

RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE AND CO-EXISTENCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper looks at religious violence and its implications for peaceful co-existence in Nigeria. To this end, the discourse begins by investigating the causes and implications of religious violence for a peaceful co-existence among the adherents of different religious beliefs in Nigeria. The possible ways of mitigating religious violence and the prospect of ending this conundrum are equally examined. Applying the narrative and analytical tool, the study depends completely on written sources which comprise of documents, monographs, manuscripts, books and book chapters, journal articles as well as magazines. As deduced from previous studies, the religious violence in Nigeria has claimed many lives and property worth billions of Naira have been lost to this monster called religious violence. It is argued here that proper education, tolerance, religious dialogue and reconciliation, to mention but a few, serve as potent avenues with which to douse the phenomenon of religious violence in Nigeria. The deliberate application of the aforementioned will undoubtedly, ensure peaceful co-existence of Christians, Muslims, Traditionalists and members of other religions as a panacea for peaceful co-existence in Nigeria. Invariably, this paper concludes by stating that peaceful co-existence of all religious adherents in Nigeria would indeed help in the restoration of peace, security, growth and stability of the Nigerian nation.

Keywords: Religious Violence, Peaceful Co-existence, Remedial Solutions, Nigerian Nation

Introduction

Looking at religious violence and its implications for peaceful co-existence in Nigeria, this discourse begins by investigating the causes and implications of religious violence for a peaceful co-existence among the adherents of different religious beliefs in Nigeria. According to **Kamal-deen Olawale Sulaiman (Kamal-deen 2016)**, there is no disputing in the fact that the problem of religious violence casts a serious doubt to the order, progress and stability of the country. This is because the country has recorded very bizarre experiences in the domain of religious violence (Ikenah-Metuh 1994:2; Ogege 2001: 23-26; Kanu 2017: 31-40). A time line of some of the prominent examples may be necessary here; these include those of the Kasuwan Magani in 1980, Zango Kataf and Gure-Kahugu in 1987, Kafanchan and Lere in 1987, Ilorin and Jerein 1989, Tafawa Balewa in 1991 as well as that of Zango Kataf in 1992 (Eniola 2010: 77-81; Teehan 2010:

145-147) The category of conflicts exists mostly in the Northern part of the country where the main protagonists are Hausa/Fulani Muslims and Christian ethnic minorities. The 'pagan question' it has been argued, seems to play a major role in creating a climate of suspicion and intolerance among the groups (Sulaiman, 2015: 111-120; Eniola 2010: 7781).

Just like the recent lynching and eventual burning to ashes of Deborah Yakubu, a second year Christian college student who was killed by a mob of Muslim students in Sokoto, after being accused of blasphemy (The Punch, 12 May, 2022), we can go far back in history to the religious crises in Kafanchan in 1987, which started from the College of Education Gidan Waya for example, was precipitated on 6th March by what was considered as blasphemous remarks when a convert from Islam to Christianity was said to have misinterpreted the Holy Qur'an while preaching. This led to a fight between the Christians and the Muslims on the campus. Later it was spread to Kafanchan town as well as six other towns in the old Kaduna State, namely: Kastina, Funtua, Zaria, Kankia, Daura and Kaduna. In the process, hundreds of people were killed, many Churches and Mosques were set ablaze, and hotels were destroyed, altogether resulting in massive destruction of people and property (Obioha 1999: 45; Eniola 2010: 77-81; Kanu 2017: 300-310). Also, the April 1991 violence in Tafawa Balewa (Bauchi State) was also precipitated by a quarrel in the market between a Christian butcher and some Hausa/Fulani people. In the ensuing impasse, many Muslims were killed. On carrying the corpse from Tafawa Balewa to Bauchi town a reprisal was launched on the Christians in the town. This led to the massacre of many Christian settlers in the town. The invitation of the army to restore order only worsened the situation as a result of series of massacres in which thousands of people were alleged to have been killed' (Alanamu 2005: 165- 170; Armstrong 2014:10). In the year 2001, the religious clash between Muslims and Christians in the same Tafawa Balewa local government area of Bauchi State, this began on June 19 and ended on July 4, resulted in the death of over 100 persons (Alanamu 2005: 165- 170; Odey 1999: 21-14). In like manner, the Zango-Kataf crisis of January 1992 started when the Kataf controlled Local Government Council decreed that the market would be moved out of Zango on February 6, 1992. This immediately led to the attack of the Zango community and killing of many of the Kataf people. This later assumed a religious dimension and spread to Kaduna and Zaria. Consequently, this led to attack and counter attack and the resulting effect was series of massacre in which thousands of people were killed. What started as an inter-ethnic conflict soon widened into a national crisis with religious dimensions (Egwu 2001: 10-12; Ademola 2006: 33).

Another serious dimension of religious crisis was the upsurge of movement known as Yan Tatsini popularly known as Maitatsine. This group was notorious for inflicting severe religious violence on the people in Northern part of the country. Between 1979 and 1983, two Maitatsine uprisings occurred. The classic case was the Kano uprising of 1980 which left between 4,000 - 6,000 people dead and property worth millions of naira destroyed. It was after the intervention of the army and the air force that the 11 days' riots were finally quelled (Olupona 1992:23-27; Rowley 2014: 361-402).

Again, in year 2000, many killings were recorded from religious disturbances. From February 21 to 22, an estimated 3,000 people lost their lives in a clash between Muslims

and Christians in Kaduna, the capital of Kaduna State. There was a reprisal attack in Aba, Abia State and about 450 persons were killed (Olukorede 2002: 8). The riot was initially sparked up by the introduction of Islamic criminal law (Sharia law) in some northern states. Between May 22 and 23, Kaduna was again brought to its knee when Muslims and Christians clashed. Over 300 lives were lost (Olukorede 2002: 8; Kanu 2016: 3).

In November 2002, religious violence again rocked the city of Kaduna after an English Newspaper, *This Day*, made a disparaging remark about Prophet Muhammad (SAW). The remark was made in the context of an international beauty pageant being staged in the country. Many Muslim organizations and some political leaders had objected to the holding of the Miss World Contest in Nigeria. Members of a militant Muslim grouping had gone on the rampage in Kaduna, targeting churches and private property, a day after the report appeared. The rioting briefly spread to Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory. The newspaper has since tendered an unconditional apology and the author of the article was ordered to resign.

There was also a violent reaction from the minority groups. More than 200 people lost their lives and thousands were rendered homeless (Cherian 1995: 12-13; Sulaiman 2014c: 18-35). Plateau State particularly, has been a theatre of war, as a result of frequent ethno-religious crises in virtually all parts of the state; apart from massive killings of innocent people, there were systematic humiliation, wanton destruction and large scale displacement of people which had changed the sobriquet of Plateau from 'Home of Peace and Tourism' (Shobayo 2004:10). Plateau war started as a conflict between those that considered themselves the indigenes and their seemingly settlers. However, in the year 2001, religious undertone crept in, thus by September 2001, Jos experienced an eruption of violence, which was unprecedented. Between September 7 and 12, over 500 persons were killed. About 1,000 others were injured (Onyeka-Ben *et al.* 2004: 12; Kanu, Omojola, Bazza 2019: 1-13).

Adamawa State has also had its own share of religious conflict, on the 8th of June 2004, religious violence erupted in Numan town, headquarters of Numan Local Government Area of the State, leaving more than 17 persons dead and some worship centers destroyed. The violence was believed to be the climax of two weeks of tensed relations between the native Bachama Christians and the local Muslim community over the location of the town's central Mosque, a few yards away front the Bachama paramount ruler's place (Alanamu 2005: 170177). The reconstruction of the Mosque, which was destroyed during a similar religious clash in the town in the year 2003, had ignited passions among the native Christians who thought that building the Mosque's minaret higher than the Hama Bachama's (Bachama paramount ruler) palace was an assertion of dominance in the town (Murray & Ajose 2004: 6; Mustapha 2004: 23-25).

Clarification of key Concepts

Violence: Violence is defined by the World Health Organization as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation (Dogo 2003: 33-37;

Wellman and Tokuno 2004: 29; Fox 2004b:3-5). This definition associates intentionality with the committing of the act itself, irrespective of the outcome it produces.

Also, violence or a violent act involves threat or actual execution of acts which have actual or potential capacity to inflict physical, emotional or psychological injury on a person or a group of persons (Short & Wolfgang 1972: 41-43; Cavanaugh 2009: 272). Violent act ranges from trivial assaults to mass murder and takes place in public, in the home, in the workplace, in clubs, schools and on the road where 'road rage' has recently become yet another manifestation of the assumed spread of violence (Short & Wolfgang 1972: 41-43; Fox 2004a:1-2).

However, violence is inevitable when accommodative structures break down (*Punch* Editorial May 17, 2004:6). Violence is best explained relative to its etymology to violate (Yahaya 2009: 43-50). The basic issue about violence is that somebody is been violated. From the above views, the extended definition of violence enables us regard any action that infringes upon the rights of citizens as constituting violence.

Religion: Religion, unlike other disciplines like Music, Geography, History, Mathematics, Chemistry and a host of others, has no universally acceptable and satisfactory definition. Religion is looked at from different perspectives based on the angle which one understands it. It originates from the Latin words: *relegere* (to unite or link) and *religio* (relationship, bond) (Kanu 2015: 1-22; Sani 2007:12; Fox 2002: 415-434). It therefore means a link or a relationship between man and a being that exists which is greater than man. Man and religion are inseparable in all human cultures.

However, according to Webster's Dictionary of English Language, religion refers to man's expression of his acknowledgement of the divine or a system of belief and practices relating to the sacred and uniting its adherents in communities. This shows that religion focuses on what is ultimate or absolute and taught of worship. Therefore, relationships between the transcendent and men demands total submission and an absolute obedience (Short & Wolfgang 1972: 41-43; Juergensmeyer 2004: 23).

Similarly, religion is a system of symbols which act to establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic (Peter 1998: 10-17; Tanner 2007: 5-6).

Religion also, is the consciousness of one's dependence on transcendent being and the tendency to worship Him. It is a body of truths, laws and rites by which man is subordinated to the transcendent Being (Adeniyi 1993: 12-18; Juergensmeyer 2001: 13-23).

Religious Violence: From the aforementioned perspectives, Religious Violence may be described briefly as the threat or actual implementation of acts which have potential capacity to inflict physical, emotional or psychological injury on a person or a group of persons for religious ends. The perpetrators of religious violence often represent or act in the name of a particular religious cause. Religious violence is also defined as a term that covers phenomena where religion is either the subject or object of violent behavior (Wellman & Tokuno 2004: 291.). Religious violence is, specifically, violence that is

motivated by or in reaction to religious precepts, texts, or doctrines. This includes violence against religious institutions, people, objects, or when the violence is motivated to some degree by some religious aspect of the target or precept of the attacker. Religious violence does not refer exclusively to acts committed by religious groups, but also includes acts committed by secular groups against religious groups.

Causes of Religious Violence in Nigeria

Having attempted to clarify some conceptual issues on the subject of this research paper, the following discussion will now focus on the causes of religious violence in Nigeria. These causes differ from one environment to another. In Nigeria, certain constant factors breed and nurture religious violence with obvious consequences on the stability order of the citizens. On the basis of the foregoing, a number of factors can be identified to be reasons responsible for incessant religious violence in Nigeria, among which are as follows:

The Theological Factor

As it were, all religions involve specific intellectual beliefs. Each has a number of literatures held especially sacred which contain historical materials with which the validity of the doctrines are connected as well as their modes of propagation. However, owing to lack of in-depth understanding, outright ignorance, misinterpretation or cheer mischief, scriptural texts have been given whimsical and capricious interpretations towards predetermined ends. Such actions have often sparked off emotional responses and violence among the adherents of the various religions in Nigeria (Ekwenife 1993: 10-16; Nayak 2008: 273 -291). In a situation like this, missionary workers should distinguish between missionary work and conversion work because religious propagation is being altered by social and political changes and most importantly by worldwide mental revolution.

Religious Intolerance

Religious intolerance is a blind and fixated mental and psychological negative attitude towards religious beliefs and practices that are contrary to one's cherished beliefs and practices (Balogun 1988: 23 - 30). Such negative attitudes constantly manifest themselves in violent outburst that spill over the political and economic lives of the citizens. The inability to recognize and accommodate views and opinions of others is therefore, one of the major sources of religious violence in Nigeria. Nigerian religious adherents, especially the Muslims and the Christians have demonstrated intolerant attitudes to result to violence.

Religious Fanaticism

Religious fanaticism, in this context, can be seen as a violent and unreasoning religious enthusiasm. Religious fanatics show excessive irrational zeal to defend their religions in Nigeria; consequently, they become destructive agents of religious disharmony in the society (Balogun 1988: 23- 30; Sulaiman 2014a: 6378). The adherents of Christians and Muslims are at one stage or another influenced by fanaticism to result to violent confrontation.

Unbridled Action of the Press

The traditional function of the press in any society is to inform, entertain and educate. Under no circumstances is the press expected to misinform, mis-entertain and mis-educate people. The mass media practitioners ought to be cautioned in their reports on sensitive issues that could threaten stability order in the society. In Nigeria, experience has shown that the mass media reports, news analysis and features are capable of playing a positive or negative role in the relationship between religious adherents, particularly Muslims and Christians depending on the intention and orientation of the journalist concerned. More often than not the actions or reactions of the Muslims to Christian's action or vice versa are determined by the mass media reports (Bashir 2002: 23- 30).

The press on many occasions in Nigeria have fanned the embers of disunity through junk journalism and sensational headlines (Bashir 2002: 27- 29). Such negative and sensational press reports and news analysis often breed religious violence. For example, the demonstration led by Mallam Yakubu Yahaya which resulted to a riot in Katsina in April 1991. The demonstration which led to riot was caused by an article titled: "would you marry a known prostitute turned born again?" Published in *Fun Times*, written by Orlando Emmanuel Giwa Atanda. In this article, the personalities of both Jesus Christ and Prophet Muhammad were ridiculed (Dauda 1993: 20-26). The role played by the press in the year 1987 Kafanchan riot was also negative. Members of the public were grossly misinformed by the press which created a crisis between Muslims and Christians (Bidmos 1993: 32-39; Sulaiman & Ojo 2013: 21-38). Even as at today, the unbridled actions of Nigeria press towards national issues like Sharia and other sensitive religious issues are capable of causing violence.

Aggressive or Militant Preaching/Evangelism

This means an offensive or coercive approach to conversion and propagation of one's religious faith. This happens when any religious group or individual preachers within that group set out to convert those they consider infidels or ' pagans' to their own religious system.

Poverty

The problem of poverty, especially in the urban areas apparently accounts for the bulk of violence (whether ethnic or religious) due to such problems as unemployment, inadequate housing, physical and social infrastructures (Obateru 1994: 32-35; Sulaiman & Ojo 2013: 21-38). The current depression in the Nigerian economy must have worsened the problem of poverty, thereby partly responsible for the creation of religious violence.

Also, poverty creates societal problems particularly when many people cannot afford their needs like shelter, clothing and feeding. Since Nigeria lacks structural economy to cater for large population the resultant poverty creates societal problems. Extremely poor people can do anything to sustain themselves. Thus, the poor youth (Almajiris) particularly in Northern Nigeria are manipulated with small amount of money to cause religious disturbance.

Wrong Religious Orientation

People are taught differently under different religions. When wrong methods are used in

indoctrinating adherents of a particular religion, what often follows is religious obsession which invariably leads to violence.

Literacy Level of Religious Adherents

Every Nigerian belongs to one religion or the other. But not too many people are educated in Nigeria, since people often believe what their religious leaders say; illiterates are easily manipulated since they are not critical in their thinking.

Selfishness on the Part of Religious Personalities

Some religious leaders despite their calling have given to selfishness. They employ fowl means to perpetrate religious violence knowing that they will be invited by the Government in power to seek their advice. That way they get closer to the Government for their personal interest.

External Influence on Religion

There is a mutual suspicion among the different religions in Nigerians. While some people think that Christianity is an agent of American and European imperialism, others think that Muslims have close ties with Saudi Arabia. Both religious bodies are believed to often get financial support from these places.

Implications for Peaceful Co-Existence

There is no gainsaying about the fact that the problem of religious disturbances in Nigeria has devastating effects on stability and peaceful co-existence of the citizenry. The destruction which religious violence has caused to Nigeria cannot be quantified. The frequent clashes which erupted as a result of this had inflicted untold hardships on both individuals, in terms of loss of lives and property and on the Government in terms of occasional provisions of relief materials for the victims of religious disturbances. Though, there are many consequences of religious violence, but the most obvious consequence has been loss of lives and property and a growing suspicion resulting in a huge trust deficit between people of different faiths who hitherto have seen themselves as brothers and sisters. Innocent citizens are in most cases the victims of violence, and have increasingly found themselves unable to co-exist with each other. Religious violence has the potential of resulting into large-scale physical displacement and forced relocation of individuals, families and groups. The spate of this violence in the last three decades has certainly resulted in varying degrees of internally displaced persons (Jibrin 1989: 65-82; Egwu 2001: 30-33).

Apart from undermining the stability order, religious violence tends to dent the image of the country in the international community. The frequent eruption of religious uprisings has forced some countries to issue travel warning advising their citizens not to travel to Nigeria because of religious tension that could erupt quickly and without warning. For instance, in December of 2003, the American State Department citing alleged resurgence of violence crises, warned its citizens of the dangers of traveling to Nigeria (Abubakar 2003: 6; Sulaiman & Ojo 2013: 21-38). Also in December year 2004, the Government of United States and Britain re-issued travel advice to their citizens traveling to Nigeria. The advisory noted among other things that “religious tension between some Muslim and

Christian communities result in occasional acts of isolated communal violence that could erupt quickly and without warning...” (Egua & Makinde 2004: 6; Avalos 2005: 32). It is a truism that this kind of warning does not augur well for stability order in the country, hence, the need for religious peace. It also causes psychological trauma to those who witness the killing of their relatives, and burning of their properties. And it increases the unemployment level when most of the small-scale industries that employ youths are lost to religious violence.

In other words, while religion has been a factor in national development, it has also been manipulated to wrought havoc on the Nigerian populace. As earlier mentioned at the beginning of this paper, between the year 1980 and the year 1990, Nigeria recorded eight major religious disturbances with heavy human and material losses; many monuments of high and historical value were also destroyed.

Apart from the monumental losses which can be qualified, the crisis further deepened the division which hitherto existed among the various religious adherents. For example, the psychological trauma among the victims of religious disturbances is a recurring decimal. Such persons never live to forgive or forget the persons involved in the carnage.

And economically, Nigeria has lost opportunities of economic recovery owing to suspicions based on religious rivalry. For example, in the year 1984, Nigeria lost an opportunities of an interest free loan from Saudi Arabia which agreed to lend Nigeria a substantial part of the 2.5-billion-naira loan, she was negotiating with the I.M.F. The rumour then was that Nigeria's regulation of her membership of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) would make Nigeria an Islamic state (Ojie 2004: 12- 17; Eniola 1990: 24-30). Nigeria lost this golden opportunity even when relatively smaller nations such as Garbon, Uganda, Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Cameroon and Guinea Bisau enjoy comprehensive economic facilities of the OIC and have not become Islamic States in the process of their regular membership.

The incessant nature of violence in the country also has the impact of breeding social miscreant and criminals who by their access to weapons of war (which are usually sophisticated) become terrors to both their immediate community and the larger society. After the crisis, it is always difficult to retrieve such weapons back because most of these people are originally jobless, they often found solace in terrorizing the society. Also, the inability (in most cases) of the security forces to nip in the bud this religious violence before they escalate to the level of wanton destruction of lives and property is a major concern.

Prospects and Remedial Solutions in Combating/fostering Religious Violence and Peaceful Co-Existence

Having synthesized the implications of religious violence for stability order in Nigeria, it is necessary to make some recommendations which the following antidotes are, therefore, expected to go a long way in combating. The Constitution of the Federal republic of Nigeria must be strengthened and respected. This include the respect for the rule of law, respect for the fundamental human rights, independence of the judiciary and respect for all democratic norms and values. This is the running of Government affairs in a positive and progressive manner that will be beneficial to the Governed.

The issue of religious faith is the concern of many individuals in Nigeria. Thus, people have the choice and freedom to follow whichever religion they think they can find solace

and tranquility in (Bashir 2002: 27- 29; Sulaiman 2014c: 368-387). So also must every person be free to invite others to consider his or her religion of choice without any harassment whatsoever. In doing this, the principles enumerated by different religions on how to invite people to the way of God should be employed. Invitation of another person to a religion should not be done in an aggressive manner. The invitation should be done with wisdom and discretion, meeting people on their own ground and convincing them with illustrations from their own knowledge and experience, which may be very narrow, or very wide. The use of social and economic diplomacy can also be employed to win souls to one's religious belief.

Also, to avert religious violence, the Nigerian Government should, at the Federal, State and Local Government levels, adopt an open and uncompromising neutral attitude towards religious groups in the country. By this, it means that anyone in the position of power in a multi-religious country should not allow his or her religious inclination to override common interests. Nigerians should be treated equally and be given equal rights and privileges irrespective of their religious background.

Relatedly, religious leaders should preach the genuine teaching of their respective religion about peace to their followers. All religions could promote peaceful and harmonious co-existence among people if only their teeming followers are informed of the erroneous consideration of anyone outside their faith as an antagonist. Biblical and Qur'anic injunctions are germane for promoting love and religious peace in contemporary Nigeria.

In addition, the Nigerian press can play a big role towards averting religious violence and promoting national peace and stability order. The objectivity of the press in reporting religious matters, will promote religious harmony and peaceful co-existence. It is expected that media practitioners should always imbibe the ethics of professional journalism whenever they are reporting or making news analysis and features.

Furthermore, at the level of education in Nigeria, students and their lecturers should constantly reflect on the value of religious tolerance in a mixed community of religious believers. In all tertiary institution; symposia, lectures and conferences should be frequently organized on this (Lederach 1995:43; Ekwenife 1993: 10-16). Experts on dialogue with different religions should be invited to present leading papers that will promote meaningful dialogue. Enlightenment campaigns should also be organized for the members of the public on religious peace.

The need for inter-religious dialogue in a religiously pluralistic state like Nigeria is equally expedient. The aim of dialogue should not be to obliterate the identity of a participating religious group. Rather its objective should be to discuss the various aspects of the problem that pose a threat to the peaceful co-existence of different religious groups. The promotion of inter-religious dialogue in Nigeria, will therefore contribute a great deal to averting religious violence.

In another development, all religious bodies should work hand in glove to identify the fundamental aspects of religion in relation to the complex national and international issues (Balogun1988: 23- 30; Sulaiman 2014b: 106 -120). For instance, what does religion say about corruption, child abuse, secret cultism, terrorism, poverty, to mention but a few. They should come together to fuse their knowledge and fight these social

problems in unison rather than broad generalizations and more sentimental statements of concern from different religious bodies.

The problem of religious violence can also be tackled through poverty alleviation programmes. In this respect, it is imperative that the economy should be empowered to take care of the unemployed and a poverty-ridden populace. Besides, Government should pursue democratic governance that respects individual and group rights while shifting emphasis from distribution to innovative and productive politics. Furthermore, there is the need for the development of an early warning system for raising alarm on the imminent eruption of religious uprising. Such warning system will enable the law enforcement agents to intervene promptly in religious tension before it escalates into violent out-burst. The pluralism on religious matters and ethnicity call for sincerity when relating with people of different faiths, we must be truly tolerant of each other especially where the practice of religion proves divisive. Since all religions preach peace and love and since we are children of one God; all efforts must be geared towards unity. Any country that is divided by religious conflicts finds it hard to recover. Christian and Muslim preachers must carefully guard their utterances so as not to wound people's sensibilities. Finally, the curriculum of religious studies in the Nigerian educational system should be wholly reviewed. Basic tenets that are characteristic of the three major religions should be more emphasized through realistic comparative studies, which should be made compulsory in all schools and for all students. Through this, students shall be opportune to know more about themselves, not only in their Christian or Muslim faiths or religious understanding but also attain a sound, sharpened and refined view of other people's belief system.

Conclusion

In this paper, it was found that among the causes of religious violence in Nigeria are: Religious Intolerance, Religious Fanaticism, Unbridled Action of the Press, Aggressive or Militant Preaching/Evangelism, Poverty, Wrong Religious Orientation, Literacy Level of Religious Adherents, Selfishness on the part of Religious Personalities, poverty and External Influence in Religion. It was also discovered that the destruction which religious violence has caused to Nigeria cannot be quantified. The frequent clashes which erupted as a result of this have inflicted untold hardship on both individuals and the government. Apart from undermining the stability order, religious violence tends to dent the image of the country in the international community. Also, the frequent eruption of religious uprisings has forced some countries to issue travel warning advising their citizens not to travel to Nigeria because of religious tension that could erupt quickly and without warning. It also causes psychological trauma to those who witnessed the killing of their relatives, and burning of their properties. Likewise, economically, Nigeria has lost opportunities of economic recovery owing to suspicions based on religious rivalry.

In good conscience, it is believed that religion is meant to bring peace and stability to the world and unite humanity irrespective of tribe or language. Moreover, anyone who understands the teachings of religions will not relate the overwhelming presence of violence in Nigeria to religious mission. The study concludes that religious violence in Nigeria has claimed many lives and property worth billions of naira. The violence has not helped the growth and development of

the nation. However, education, tolerance, religious dialogue, reconciliation, among others, should serve as avenues for dousing the social violence that emerges from the practice of religion in Nigeria. This will ensure peaceful coexistence of Christians, Muslims, Traditionalists and members of other religions. Invariably, this would help in the restoration of peace, security, growth and stability of the Nigerian nation.

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