

WILLIAM JAMES PRAGMATISM AS AN ANTIDOTE TO RELIGIOUS CRISIS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Our world has always been ravaged by one form of crisis or the other, ranging from religious, political, economical, social, psychological, and educational and so on. But in all these, religion plays an important and indispensable role in the life of man who is the chief pilot of all other activities of life. However, when the heart (or soul) of man is divided from the main purpose of his creation, crisis sets in, and most times engulfs the rest of the other areas of his lives. For William James, man is always in search of the truth and this truth is the true meaning and purpose of life; when achieved, there is peace but when eluded, there is crisis. This research work employed the method of analysis where we critically examined the different crisis moments fueled by religion in Nigeria. Our findings show that the root of these entire religious crises in Nigeria is lack of tolerance and dishonesty in the highest order especially from the Muslim brotherhood who wants to dominate the whole country and the entire world with Islam. In conclusion, I recommend that William James Theory of Truth summarized in his pragmatism be adopted by the two major religions in Nigeria, Christianity and Islam, for a peaceful coexistence of all.

Keywords: William James, Crisis, Nigeria, Religion, Pragmatism

Introduction

In a nation bound with vast geographic, vast ethnic and religious differences, these religious differences aid conflict which is a basis for showing religious biases and prejudices with the adherents being too fundamental and extremist in nature. Naturally, the psycho-social description of man shows him as genetically selfish, fighting for his own interest alone. However, this does not necessarily explain or construe the religious nature of man. With various descriptions of the religious nature of man especially Africans, Mbiti have described him as notoriously religious. Maybe this can adequately give a hypothesis for action that is behind religious conflict in Nigeria. But how rational or how plausible is it for two notable religions to fight against each other, killing and giving a psychological aftermath

or psycho-negative effect since God can neither be described as a Christian nor a Muslim?

In Nigeria it all started in December 1980 when the maitasine – led Kano, Religious violence gripped the nation by surprise and unleashed mayhem, terror and uncertainty into the Nigerian polity. At the end of the confusion, “about 4900 people were left dead.” The amount of properties damaged ran into millions of naira. In Late October 1982, the followers of later maitasine re-enacted violence in Maiduguri and Kaduna. They produced free tutorials on disruptive fanaticism to some truants in post primary schools in Kano. This moved a reporter to wonder thus “how else does one account for the fact that the fanatics get most recruits from those disgruntled with the orthodox Islam within and outside Nigeria without detection.” However, we cannot get to the right answer without first of all understanding what religion is all about

Religion: Meaning and Origin

During the thousands of years of mankind history, man’s search for God has led down many pathways. The result has been the enormous diversity of religious expressions found worldwide, from the endless variety of Hinduism to the Monotheism of Judaism, Islam and Christianity or Christendom and to the oriental philosophies of Shinto, Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism in other vast religions, mankind has turned to animism, magic and spiritism.

The above picture is a pure manifestation of the difficulties encountered in the attempts to formulate a definition of religion. Metuh (1987:13) points out the reason why religion is very difficult to define. He puts it thus;

This is partly because the objective of religion is invincible and spiritual beings that are not subject to observation and are conceived in different ways by different people. Besides, the study of religion interests people with a widely differing interests as theologians, anthropologists, psychologists and sociologists, each of who see it from a different perspective.

It is on this background that we have so many definitions of religion by so many people, but as Madu (2010:12) rightly said, “it is important to note that there are some basic elements that are common to some religion”, which Arinze (1970:8) in

his writings identifies as beliefs, worship (cult) and morals. A philosophical analysis of these basic elements can help us formulate a good definition of religion. Before proceeding to that, it is important to trace back the origin of religion. Etymologically religion is derived from the following:

- a. Religando – Meaning reffatening up or binding back. This is the opinion of Lectantuis because for him, religion expresses a situation in which God overpowers man, thereby, binding him (man) to himself.
- b. Religendo – relegere: to read. This is the opinion of Cicero, since for him; religion is the fruit of assiduous study or meditation on divine things.
- c. Re – elegere: re- election, in which St Augustine sees the idea of re – election, by which God chooses to re – establish man in grace after man had lost former grace by sin(Madu,2010:18).

From these etymologies, we see the different shade of meaning of the word religion, and the confirmation of the elusiveness of religion.

Apart from these etymologies, we also have many theories on the origin of religion. we have five popular theories: the anthropological theory by Ludwig Feuerbach where he postulated that religion is man-made or a worship of self through self alienation; the sociological theory by Emile Durkheim where religion is seen as a means of social control for religion acts as a check and balance on the conscience of the people in the society; the psychological theory by Sigmund Freud sees religion as a childhood neurosis of ever dependence on the father; the Marxist theory by Karl Marx sees religion as the opium of the people that sedates them from revolution against the oppression from the capitalists; and finally the theological theory which is the popular view about religion. We shall limit ourselves here with E.B Taylors, James Frazer and Sigmund Freud theories. According to E.B Taylor’s (1990) anthropological theory which goes thus:

Experiences such as dreams, vision, hallucinations and the lifelessness of corpses caused primitive people to conclude that the body is inhabited by a soul (anima) in Latin. According to this theory, since they frequently dreamt about their deceased ones, they assume that a soul continues living after death, that it left the body and dwelt on trees, rocks, rivers etc. Eventually, the dead and the object they were said to inhabit came to be worshiped as gods. Thus religion was born (p.11).

According to this theory, often the primitive people became aware of this, they came up with a means of appeasing this spiritual being and thus religion came into existence.

James Frazer (1990), on his own view held that religion grew out of magic. Religion came as a result of man trying to gain control of his life and environment by imitating what he saw in nature. According to this theory when man could not control his environment as he expected, he then turned to placating and beseeching the help of supernatural powers instead of trying to control them. The ritual and incantations became sacrifices and prayers and thus religion was born⁷.

Sigmund Freud among the scholars held that religion is nothing but father – figure Neurosis. This theory expresses a situation whereby sons who hated and admired their father killed him to acquire his powers and also ate him; after some time they became remorseful and invented rites and rituals to atone for their action. The Father figure became God, the rites and rituals became the earliest religion and the eating of the slain father became the tradition of communion practiced in many religions (Watch Tower, 1990:8). There are so many theories on the origin of religion, but three things are common in all of them which are beliefs, worship (cult) and morals just as Arinze noted. Let us look at the origin of the different religions in Nigeria.

Christianity and Islamic Religion: History and Origin in Nigeria.

To solve the various problem of religious conflicts in our society Nigeria; it will be very important to lay emphasis on the origin of two foreign religions in Nigeria which are contributing to the outbreak of the religious intolerance that we are having today in our society. The founder of Christianity is Jesus Christ; whose mysterious and lowly birth continues to infuse awe in the minds of his adherents. He was born into the family of Joseph through the revelation of the Holy Spirit to Mary, Joseph and Mary were considered as his earthly parents and guardians while he was on earth, many miracles were recorded in his name and many stories have been told on how he used his blood to save the whole humanity.

This is the core point of Christianity; that Christ died and was buried, he resurrected and ascended into heaven and Christ will come again. These teachings among other commands given to Christians by Christ (to go into the world and disciple all nations) are what motivated the early missionaries to keep spreading this message until 15th century when the gospel got to Nigeria. History told us that

it was through the effort of Augustine and Capuchin monk from Portugal that Christianity first stepped its foot on Nigerian soil (Madu,2010:125). According to K.B.C.Onwubiko (2000:226) Christianity finally, gained its place fully in Nigeria in the early years of 1840s after Samuel Ajayi Crowther, (the first African bishop and also a Nigerian man who was enslaved by the slave traders but later became free) and Henry Townsend returned from Sierra Leone after they were baptized in 1842.

The origin of Islam on the other hand for Madu, can be traced to the birth of Mohammed, who was born about 570 A.D in Mecca; a city in Arabia. He became an orphan at an early age and worked as a shepherd and a camel rider. He got married to a wealthy woman at the age of twenty five. At an adult age Mohammed started to question some religions of his day. He was disturbed by incessant quarreling in the avowed interest of religion among his tribal chiefs and he was also dissatisfied with the primitive survival of the Arabian religion, the idolatrous polytheism and animism, the immorality at religious convocations and fairs, the drinking, dancing and gambling that were fashionable and the burying alive of unwanted infant daughters (p.126). All these beliefs were not in line with his new revelation, which God revealed to him through angel Gabriel. Through this new revelation he claimed that he has received a new word from Allah (God) and thus he set out to organize a new religion which he called Islam (Total submission to the will of Allah).

This religion came to northern Nigeria in 9th century C. E, and was well established in the Kanuri Empire during the reign of Mai Umme Jilmi. By 16th century it spread to the major cities of the northern part of the countryside and towards the middle-belt uplands. Sheikh Dr Abu - Abdullah Abdul Fatha Adelabu has argued that Islam had reach sub - Sahara Africa, including Nigeria as early as the first century Hijrah through Muslim traders and expeditions during the reign of the Arab conqueror.

Therefore, from these historical explanations, one can find out that one thing is common among all these beliefs. Christianity and Islamic religion are another man's religion founded by foreigners but imposed on us as a result of our inability to reason critically. Having made a brief history of Christianity and Islam, it will be important to at least examine the origin and meaning of African traditional religion, since it was originated by the Nigerian people whom this work is studying. The study of any religion is the study of the people who practice the religion. Without man, there can be no religion whatsoever, for religion can only

be as a result of the activities of two agents, God who reveals himself to man and man who apprehends and responds to God's revelation (Adelumo Dohanu et al, 2001:15). So, to study African religion is to study African people. African Traditional Religion unlike Christianity and Islam has no sole founder, in other words, we cannot say that Okeke, Okafor, Shehu or Adebayo founded the religion. What we know is that the religion exists and it is here with us. The religion must be as old as African People or mankind. Kofi Asare observed that African religion is the determining principle of African life. Africans engage in religion in whatever they do, whether in farming, fishing or in hunting or simply in eating, drinking or traveling. Religion gives meaning and significance to their lives both in this world and the next.

For Madu, the origin of African traditional society can be said to be as old as African people. It is likely that the African early ancestors in their effort to find rational explanations to the mysteries of existence formulated their thoughts in myths, legends, folk-tales, proverbs and wise-sayings. Since these earlier mortals recognized their limitations, they had to necessarily developed faith in a "whole other" that, as it were, held the universe in existence. This "whole other" they identified as a supreme being who in addition to holding the world in existence could also read the innermost minds of men. So the idea of God in Africa came as a result of man's quest to offer explanation to the mysteries of existence (p.130).

Hence every religion, be it Christianity, Islam or African Traditional Religion, all started as a result of man's quest to offer explanation to the mysteries of existence. But sometimes there is a clash of interest in these quests leading to conflicts.

Religion As Source Of Conflict In Nigeria

Religion, an acknowledgement of an obligation to God and a practical way of showing devotion to our faith in the almighty is another area that has engaged the minds of peace - loving Nigerians. It is not that all Nigerians are religiously devoted to their faith in God but the protracted issue that requires urgent solution is the way people profess their religious beliefs. The rule of the game is no longer obeyed. Obviously, this is a time bomb planted by some group of people otherwise known as the fundamentalists or religious fanatics who vehemently shun tolerance and are determined to continue to unleash mayhem on the Nigerian polity all in the name of Allah.

Should this unfortunate situation be regarded as fulfillment of the prophetic utterance of Margery Perhan, a British colonialist, who warned in 1947 that independent Nigeria would be fraught with strife because of many religions? Nigeria is bequeathed with two world religions. Christianity in the south and Islam in the North. The Hausa states of Gobir, Duara, Kano, Kastina, Zaria, Biram, were almost Islamic states by 13th century; 600 years after Prophet Mohammed began the religion of Islam in Arabia. Southern Nigerians on the other hand were, "Introduced to God" from the 14th century onwards by English and Scottish missionaries but the alternate religious influences on Nigeria had produced, by the year 1800, a triple religious legacy in the country: A Christian south, and a Muslim North, and interspersing segments of traditional religionist.

For R.W .July (1974:249-252), the triple heritage was deemed natural unit, the cries of *Allah Ak Bar* in Northern Nigeria in 1804 indicated that some persons were willing to restructure it. Inspired by Usman Dan Fodio, Muslim radicals in 1804 took Islam from Gobir to Ilorin, to Sokoto, to Kano, chanting *Allah Ak Bar* leaving trials of corpse behind in the first ever violent attempt in Nigeria history to collapse the tripled heritage of religion for pure Islamic state. When the dust of Dan Fodio's revolution settled in the 1930s, the triple heritage remained undisturbed. The Gobirans, the Bachamas, the Junkuns, the Tivs, the Anges and the Idomas, all of Northern Nigeria, remained either Christians or traditional worshipers. Significantly, though, after Dan Fodio's revolution, Islam became a hierarchically organized religion under sultanate of Sokoto and spread as far as Ilorin and Gongola, Skirting most of today's Northern Nigeria but Dan Fodio's revolution was not felt in southern Nigeria, which remains to date, essentially Christians.

If Dan Fodio's revolution was an attempt to force Islam into primacy within the triple heritage, there has been a similar, though non-violent attempt by Christians to "dilute" Islam's grip on Northern Nigeria. A hundred years before Dan Fodio, a band of Christian missionaries under father Carlo de Genove, had sought to convert Hausa's in Northern Nigeria to Christianity without success.

Again in 1890, another Christian group, the Sudan party, organized an expedition to Christianize the North, Father G. N. Brooke, Dr. N. Miller, and Bishop H. Tughell, who led the team, dressed in typical Muslim costumes as a tactics of getting across to converting the Hausas. Ironically in their disguises, the Hausas received them enthusiastically as Muslim. As such while Dan Fodio's revolution tried to upset the balance of religion, Christians have likewise tried to extend the frontiers of Christianity. The History of religious conflict in Nigeria, therefore is a

history of over-reaction by Muslims and Christians, as they have tried to upset the triple heritage of religion.

Coincidentally, the two religions at the center of the clashes in the Northern part of the country, originated from the orient land, both religions were founded at different points in time, Christianity starting before Islam. Islam is a world major religion founded by prophet Muhammed Ibn Abdallah Ibn Abdalmuttalib Hashim, and he founded Islam in Arabia (Present day Saudi Arabia) in the 7th century A.D. According to Umechukwu (1995:19-25) The interpretation, understanding and practice of the tenet of the Quran, have been distorted. As a result, the Muslims have degenerated into sectarian groups which helped to aggravate the already existing religious conflict in Nigeria. These sects fight for supremacy and often end up in unleashing violence on the Nigerian's social and political terrain.

The Muslim sects in Nigeria are the Izala (who are the most militant), the Quadirriya, the Ahmaddiya and the Tijaniya. The Izala encourages the education of women, especially married ones and sees other sects as infidels. It was founded in the 1970's by Samaila Idris an ex - army Iman, who saddened by life in the barracks, vowed to return the Muslim to the path laid out in the SUNA (preaching and deeds of the prophet). The Quadriya was led by Nasiru Kabara of Kano. The Ahmaddiya was officially banned from going to Mecca on Pilgrimage for their belief that Mohammed is not the seal, that is the final prophet. The Tijaniya, which follows the Islamic Interpretations of Shehu Tijani Kantaha, is led by Sheikh Dahiru Bauchi. It has a strong rivalry with the Izala under Gumi.

The most painful and disdainful thing about this frivolous rivalries and divisions within Islam is that it is carried into the political activities of the adherents. For Muslims, politics and other social activities are regulated by Islamic doctrine. Whenever trouble erupts among them, the innocent Christians are usually the target, as history has shown, "the born again" Christians have recently thrown challenges to them. The outcome of such has been senseless massacre of human beings and destruction of property.

Nigeria is a secular state, this being the case, any attempt to drag politics into her religious life by favoring a particular religion should be condemned and viewed as illegal Chapter IV of the Nigeria constitution of 1989, under the fundamental Human rights makes it illegal, any attempt to abuse individual's religious freedom. Inter alia, it states that; "Every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change his religious belief in worship, teaching practice and observance" (p.12)

In section 2 of the subsequent paragraph it is clearly stated that; “No person attending any place of education shall be required to receive religious instructions or ceremony or observance, if such instruction, ceremony or observance related to a religion other than his own, or religion not approved by his parent or guardian: (p.7). Furthermore, section 3 goes to stipulate that, “no religious community or denomination shall be prevented from providing religious instructions for pupils of that community or denomination in a place of education maintained wholly by that community or denomination”. On the strength of the foregoing, it is not clear why the Nigerian government dragged the Nigeria into O.I.C issue, the Muslims intimidating non-Muslims into accepting Islam. One also wonders why the Muslim should constantly use the sharia law to harass non-Muslims. The O.I.C issue is a puzzle to right thinking Nigerians. It was on February 8, 1986 that the cat was let out. That was when a wire dispatch from Agence France Presse (AFP), reported Nigeria’s admission into the O.I.C as the 46th member of the organization at its summit in Fezi morocco. Again, on Sunday February 12, the African concord broke this news to the nation. This opened the floodgate to great out pouring of religious protests in Nigeria.

A delegation of Catholic Bishops visited the then president, who gave the first official though covert admission of Nigeria entry into the organization. “Religion”, Babangida told them, “will no longer be ignored a potent weapon of social mobilization. Accordingly, we shall not neglect any reasonable international forum to which we have sufficient reason to belong or attend.” Rather than nullify, the President’s address exacerbated tensions as Christians nation-wide took up the cry calling for Nigeria’s unconditional withdrawal from the O.I.C. As a result of this, religious riots developed in Ilorin Kwara state and Ibadan Oyo state where Christians and Muslims vowed to unsheathe their daggers over the site of a Christian cross, which had stood undisturbed for 35years, until the O.I.C issue bruised skins and opened festering sores. The Morality and legality of this action of Babangida’s administration, by this decision have been seriously questioned.

In a sharp reaction many prominent Nigerians called on the Babangida administration to find a solution to the problem posed by the frequent religious riots and stop playing politics with the whole issue. These Nigerians did not think that even establishing panels to look into the problem would solve it. Their reports were never implemented. The Archbishop of Lagos, Anthony Olubummi Okogie

had cause to complain: "Nigeria is best described in Diplomatic circles as a country of panel beaters". Various panels were constituted in the past with little or no impact. The Kaduna program added one more panel to a disappointed system of retributive justice. It is the view of John Rawls that justice is fairness, implying equality both in principle and practice. It is where distributive and retributive justice is in full play and it involves tolerance.

However, what has been fueling the incessant religious crisis in Nigeria is intolerance. Tolerance is allowing opinions and practices one do not agree with and not forcing one's views on another. Of course in every society, opinions vary, this is unavoidable. Hence there is a strong need to accommodate each other's views for a harmonious coexistence. For John Gray (1995), "when we tolerate a practice, a belief or a character trait, we let something be that we judge to be undesirable, false or at least inferior; our toleration expresses the conviction that, despite its badness, the object of toleration should be left alone" (p.19). In political parley, Patricia (2001) cited in Akindele et al (2009), defines tolerance as "the willingness to extend basic and civil liberties to persons and groups whose viewpoints differ from one's own" (pp.365-379). This calls for a provision that guarantees the rights of people, individuals or groups, to be free to have or hold opinions that may not be in line with that of the government of the day. When dissent voices are not accommodated by a government, such government is viewed as tyrannical and trying to silence oppositions or stiffens the freedom guaranteed by the constitution. For Akindele et al, "in a free and open society, public deliberation should oppose bad ideas instead of suppressing them." (pp.365-379) This position is collaborated by Popper (1966) in his *Paradox of Tolerance*. Popper holds that "rational argument" should be used to engage intolerant views and keep them in check by "public opinion" rather than try to suppress them (p.265). This would be unwise to do say Popper.

In line with this thought, Archbishop Okogie again said of the Kafanchan religious violence thus;

definitely what happened in these places was triggered off by the Kafanchan Incident. I will be slow to agree that it is a civilian coup d'etat as claimed by the president (Babangida). Were it so, it wouldn't have been so easy to quell. It cannot be totally unconnected with the unsettled O.I.C issue. When salient issues are deliberately swept under the carpet, they are bound to re-erupt later.

In a sharp reaction, the former Gongola state Governor, Col. Yohonna Madaki (Rtd) had, after one of the religious riots in Nigeria, indicted the Nigeria Government thus, “the issue of religion will not be settled unless the nation is agreed about the causes”.

Tracing the Religious War to Certain Claims Of The “Holy Book”

The root cause of these evils perpetuated by religion in the name of God is the totally unjustified claim by each religion that their God is the Supreme God and it is the only religion sanctioned or revealed by God. The Quran for instance emphasizes the supremacy of Islam as well as Islam's messenger (Muhammad):

Indeed, those who are opposing Allah and His Messenger are bound to be humiliated. The Almighty has ordained: “I and My Messengers shall always prevail”. Indeed, Allah is Mighty and Powerful.

— *Quran 58:20*

It is He who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to manifest *it over all religion*, although they who associate others with Allah dislike it.

— *Quran9:33*

And whoever desires other than Islam as religion – never will it be accepted from him, and he, in the hereafter, will be among the losers

— *Quran 3:85*

Allah is the one who created you from weakness, then made after weakness strength, then made after strength weakness and white hair. He creates what he wills, and he is the knowing and competent

— *Quran 30:54*

These claims can also so be found in the Holy book “Bible” of the Christians where they emphasize the supremacy of their God, they include:

You alone are the Lord you have made the Heavens with all their host, the earth all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them you give life to all of them and the heavenly host bows down before you

— *Nehemiah 9:6*

Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the Lord, He is God in Heaven above and on the earth below, there is no other

– Deuteronomy 10:14

For the Lord Most High is to be feared, A great king over all the earth

– Psalm 47:2

I am the Lord your Holy One, the creator of Israel, Your King

– Psalm 43:15

Who would not fear you, O King of the nations? Indeed, it is your due! For among all the wise men of the nations and in all their kingdoms, there is none like you

– Jeremiah 10:7

Now to the King eternal immortal, Invisible the only God, be Honor and Glory forever and ever, Amen

– 1 Timothy 1:17

Poor Enlightenment Amongst Adherents

Some Muslims have failed to understand the history and the reason behind the “sword verse” which they have used as a guide to declare war against the Christians. Some of the sword verse includes:

And slay them wherever ye find them, and drive them out of the places whence they drove you out, for persecution is worse than slaughter... and fight them until fitnah is no more, and religion is for Allah.” – Quran 2:191

Quran scholars claim that the textual context of this particular passage is defensive war after the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah was broken by the Qurayshi-affiliated BanuBakr tribe when they attacked the Muslim-allied tribe of BanuKhaza'a. In response, the Prophet sent a letter requesting the Quraysh either terminate their alliance with BanuKhaza'a or pay a ransom. The Quraysh rejected both of Mohammad's offers, thus, breaking the treaty. It is also agreed upon that the verse refers to only the ones who broke the treaty.

The previous verse says:

Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allah loveth not transgressors.

– *Quran 2:190*

This has been used to argue that fighting is only permissible as a form of defense.

There are two points made in verse 2:191 that may cause some debate. The first is that the killing of others is authorized in the event of "persecution;" the second is that fighting may persist until "religion is for Allah" and there is no more "fitnah" (fitnah having many possible interpretations, the most likely being "trial" or "testing"). Quran (2:191-193)

Micheline R. Ishay has argued that "the Quran justifies wars for self-defense to protect Islamic communities against internal or external aggression by non-Islamic populations, and wars waged against those who 'violate their oaths' by breaking a treaty".³⁷ Mufti M. Mukarram Ahmed has also argued that the Quran encourages people to fight in self-defense. He has also argued that the Quran has been used to direct Muslims to make all possible preparations to defend themselves against enemies.

It is therefore worthy of note that the adherents of these religion are being indoctrinated instead of being educated on the basis of their religion. Numerous scholars and authors, both Muslim and non-Muslim have testified to the underlying rejection of violence, cruelty, coercion, and intolerance of the Quran and its embrace of justice and self-defense. According to FawzyAbdelmalek, "many Muslim scholars speak of Islam as a religion of peace and not of violence. They say that the non-Muslims misunderstand the Quran verses about Jihad and the conduct of war in Islam. Following this ImanTawhid posits "If suicide bombing was a shortcut to Paradise, whoever convinced you would have blown himself away". Is it not contradictory that the religion that preaches love is the same religion that unleash mayhem in the country? Thus Religious adherents should be educated properly on the basis of their religion laying emphasis on Love for the sake of mankind.

William James Pragmatism As Antidote to Religious Crisis In Nigeria

William James in his pragmatic philosophy pointed out that the whole function of philosophy ought to be to find out what definite difference it'll make to you and me, at definite instants of our life, if this world-formula or that world-formula be the true one. However, it is acknowledged that James gave series of definition and explanation on his theory of truth. In his connection, Truth is *empirical, Progressive, Asks Questions* and most importantly, There's nothing like Absolute, Immutable

and Objective Truth. On the other hand, each religion of God is originally a source of rapid material and moral progress for mankind. Religion functionally serves to give men shared goals thereby reducing too much competition, it promises later reward, thus softening the anguish of the present predicament or frustrations. It helps to define the meaning of suffering thereby reducing to the barest minimum, threats of chaos, thus Religion is a prerequisite for society. However overtime, like all things, it has slowly began to decline and eventually lose its original influence and relevance and beauty and is then in need of renewal. Using William James(2008) Pragmatic theory of Truth, Religious intolerance can be amended, thus:

Truth Is Empirical: This means that truth is found in our world and not hidden in Heaven. Truth is not eschatological but practical, thus we experience truth and push towards its verification and not a promise we meet in the afterlife. The root cause of these evils perpetuated by religion in the name of God is the totally unjustified claim by each religion that it is the only true religion sanctioned or revealed by God, the only true religion approved by God, while the others are false. Each religion claims to be the only saving boat which God has sent down to mankind and that it is only by belonging to it that any human being can be saved. All other human beings who do not believe and are practicing other religion will be condemned by God.

Truth Asks Questions: Asking Question removes any stand for dogmatic assumptions. Answers that cannot be questioned often gives room for conflict amongst the two opposing sides. Therefore, with this continuous act of killing of each other, one may be tempted to ask, how true is the unjustified claims different religions make? Are these killing really what our religious beliefs teach? Are we really in line with the dreams of our national liberation fighters who understood the unity and diversity of our different ethnic groups and religion, and came together to fight for the independence of this nation? These questions demands to be answered, because the way people are following their religious beliefs dogmatically calls for an urgent answer to this question.

There Is Nothing Like Absolutism, Immutability And Objective Truth: Cosmology, Culture and Society differ in one way or the other. Any proposition seeking to be enacted as truth must pass through the three. Religion is inseparably part of culture. Every religion is the product of a particular culture within which it grew. Its doctrines reflect the worldview of that culture, it's understanding of reality, it's way of looking at things at that particular time. Yet, no culture can be said to be

the culture approved by God for the whole world, it makes no sense to talk of any religion being the only true religion approved by God for the whole of Mankind, the only true religion that God wants all mankind to belong to.

Every religion represents the way in which a particular people, a particular culture looks at reality; it is an expression of the cultural worldview of a people and the vehicle for the transmission of such a cultural worldview. No such cultural worldview can be said to be absolute one approved for the whole world by God. This is precisely what those claim that a particular religion intended for mankind by God are saying. These claims are self-evidently unrealistic and false. The truth of these claims cannot be verified and rather the claims bring destruction to mankind. According to William James, truth depends on agreement with reality. William James made this explicit when he said that the proposition or theory is useful in the sense of enabling us to deal adequately with experience. The goodness of every idea is to be tested by its usefulness as its truth is to be tested by its consequences. However, when we say that an idea is true, we mean that it works in practice or will have beneficial consequences in practice.

Truth Is Progressive: Nigeria as a country has suffered greatly from religious conflicts and this is as a result of the inability of the religious adherents to reason with their common sense and see how dogmatic some of their beliefs are. These religious dogmas have blinded people to an extent that their brains have become so weak that the only thing they consider as the truth is only what their so called religious leaders tells them to do. Progression here means replacement of old ideas with new ones. Truth is not static but dynamic and progressive because it gives room through dialogue for new Truth.

Evaluation

From our discussion so far, we have observed that men and women have given themselves up to be slaughtered, to be eaten by lions, to be thrown into the fire and burnt alive for their religious beliefs. Some others who are born into wealth and destined to inherit wealth have renounced wealth and turned themselves into beggars for their religious beliefs. On the other hand, the ruling elite and prominent members of the clergy always blame religious intolerance on Unemployment, poverty, illiteracy and mental derangement and ignore or downplay the damaging effects of certain explicit injunctions contained in "Holy Books" and the totally unjustified claims by each religion; that it is the only true

religion sanctioned or revealed by God. This kind of claim simply is the product of ignorance, a symptom of narrow mindedness, fanaticism, bigotry and has led to disunity, intolerance and violence in the country. How then do we tackle this superstitious *weltanschauung* and barbarism, and vindication of wanton cruelty and violence "In the name of God" which is an appalling regress to primitivism which jeopardizes the spiritual core of Humanity?

William James Pragmatism in the bid to curb religious crisis have clearly validated that "might" doesnot make "right". The danger of imposed dogmatic assumption without any cash value or workability can often undergird, reinforce, and support social norms that are exploitive, that fail to represent or truly reflect what is happening on the ground, and serve only to uphold existing power structures and the supporting institution. Hence, James placed emphasis on facts and consequences as opposed to theories and principles.

James places a great emphasis on change and development. Hence he rejected universally valid theory since the world evolves, and human societies grow and change. A look at the developed nations will unveil the application of pragmatism. There was a total change of mindset and attitude before they could attain such heights. Many European countries like Canada, Sweden etc. which we now call developed countries, tried very hard to eradicate such religiosity mentality and apparently now they have some degree of success. For instance, the abandonment of "faith based thinking" during the enlightenment is a major factor that allowed Western Europe to be more successful.

Nevertheless, the high rate religious conflicts which ravage most of the third world countries like Nigeria, drawing them back from achieving the desired sustainable development, is seemingly absent in their developed western counterpart. China has more religious and ethnic group more than Nigeria, but yet they understood the pragmatic principle of workability, they work while praying and as such move towards development. Since the world is dynamic, people need to develop new methods of understanding what is right and wrong. As Katz, E. and Light, A(1996:26) havewritten;

Pragmatism maintains that no set of ethical concepts can be the absolute foundation for evaluating the rightness of our action. We know from our past experience, that some ethical concepts work better than others in a given situation, but our past experience is the only thing you have as an ethical foundation. Our actions should be

creative mediation of conflicting claims to value, aimed at making life on the planet relatively better than it is.

Hence, all religious doctrines, books and symbols should exist so as to provide for the needs of individuals. All religions should work towards conformity to their social needs. James sees pragmatism as an improvement on Empiricism and a rebuke of rationalism. Hence, pragmatic truth brings us much closer to the actual ground of reality by leading away from a search for some abstract final truth or principles, and close to our actual experience.

Conclusion

In close comparison to religious crisis in Nigeria, the question about living together in peace emerged as a result of the violent confrontation that has been occurring among religious groups. The massive destruction among the two strong religious groups (Christians and Muslims) has led to the destruction of property, valuable infrastructure and development projects; and above all poses a serious threat to national security, causes disaster, psychological trauma, disruption of activities etc. one has no choice but to infer that uncritical beliefs are the major cause of this violence.

Therefore, this study urges religious leaders to shun the exploitation of their members, emotionally, psychologically, financially and otherwise, rather, they should educate them on the dignity of labour and respect for human life. The individual should wake up from their religious slumber and put religion in the faculty of moderation and start making committed efforts in taking active involvement in solving their existential problems. They should debar from religious controversy and look for workability and what will develop the nation. hence, all doctrines that promote violence should be subjected to the scope of verification so as to prove its authenticity and workability.

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