Nigeria.

In terms of pure adherents, ATR in Nigeria has dwindling number of adherents ostensibly, while the adherents of Islam and Christianity seem to be increasing by leaps and bounds. It will be flying in the face of facts to deny that ATR or certain of its aspects has persisted within and under the surface of Muslims and Christians through wide reaches of Nigeria (Agi, 1998:16).

Religious Intolerance and Nigeria Experience

Religion in all societies is an instrument of cohesion, unity and progress. It is also used to control the social and spiritual life of the people in a community and in the wider society. Every society has a religion in one form or the other, and as a definition of reality, values and goals. In Nigeria situation Edlyne says:

> Religion is a means to perpetuate violence, fueling of ethnic consciousness and solidarity, acquisition .of political power, socio-economic gains, massive killings and the wanton destruction and vandalization of property of those considered infidels or who pay allegiance to other religions. As a means of commanding political legitimacy in Nigeria, it has dictated the pace of the political democratization process which hitherto nurtured ethnic consciousness in the country (2004:23).

Nigeria as it exists today is a pluralistic society, with different cultural and religious groups. The notion of pluralism as it is needs further explication. Pluralism involves awareness on the part of those affected of the existential differences in cultural behaviours, philosophy of life and even certain attitudes and values. It further implies a conscious acceptance of those differences as inevitable in the search for significant and relevant common goals, objectives and philosophy which take cognizance of the common needs, aspirations and values of the different ethnic groups within the same Nation. The reflection on pluralism seems to agree with Turner's definition of a pluralistic state or society when he intones;

> A pluralist state or society is one in which (i) there co-exist more than one religion, philosophy which are in relationship of conflict (ii,) there is some degree of recognition by all the parties concerned that a fundamental incompatibility between them exists; and (iii) there is nevertheless some degree of awareness that this co-existence of incompatibles is of positive value, both to the community as a whole, and to each of the people concerned. (1957:157).

The unification of the Northern and Southern Nigeria by the British colonizers in 1914 is like the beginning of the problem. Besides this, another vital and relevant event in the history of what is known as Nigeria today was the introduction of two militant missionary religions; Christianity and Islam. Before the arrival of those missionary religions, each ethnic group that makes up what is now known as Nigeria were under the prop of the traditional religion (A.T.R). Religion then, was no problem since it was a means to an end and not an end in itself. Ahmadu rightly observed that;

> The presence of oriental religions in Nigeria thrust a discordant note into this serene religious atmosphere. Through the history of their developments Islam and Christianity have co-existed in mutual hostility. Though emerging from the same roots with almost identical literature and tenets, their strides for proselyfization have often been marked by violence and intolerance…. (90:52).

The contention here is that the seed of religious intolerance in Nigeria was quietly sown through the agencies of colonialism, Islam and Christianity.

Religious Crisis in Nigeria

Nigerians have witnessed series of religious crises in the past and they are still witnessing such today. As a result of those crises, many people had died and properties worth billions of Naira were destroyed. In recent times, religious crisis, especially between Muslims and Christians had reached a dimension whereby each group of adherents enthusiastically calls on God to annihilate the other group (Okoduwa, 200:58). There are different levels and forms of religious crises in Nigeria that degenerated into intra and inter-.religious crises. Intra-religious crises as earlier mentioned exists within a particular sect or denomination, intra-religious crisis, instance of the Maitatsine riot of 1980 in Kano and skirmishes between the Izala and the Tijianyia in Gombe in 1987 (Larkin, 2009:79). The same Maitatsine sect launched a violent attack on the people of Kano. There have been several similar upheavals in some parts of the country. The sect leader, Mohammed Marwa Maitatsine had his famous kingdom in the heart of Kano with about 10,000 followers. Towards the end of 1980's Maitatsine struck following a two week ultimatum given by Kano State government to quit the area said to be illegally occupied by his followers. In response to this order, they put Kano under siege for two weeks killing and maiming thousands of innocent people. Eliagu [1993:27] cited in Nnanna that intones:

> In reality, however, the Maitatsine unrest is a religious phenomenon, Islamic in nature both from the point of view of its participants and of historical trends. Like all other major religious uprising, however, it is basically a power struggle, employing the mass mobilization potential of Islam in Nigeria for selfish aims (2004:19).

The various Christian denominations in Nigeria are also guilty of religious intolerance towards each other. Such attitudes have led to open denials of basic political, economic, educational, social and religious rights. Method used to whip up religious intolerance include: derisive songs against each other; indoctrination of members on the weakness of each other's religious systems: ex-communication technique, denial of spiritual benefits etc. Ekechi critically examined the rivalry between the Roman Catholic Missionaries and protestant missionaries in Igbo land, within 1885-1914 (1972: 86-105). While some healthy areas of these rivalries produced positive results like

mass formal education, healthcare delivery and apparent material progress while their negative metamorphosed into religious intolerance. Christians in lgboland are still harbingers of this vice and some of them are our political leaders to date.

Inter-religious Crisis
There are crises that occur between two or more different religious groups or traditions, among the crises that fell under this category were the Bulmukutu riot of October 1982, the various Kaduna riots of 1987, 1988 and the year 2000. As if these were not enough, there was Kaduna riot on 22nd November 2002 where about 200 people were reported killed and properties worth millions of naira were also destroyed. Those crises were said to have been caused by what the people termed 'blasphemous publications.' Also on the same day there was a protest against Miss World Beauty contest' scheduled to hold on 7th December, 2002 in Abuja. Down to the Southern part of the country, there were crises that erupted because of religious symbols. For instance, there was a religious crisis in May 1986 at the chapel of Resurrection, university of Ibadan when the statue of the Risen Christ was set ablaze by an unknown group of people. Besides, in Imo State the Ikenga Symbol which signifies an upright man struggling through the vicissitudes of life in Igbo land was destroyed by a group of religious fanatics who described the symbol as an object of idol worship (Adamolekun, 2003:18). The ideal of religious tolerance has constantly eluded the devotees of three major religions of Nigeria such as African Traditional Religion (A.T.R), Christians of this country contemptuously regarded traditional religious beliefs and practices as devilish, paganish, satanic and fetish. Traditional shrines are often looted and valuable sacred symbols and images carted away and sold either in Europe or America, this unkind act has caused violence and crises in the affected areas in the country.

Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) Issue
Since 1986, when the news of the alleged membership of Nigeria in the organization of Islamic Conference (O.I.C) filtered into the ears of Nigerians, voices of dissent have been rife from well-intentioned Nigerian citizens especially the Christians. As one scholar succinctly observed:

> The O.I.C issue is an acid test of president Babangida's wisdom and commitment to the cause of Nigeria's political stability, unity and peace. Anybody in Nigeria who cannot yet understand that, with the possible exception of the Nigerian civil war, there is no other issue that has so far threatened the peace, unity and stability of this country more than the OIC issue is either dishonest or a dreamer...(lwuchukwu, 1990:25).

The up-shot of this alleged deal is that it has divided Nigerian political citizens into two major religious camps - Islam and Christianity. While the adherents of the former tried to throw some light on the benefits of membership, the latter saw the venture as an attempt to Islamize the whole Nation. The then government presidency had not made any categorical official statement on the issue. The alleged enrolment of the entire citizens of Nigeria as members of the O.I.C smack of religious intolerance and imperils the future political peace and stability of the country which is obvious. To accord any religious group a right which directly and indirectly involves other religious groups in a heterogeneous society as Nigeria is to light an unquenchable conflagration of religious strife and intolerance (Kenny, 1985:12).

Sharia Crisis
Another issue of national importance which seems to border on religious intolerance is the sharia the sacred law of Islam governing all aspects of Islamic life of a Moslem. Should it be placed side by side with the secular laws of the state? Should non Muslims be bound by it especially in areas of Muslim domination in a pluralistic country? The problem seems to be one of divided loyalty to the National laws of the state and loyalty to the religions. Kenny brilliantly made a historical survey of this problem from the pre-colonial period to Nigeria second Republic. The conclusion to this thorny problem was that: "the apparent socio -political peace and unity of Nigeria would be hanging as long as the Sharia question remained unsolved" (1985:15).

Sharia law was in practice by the Muslims but Zamfara State was the first to make it a state law in a secular Nation (Nigeria). This act epitomizes religious intolerance. The development did not take into consideration the fact that there existed other religions minority, such as Christians and adherents of traditional religion. The adoption of Sharia as a state law in Northern Nigeria began in Zamfara state on

October 27, 1999 at the instance of the then governor Ahmed Sani Yerima. This action caused serious crisis that later spread like a wild fire in all the core Northern states like Kaduna, Sokoto, Niger, Yobe, Borno, Katsina, Bauchi, Kano, Jigawa and Gombe. According to British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) African service of 22nd Feb, 2000 as many as 25 bodies were picked by police from the streets the previous night. By September 2000 the same station reported that Sharia related violence claimed over fifteen lives and properties worth millions of naira were destroyed. This is a clear case of religious intolerance because Moslems assumed that no other religion existed in the state (Diara, 2012:16).

Boko Haram Crisis
Boko Haram is an indigenous radical and militant Islamic sect in Nigeria that turned itself into a jihadist movement in 2009, with strong opposition to anything Western. This deceptive ideology has strongly rooted the group against Western life in all its ramifications, with concerted attacks on the government and its various institutions. There is no doubt that Boko Haram through its unpredicted activities has declared war of terror in Nigeria.

Recently, Boko Haram launched its attack on the people in Bauchi, Jos, Maiduguri and Abuja where a suicide bomb attacked the United Nations house. During those attacks, many Nigerians lost their lives. Also, the incessant Jos crisis is manifesting the alarming rate at which crises are moving in the country. Through bomb attacks and other deadly means, both human and materials resources have been wasted (Adamolekun, 2003:47). Further more, the sect 'Boko Haram' came to be known with this name because of what they were teaching. The Hausa interpretation of their name means that Western education as sin. The group claims that it wants Sharia laws to be obtainable in twelve core Northern States. The leader Mohammed Yusufs first disciples were mainly the poor and highly disadvantaged of the society. Many poor Muslim families from across Northern Nigeria as well as neighbouring countries enrolled their children in their training school (Isidore, 2013:22). The group according to Bulablin Garman who is one of the leaders was quoted in News watch of August 2011 as saying that they were fighting Jihad, an holy war against those that are sabotaging their religion.

He pointed out that the saboteurs of Islam include: politicians, traditional rulers, security agents and unbelievers. They vowed to cut down as many of their enemies as they came across. The sect has its base in Maiduguri and occupied a compound as large as 4km in size which contains a training ground, living quarters, Amory and manufacturing workshop for bomb fabrications. They have in their possession state of the art cars, assault rifles like AK47, GPMB (General purpose Machine Gun) hand grandees in addition to materials for other dangerous weapons. The leader Mohammed Yusuf was said to be stupendously rich and infact in one of his accounts he had ₦800, 000,000 (Eight Hundred Million Naira). According to News-watch August 1, 2011, one Mohammed Manga, Boko Haram adherent was paid four million naira for the suicide bombing of the police head quarters and the mandate actually was to kill the then police inspector general Hafiiz Ringing. With the breeding ground for sectarian violence properly prepared a section of Nigeria became a future thorn in the flesh for it's cooperate existence (Isidore, 2013:30).

The bombing of United Nation's house on August 26, 2011 shows that it is a politically motivated suicide group (Okwueze, 2012:13) killings and bombing by Boko Haram group on police headquarters, churches and mosques in the town of Damaturu, Yobe state capital led to the massacre and killings of more than 90 persons in November 2011. The sect also hit St. Theresa's Church Madala and in this singular attack, scores of people died. Yusuf in Okwueze remarked that more than 25 people were killed, 13 cars were burnt and nine apartments shattered at the frontage of the Church.

On January 20, 2012 the group carried out attacks and gun battles in Kano city and police barracks and this led to the death of 186 people also according to (Okwueze, 2012:20) while Catholic Church in the city of Jos was bombed in February 2012 leaving several people dead in both Damaturu and Patiskan. There is unending of bombing and gunning activities by the sect, the media houses, banks, schools (chibok girls were carried away) and even market places and parks are their targets up to date.

Consequences of Religious Intolerance in Nigeria
Since there is no value - free action, every piece of action carries consequences on the actor and the society at large. Therefore, religious

intolerance produces negative effects on the Nigerian socio-economic and political development. Obviously religious crises in Nigeria had served and is still serving as a great obstacle to achieving national relevance that would enhance socio-economic and political development. Fundamental among the militating factor against efforts of the people toward nation building is religious crisis with political undertone (Okweze,, 2012:35).

Religious intolerance, that often than not results in crisis often leads to loss of lives and properties. Arising from those losses deprives the Nation (Nigeria) of much needed manpower. Affected families have lost either their bread winners or economically useful members. All these have negative impact on the socio-economic wellbeing of the country at large. So, religious crisis leads to security risk and fear of uncertainty on both local and foreign investors. This no doubt, has discouraged investment in Nigeria. There are many cases where international and local business enterprises concerned have pulled out from certain areas considered troubled spots.

To win those investors back, a lot of money and time will be spent on over seas trips in order to regain confidence.
Furthermore, religious crises have always been a threat to political stability. In most cases some of those crises are politically motivated, it has been observed, from the time of independence there has been a gradual and continuing polarization of the country across religious lines. This directly or indirectly negatively affect the choice of presidential or governorship candidate, the major concern is often the religion the candidate professes (Abdul, 2002:46).

According to Iwe (2000:10) the intolerant spirit of religious fanatics often led to religious totalitarianism which seeks to impose religious conformity and uniformity on the society by force. This attitude is capable of plunging the country into religious war, as no religious group will be ready to compromise its faith. This can paralyze the country for a long time. The more people experience these unrests, killing of innocent souls, destroying properties people labored to acquire, and undemanding the progress of the nation in general. This poses strong doubt on the issue of one Nigeria.

Recommendations

In view of the magnitude of the problem posed by religious intolerance to healthy socio-political and economic lives of Nigerian. The following recommendation were made without prejudice.

1.	Nigerian government at the Federal, State and Local levels, adopt an open and uncompromising neutral attitude towards religious organizations in this country. This simply means anyone in the position of power in a country with various religious groups should not allow his own religious inclination to over-ride common interest of the nation. Neutrality demands that the present and future political leaders of Nigeria should guard against partisanship to any religious group in matters regarding proper governance of the nation; a leader who would recognize in practice the value of religious pluralism in a heterogeneous society of Nigeria

2.	The government of Nigeria should administer strict disciplinary actions against those who perpetuate religious intolerance that results to riots, killings or destruction of lives and properties of Nigerians, (the culprits) the barons behind those waves of religious upheaval should be unmasked and severely punished. It is not enough for government to map out policies on paper against religious intolerance or even to condemn violence that gave rise to religious intolerance after much harm has been done to the Nigerian society.

3.	Application of the spirit of tolerance is essential in the lives of adherents of the three major religions in Nigeria namely: African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islamic religions. As religious groups, there is need to tolerate one anther. Tolerance as used in this context refers to ability of religious man, politician or men and women from different ethnic groups to give allowance for the opinions, beliefs and practices of others. It has been noticed that African Traditional religious adherents are the most tolerant of the three religious groups in the country, if adherents of both Islam and Christianity can emulate indigenous worshippers in the area of tolerance, then the issue of religious conflicts will soon become a forgotten issue. In the past before the emergence of modern religions, Nigeria accommodated and still accommodates innumerable number of religious sects and cults

such as: "Expo, Ala, Ifa" and so on, yet there was mutual understanding.

4.   In order to be free from religious conflicts adherents must accept to dialogue as exchange of opinions between people with opposing interest or points of view. Dialogue can be based on religion, culture, politics, or ethnic group. One of the major characteristics of dialogue is that it encourages those involved to respect all that is good in the other and also to respect others sincerity in the matters where they cannot agree. Dialogue therefore does not bury the conviction of people involved but openly admit them. Nigeria recognizes people and government should admit the plea of Vatican Council II with the view to forget the past and urges a sincere effort be made to achieve mutual understanding for the benefit of all men and to let them, together preserve and promote peace, liberty, social justice and moral value.

5.   Leaders of various religious groups should device modern means of conscientizing their numerous followers on the great value of religious toleration in a pluralistic religious country. They should match words with examples. They should denounce intolerance in any form by upholding the positive values and functions of religion. Present believers of African Traditional religion should be thoroughly acquainted with the essential teaching of that religion which is justice to God, divinities, spirits and ancestors. Justice demands respect and toleration, of opponents and their views. In Igbo culture area, this justice is summed up in these words: 'Live and let live' ("Egbe belu", Ugo belu" Let the kite perch and let the eagle perch). While Muslim leaders should constantly remind the followers of the prophet Muhammad of the true meaning of Islam which is peace, and peace in the modern world cannot be achieved by religious war of any kind. Christi an leaders, on the other hand should constantly remind the flocks of Christ of the essence of Christ's teaching love of God and love of neigbhour, as exemplified in the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-31) all inclusive and not exclusive. They should encourage Christians to avoid derogating remarks on non-Christian religions. Etc.

6. Government at all levels must make provision for job opportunities. In traditional African society, there is no room for loiterers or idlers because it is generally believed that an idle hand is a devil's workshop. It is through job opportunities that suffering and poverty, which in sonic cases often lead to conflict, can be alleviated. When people are gainfully employed, the menace of religious crisis will be reduced to (the barest minimum if not totally eradicated).

7. Government should provide security to mission institutions and other private schools of individuals to avert-future adduction of school girls. The private schools of individuals and missions as well as public schools accommodate greater number of Nigerian youths and government should ensure that the future of greater Nigerian should not be made gullible.

Conclusion

Obviously, findings made so far has indicated that Nigerians have suffered a lot and still suffering from series of religious crises and riots. Bearing in mind the causes of those crises and the failure of the past attempts to bring them under control, it was discovered that this crisis, was complex and have generated negative effects on the well being of Nigerians and on the quality assurance needed for rapid development in the 21st century in a country that is highly endowed with abundance human and material resources. Prominent among discoveries made in this paper includes: loss of human and material resources, socio-economic and political instability, fear of insecurity, wasting of money and time meant for developmental projects on crisis management emanated from religious intolerance in the Nation. This paper suggested some ways through which religious crisis could be managed with the aim to see Nigeria emerge really as a free and democratic society, a society where respect for the worth and dignity of the individuals is accorded to all irrespective of their religious and cultural background. Others include emulation of indigenous worshippers in the areas of tolerance, mutual understanding and moral consciousness, unbiased attitude of government towards all religions and provision of job opportunity for youth, adopting dialogue in issues of crisis, for religious leaders to inculcate virtues and values such as live and let live, love, peace, forgiveness, unity, harmony and toleration of others, in order to restore the true nature of religion which is a normal

circumstances remains cohesive and unified factor in any society. However, this is dependent on the implementation of the suggested solution given to avert the many problems of religious intolerance in our present socio-political Nigeria.

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