

## **ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF INIMICAL RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES IN NIGERIA**

**Emmanuel C. Anizoba**

*Department of Religion & Cultural Studies*

*Faculty of the Social Sciences,*

*University of Nigeria, Nsukka*

*emmanuel.anizoba@unn.edu.ng*

*08036060396*

**Akabike Gladys**

*Department of Religion & Cultural Studies*

*Faculty of the Social Sciences,*

*University of Nigeria, Nsukka*

*gladys.akabike@unn.edu.ng*

*08060477522*

### **ABSTRACT**

The impact of the activities of different types of religion such as Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion in Nigeria is enormous and should not be over looked. The study aimed at exploring some of the effects of the activities of aforementioned different types of religion in the Nigerian Economy. The study adopts a qualitative phenomenological research design and descriptive method for data analysis. Personal interview forms a primary source of data collection while the secondary source includes library resources. The study reveals that, Government neglects, oppression, domination, exploitation, victimization, discrimination, marginalization, nepotism and bigotry are some of the causes of religious violence in Nigeria. The study also identified poverty, corruption, non-implementation of previous probe panel reports, impunity of past perpetrators of the violence, proliferation of preachers and worship centres, provocative and inciting utterances, sensational journalism, political manipulation of religion, incitement in the social media and mobile telephone among others as key causes of religious violence in northern Nigeria. The study also notes that, the effects of these inimical activates of these religions are enormous in the Nigerian economy, where in addition to the gratuities killing and maiming of thousands of persons, properties worth billions of naira have been destroyed. Certainly, these huge losses have deprived the nation of needed manpower and services for the growth of its wobbling economy. The study recommends among other things that Nigeria should consider her diverse cultures as a blessing and live in peace with each other irrespective of religious denomination to ensure peaceful and a healthy nation, since a healthy nation is a wealthy nation.

**Key words:** Economic, Religion, Activities, Violence, Nigeria

### **INTRODUCTION**

Religion is an important phenomenon in contemporary Nigeria. It is ever popular and has captured the attention of many Nigerians. Its activities have predominated man's life. Religion has been and is increasingly coming to the fore front in modern scholarship. It is equally a subject for discussion in the daily newspapers, magazines, radio and television. Most Nigerians appear to be interested in religion for its immense benefits. From all indications, Nigeria is a pluralist society. By this, it is meant that Nigeria is a country where different religious adherents coexist and mix

freely to carry out their day-to-day activity (Hackett and Olupona (2007.)). there are basically three major religions in Nigeria. These include: Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion (ATR). Besides these, other religions exist in Nigeria like Hinduism, Bahai, Judaism, The Grail Message, and The Reformed Ogboni Fraternity but are practiced by either foreigners or negligible few Nigerians. The questions now arise: How has religion fared in Nigeria since their inception? How are they co-existing, influencing and impinging on each other as well as the entire Nigerian society? What exactly is religion showcasing in Nigeria ever since its emergence? This paper is a humble attempt to examine these issues.

The paper employs phenomenological and historical analytical method so as to be able to examine religion as a phenomenon because religion itself has existed in and impacted on the Nigeria society for so long now. According to Parratt in Inyama (2007), phenomenological method has three advantages.

First, the study begins at the right place (the phenomenon). Secondly, the approach is conducive to clarify in the sense that one knows what one is talking about. Third, the phenomenological moves on a more secure ground because it proceeds by description rather than by deduction.

The phenomenological method generally deals with the true nature of the theme, which in this case is religion, starting from the inside. It is equally held that ‘‘The test of a phenomenological description is that the picture given by it is convincing, illuminates other related ideas, makes reality understandable, as they give themselves, without the interference of negative or positive prejudices and interpretations’’ (Inyama 2007, p.10). The historical method on the other hand helps to trace the origin of the three major religions in Nigeria chronologically. According to Van Derleew (1963), there is an affinity between the historical and the phenomenologist methods. He reiterates that history goes with phenomenology just as the phenomenologist works with historical material. Be that as it may, it is concluded that, the historian and the phenomenologist, therefore, work in the closest possible association; they are indeed in the majority of cases combined in the person of a single investigator’’ (Van Derleew 1963, p.686)

## **OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS**

There are different definitions of religion from different perspective of different disciplines

### **Theological definition of religion**

Religion can be defined as the act of believing in God, or believing in supernatural being.

### **Moral Definition of Religion**

Religion is morality tinged with emotion or the recognition of all duties as divine commands or is a sum of scruple which impede the free us of our faculties.

### **Philosophical Definition of Religion**

Philosophically, religion is defined in terms of an abstract, usually as an impersonal concept. Examples; religion is what a man does with his solitariness.

### **Psychological Definition of Religion**

Psychological definition of religion stress that religion has to do with the emotions, feelings or psychological states of the human relation to the religious object, Ferguson gave an example; that religion is seeking comfort in a world which , dispassionately considered, is a terrifying wilderness.

### **Sociological Definition of Religion**

Sociological definition of religion emphasizes on religion as a group consciousness embodying cultural norms

### **Cultural Definition of Religion**

Religion is a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, persuasive, and longlasting moods and motivations, 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.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF RELIGION IN NIGERIA**

Any discussion on religion in Nigeria must begin with some reference to the history of Christian-Muslim relationship. The Nigerian political scene is not dominated by religion, but has been greatly influenced by it (Atanda, 1989; Ilesanmi, 1997). Nigeria, like many other African nation-states that have emerged from under the cloak of colonialism, has sought to negotiate equitably its extensive ethnic and religious pluralism, and channel such into national integration. The much talked about imbalance in the country was as a result of the advantages gained by those who received western education (Ekoko, 1989; Igbo, 1997). It was in the South of the country that Christian missionaries were most active in establishing schools. Due to the British policy of non-intervention toward the Muslims in the North, the later did not gain the benefits of western education. This resulted in a lasting and destabilizing dichotomy, and is firmly imprinted on the historical memory of Muslims.

Nigerian Christians on their part, still harbor fears of political domination by the Northern Muslim Hausa-Fulani peoples. They remember the Jihad movements of the nineteenth century that promoted a new exclusive, intolerant and militant Islamic orientation (An-Naim, 1997; Isichei, 1983). Nor have they forgotten the Islamization policy of “One North, One Islam” of Northern Muslim leaders during the first republic of the early 1960s (Ohadike, 1992). It is imperative to add that majority of the country’s past military and political leaders have come from the North, often of the Muslim religion. In addition, such governments have employed various quota and federal character strategies as a way of bridging the purported imbalance between the North and the South. In such circumstances, most Nigerians have every reason to be doubtful of the concept of fair play, with nepotism and corruption rife at so many levels

Looking back in retrospect, some crucial and sensitive matters of public interest have also in some ways generated conflict. A good example of this is the “OIC incident”, as it is known, when the federal government secretly made a move to become a member of the Organisation of Islamic Conference in 1986, and similarly, in January, 1997, when there were plans for Nigeria to join the Islamic economic group, the D-8.

## **MEANING OF RELIGION**

Religion is said to be a reality in human experienced which pervades through life. It describes the way man relates with the supernatural world or the divine being. This relationship finds expression in beliefs, worships, creeds and symbols (Uka 1990).

Religion certainly is a difficult word to define. To attempt to define it is to embark on an almost impossible task. This is because there are no two persons or authors with exactly the same concept of God and religion. In other words, as Nwahaghi (1998) puts it “A simple comprehensive definition of religion cannot be attained because of the complex nature of religion” (p.9.). He reiterates that the objects that religion deals with are not subjected to empirical observation. These Religious objects are believed to be conceived in different ways by different people. This difficulty apart, Metuh (1987) sustains that “The study of religion attracts people with various interests as theologians, anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, economists, historians etc, each of them sees it from different perspective” (p.13). Added to this is the fact that, the expression of religion always varies from religion to religion as a result of different beliefs and practices. All these put together compounds the problems to achieving a single universally acceptable definition of religion.

However, different opinions hold that religion is an organized system of beliefs, ceremonies, practices and worship that centre on one Supreme Being called God, or the Deity (Watkins & Wartkins 1992). Interestingly, it is equally discovered that almost all people who follow some form of religion believe that a divine power created the world and influences their lives. In summary, religion seems to be understood briefly as an expression of faith and belief. It is said to be the conscious and sub-conscious response to the ultimate source of existence referred to as God in whichever name or language (Kitause 2012). To cap it up, Metuh (1992) asserts that “Religion is an institutionalized system of symbols, beliefs, values, and practices focused on the relationship between God and man, and between men living in society” (p.11). Taken in that sense, it is remarked that the notion of ‘Religion’ is different from that of ‘A Religion’. Uka (1990) in expatiating on this expresses that:

‘Religion’ deals with questions of human existence that is deep and serious such as: why do men suffer? Why does anything exist at all? What lies beyond death?... ‘A Religion’ has to do with what a particular religious group does or believes. For example why do Muslims go on pilgrimage to Mecca? Why do Christians celebrate the Holy Communion?... What we call religion today refers to religions such as Islam, Christianity, African Traditional Religion, Judaism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Shintoism and the like. These religions are a people’s belief system through which they interpret and relate to the visible and invisible world around them.

### **RELIGION IN PRE CHRISTIAN AND PRE ISLAMIC NIGERIA**

Modern Scholarship now recognises that a concept of God as a Supreme Being and creator is virtually universal in traditional Africa (Olowola 1993, p.11). Africans, particularly Nigerians knew about God long before the advent of Christianity and Islam to Nigeria. In fact, there was in existence an indigenous religion of the native. The facts remain undisputable that these foreign religions did not come to meet a vacuum in Nigeria. There were evidences of already existing culture and philosophies of the aborigines, whose roots are traceable to their religion. How did this happen?

According to Olusegun & Akin (1992) prehistoric religions arose as a result of mysteries and incomprehension that pervaded certain events and aspect of human life. It is believed that powers pre historic people probably interpreted supernatural occurrences and credited supernatural powers greater than themselves. This made them to have either consciously or unconsciously developed or directed their indigenous religious activities on the most important elements of their existence such as combating their fears and ensuring their corporate existence and prosperity. This

equally probably explains the reasons ancient people observed libation by pouring wine and placing foods, ornaments and tools in graves in order to maintain close proximity with the deceased and the unseen world (Kitause 2011; Eriwo 1985).

It is said that “The traditional religion of Nigeria is the richest heritage which the forebears of Nigeria have handed down to their children” (Nwahaghi 1998, p.10). History has it that in the past, in Nigeria, the dominant religion was the traditional religion popularly known as African Traditional Religion. According to Ekeopara (1996), the term African Traditional Religion refers the religions beliefs and practices of the Africans. It is traditional and indigenous religion of the Africa is not localized. It is also believed not to only restrict itself to Africa and Africans alone, but is said to be opened to all races of the world. The word Africa, it is stressed, merely describes the geographical location where ATR is dominant. This indigenous religion is what Nigerians have been practising long before the advent of Christianity and Islam. It is a religion that has permeated all aspects of their life as African. Speaking about the person is very religious and does not know how to live without religion- he or she eats likely to be what Mbiti (1969) meant when he says that “Where the African is, there is his religious”. To Idowu (1966), Africans including Nigerians are “ A people who in all things are religious”. As observed by Nwahagi (1998), it is this traditional religion that has helped to shape probably the social, political and economic activities of the people of Nigeria.

#### **ARRIVAL OF ISLAM IN NIGERIA**

Islam penetrated Nigeria through the Northern Part of her borders. It came to Northern Nigeria about five or six hundred years before Christianity (Metuh 1985). History has shown that Islam arrive Nigeria sometime between 1000A.D and 1100A.D (Enwerem 1995). The first town of contact was Bornu in the North-eastern Nigeria before it overtook the entire Hausa States between 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries (Trimingham 1963). Initially, Islam was propagated only among City dwellers and was chiefly patronized by the upper class for economic, social and Islam spread to every nook and cranny of Northern Nigeria and was forced upon the people. In his studies, Ekeopara (1996) observes that:

From 1750 AD, Islam in Northern Nigeria entered into a new phase. It became militant and intolerant of the Traditional religious system. By this time, Muslims were no more satisfied with receiving tributes. They were now bent on wiping out all associations of pagan custom with Islam. The infidels or unbelievers were forcefully converted by the military might of the Jihadists and not through preaching.

Historical evidence shows that upon capturing a place, the Jihadists immediately introduced Islamic system of Law and government in order to cement their stronghold in the region.

#### **EMERGENCE OF CHRISTIANITY IN NIGERIA**

Christianity is one of the religions in Nigeria. It is said to have entered Nigeria in three phases. In the first phase, Christianity is reported to have made its appearance in Nigeria in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century. Historical facts abound that Benin and Warri in the Niger Delta region were the first cities to witness missionary presence in Nigeria.

The earliest known Christian Mission that first showed up in Nigeria was the Portuguese Roman Catholic Mission which came to Benin in 1485 at the invitation of Oba Uzolua and later in 1514 by Oba Esigie, Kings of Benin (Agha 1999; Tasie 1978). History shows that the initial attempt in planting Christianity in Benin failed because “The Kings of Benin City remained

strongly attached to their indigenous religion'' (Baur 2009, p.75). it is said that there were enough evidence for such failures in Benin in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century of which the above was but one of them.

The second attempt in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century under Oba Esigie succeeded to a certain extent as the Oba himself and most of his chiefs did submit themselves for baptisms and actually professed and practised Christian religion somewhat in their own terms. Eventually Christian churches were built but unfortunately the Benin Mission appears to have remained confined to the royal court. Much later, it is reported that some Spanish Capuchins, some Augustinian monks and some missionaries from the Sacred Congregation de propaganda Fidei had their turn in the Benin and Warri Mission field with both positive and negative responses each time. How far this Benin mission expanded is not known. But is most likely that the crucifixes, mutilated statues of saints and several catholic emblems that were discovered within the Benin royal court several years later go to prove that some measure of success was recorded in the Benin missionary work.

In the second phase, Christianity is reported to have penetrated Nigeria through Western Nigeria. Lagos as at 1841 had developed onto a notorious slave market with its King Kosoko as the Principal promoter of the trade (Dike 1957). Evidence indicates that it was after his deportation by British administration that real missionary enterprise began in Yoruba land. Among the earliest missions that evangelized Yoruba land are the Wesleyan Methodist Mission and the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S) ably represented by the Reverend Thomas Birch Freeman and Catechist Henry Townsend respectively in 1842. Samuel AjayiCrowther became the first Yoruba man to get converted at Sierra Leone as a free slave. He became instrumental in reaching his own people with the gospel (Oduyoye 1969).

This was followed by the Calabar Mission in 1846 with the Scottish Presbyterian Mission taking the lead in evangelizing the Efik people. EssienUkpabio, a native of Greek town emerged the first convert and was baptized by the Reverend Hope Waddle, the first pioneer missionary to Calabar after being to Ethiopia. Other missionaries like Mary Slessor joined later in the missionary work in Calabar. King of Greek town, King Eyo Honesty was one of the main actors that helped missionaries to plant Christianity in Calabar. From Calabar, the Presbyterian Church spread to the other parts of the former Eastern region (Ajayi 1965; Kalu 1978). According to Ajah (1994) ''Christian Missions came to Eastern Nigeria mainly through angles. The first angle was through Lagos area or from Western Nigeria... The second angle was directly to the easestern end of the country through a sea port'' (p.40). Ajah fails to mention for clarity purposes the Sea Port in question. He confirms that the Presbyterian and Qua Iboe Churches penetrated the east through Calabar. With the passage of time, Christian Mission over spread the whole of Eastern Nigeria.

Furthermore, Nigeria witnessed the third phase of missionaries' entrance into Northern Nigeria as from 1870. This was said to be in three phases too. The first phase 1870-1888 was met with relative success even though there was no single convert won, but the missionaries succeeded in making contact with the north and opening it up for further missionary work. The Baike, Archdeacon Henry John and Charles Paul. The second phase was between 1888 and 1900. During this era, the missionaries. In 1890, the CMS sponsored what is called the Sudan party and later the Hausa Association with the mandate to evangelize Northern Nigeria and to study and translate the Gospel into Hausa Language as well as establishing a College. Membership of this group comprised of graduates from Cambridge and Oxford Universities, Presidents of the CMS and the Wesleyan Missionary Society among others (Crampton, 1979). At this time, all efforts to convert the Muslim proved abortive, but the missionaries were able to convert some adherents of

traditional religion in the north. Gradually, Mission stations were established here and there in the region which became bases for the spread and penetration of the Gospel in Northern Nigeria. Later on, other missionary bodies equally started showing interest in reaching northern Nigeria.

In the third phase 1900-1918, the British administration under Sir Frederick Lugard appeared to be anti missionary by restricting missionary activities in the territory. But generally the initial eagerness shown by some emirs to establishment and solidifying of Christianity in the Northern region.

### **A GENERAL AND NATURALISTIC THEORY OR RELIGION**

Rue proposes a general and naturalistic theory of religion. For him, a general theory is one 'that tells us what religion is, where it comes from, and how it functions' (2). We may ask to what extent his book answers these questions. Rue deals with the first question by describing the structure of religion, which consists of a central myth and ancillary strategies to transmit the consumerism a religion? Given the fact the Rue also states that consumerism fulfils the 'religious function' we, must suppose that it meets his criteria for being a religion. We can go further and note that any cultural tradition could be described as comprising a core myth and ancillary means of making the myth appear real. Rue does not explain the difference between religion and other cultural traditions, if there should be any.

Rue obviously does not agree with most cognitive scientists of religion, who would maintain that religion is different because it implies ideas of counterintuitive supernatural agents. 'Religion is not about God' is the first sentence of the book (1). In Rue's view, religion 'is about us. It is about manipulating our brains so that we think, feel, and act in ways that are good for us, both individually and collectively' (I; italics in original). This sound a bit like addressing a congregation. It seems to imply that a cultural tradition is a religion if and only if it is good for s, or perhaps its followers. Do Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism cease to be religious when they legitimate war and violence? Rue's description of these religious, which is intended to provide empirical evidence for the central religious functions of personal wholeness and social coherence, ignores the fact that these traditions have also been sources of individual suffering and social conflicts. His theory does not tell us what a religion is and how it functions; it rather appears to be an idealized vision of what religion should be and how it should function.

As to the question where religion comes from, the theory offers two kinds of answer. One is a story telling us how and when paleolithic man started to invent myths that integrated socially constructed cosmological and moral ideas into narratives, it is plausible story but no scientific theory. The other answer is more theoretical, in that it uses the language of neuropsychology in explaining why human behaviour is not completely determined by the cognitive algorithms developed through genetic evolution, but instead guided by culturally transmitted cosmological and moral concepts. The explanation postulates a set of secondary mental operators that enable the human brain to overrule the impulses of the innate primary operators. Religion, then, is based on these secondary operators and may be said 'to come from' the brain's ability to construct them. Theory of religion as myth.

One could object that the theory of secondary operators just expresses in other language was known before, that is, that human behaviour is influenced by genetic as well as by cultural factors. However, it should be recognized that his translation of insight of the cultural sciences into the terminology of neuropsychology and biological evolutionary theory is a valuable attempt to

overcome the lack of communication between cultural and natural sciences. Rue subscribes to Edward O. Wilson's programme of consilience (Wilson 1998) the unity of science based on scientific materialism. His theory of religion is intended to integrate the social science and the humanistic sciences into the consilience programme designed in the natural sciences (16). To develop a common terminology certainly is an important step to this end. In this respect, Rue's theory of religion can be seen as a significant contribution that may open new paths of cooperation and mutual stimulation of the natural and social sciences.

It is in view of the consilient unity of science that Rue is advocating not only a general but also a naturalist theory of religion. However, if by 'naturalism' he should mean scientific naturalism, there are some problems with his approach. Rue sees evolution as a teleological and meaningful process. If we understand the 'epic of evolution', we can find out what the meaning and purpose of human nature is. Yet evolution is no epic composed to make us understand the meaningful of life, but a natural process. Unless we subscribe to the theory of intelligent design, there is no goal, purpose, telos, or meaningful in natural evolution. Scientific naturalism is a major agent to what Max Weber has called the 'disenchantment of the world'. It deprives the world of the meaning it had when religious and other myths described it as a cosmos full of mysteries. What Rue proposes is a religious naturalism engaged in the re-enchantment of the world to nurture an 'acquired sense for the mystery and sanctity of nature itself. His theory of religion drafts the myth of religious naturalism'.

As a postscript and to do justice to Rue, it should be added that he is without doubt well aware that he is offering a myth camouflaged as scientific theory. In one of his earlier books he argues for the necessity of inventing a 'noble lie... to reenchant the universe' as an adaptive strategy. 'for opposing the maladaptive truth of nihilism' (Rue 1994:279). To this end he envisions the creation of a 'biocentric myth' that 'takes its basic vocabulary from the sciences, adding only a narrative dimension to them' (Rue 1994: 304). This is what he has done in the hook under scrutiny here. He may be right in thinking that deception can be more adaptive than truth and mythmaking more necessary than scientific argument. I doubt, however, that we should assign the task of inventing myths to the study of religion.

## **ACHIEVEMENTS OF RELIGION IN NIGERIA**

Religion is probably the most popular phenomenon in contemporary Nigeria. Religion has achieved this preeminence due to its overwhelming impacts and contributions in the Nigerian society. As a notable agent of change, religion has undeniably exerted a great deal of influence positively and negatively on the Nigerian people in many ways

Even though, it is on record that religion in Nigeria has fuelled and generated a lot of tensions and conflicts (Agi 1998), it is no doubt a great force of peace and unity in Nigeria (Turaki 2010). Religious affiliation has been a binding force in Nigeria. It is a known fact that religion whether it is Christianity, Islam or ATR has been able to successfully unite the different ethnic groups together and make them to coexist peacefully along religious lines in Nigeria. According to Omoregbe (1996).

It can hardly be denied that religion has been the source of a lot of intolerance, feud, discrimination and devastating wars in different parts of the world, both in the past and at present....It has also done a lot of good to mankind. It has produced saints in every part of the world; it has helped to inculcate in many people worldwide the spirit of self-discipline and dedicated service to one's fellow men. It has enabled many to see some meaning and purpose in



their lives. By providing man with a worldview and describing man's place within the scheme of things, religion enables many people (who believe in it) to see human life as meaningful and purposeful, thus providing them with a sense of direction in life (p. 298, 301).

As a matter of fact, history has shown that religion does foster national growth and development. In Nigeria, religion has greatly assisted in wiping out mass illiteracy (Ugwu 2002; Ayandele 1966). Indeed, the outstanding contributions of Christianity and Islam in the enlightenment and education of Nigerians cannot just be overlooked. Both religions have played significant roles in the evolution of a literate culture in Nigeria. This was through the establishments of the various missionary and quoranic schools in Nigeria (Lemu 2002; Mkpa 2010). In his observation, Schumacher (1975) maintains that development does not start with goods; it starts with people and their education, organization and discipline. This is a fact. It is people who are knowledgeable, competent, honest and skilful that builds a nation. Schumacher (1975) expatiates that: The work of nation building solidly hinges on the way the state enjoys true goodness. The building of the nation is first and foremost the building of the people that make up the nation, which in effect boils down to the building up of the individuals themselves-justice, love and peace, which are essential ingredients for nation building, and are products of the human heart; these cannot be imposed by the force of arms.

Christianity for instance, in the opinion of Mbachirin (2011) has made great achievements in the areas of education, healthcare, and rural development since its inception in Nigeria. The education that religion gives influence people's moral life; thereby making them perhaps to be responsible in all areas of life in the society. This implies that religion encourages people to live moral lives by providing them with the incentives to do so. According to Omoregbe (1996), one of the virtues taught by religion is the virtues of humility. This, in a way provides man with a new dimension to the concepts of leadership and greatness. By inference, therefore, it is reasoned that religion nurtures good governance, as is self evidences in Nigeria. This is premised on the very fact of the various religious teaching of the founders of religious. The teaching practical example of Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity on humility, for instance gives the Nigeria Christians the impetus to imbibe and inculcate that style of leadership in Nigeria. This is buttressed better in the following words: Leadership should manifest itself in selfless service rather than in the exercise of authority. Greatness reveals itself in humility, for it is the humble that is great. A leader should therefore distinguish himself by selfless service; anyone who aspires to greatness must be humble, for it is humility that leads to greatness (Omoregbe 1996, p. 304). Religion has over the years produced great leaders in Nigeria. The three major religions in Nigeria have contributed immensely in the political development of the country. They all produced competent individuals who championed the cause of leadership in Nigeria (Dike 1957). True to its teachings, religion nourished individuals who understood the concept of leadership as selfless service to the nation. Beginning from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Nigeria started witnessing the emergence of nationalities with seasoned leadership qualities like Chief ObafemiAwolowo, DrNnamdiAzikwe, Sir Ahmadu Bello, General Yakubu Gowon, Chief OlusegunObasanjo, General MuhammaduBuhari, Prof Jerry Gana, Prof Dora Akunyili, AlhajiShehuShagari, General Ibrahim BadamasiBabangida, DrNgoziOkonjo-Iweala, AlhajiUmaru Musa Yar'adua and DrGoodluckEbele Jonathan among several others (Musa 2009). Though, some of them perceived leadership as exercise of authority and as an avenue to amass wealth for themselves, but majority of them did creditably well and improved the lot of the people tremendously in Nigeria.

Furthermore, religion in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century has achieved some measures of incarnation in Nigeria. In trying to respond to the yearnings of the people, both Christianity and Islam in their individual ways attempt to incarnate religion in Nigeria. During this epoch, religion especially Christianity assumed its true African nature by putting off all foreign regalia and clothed itself with African cultural garbs. Islam and especially Christianity borrowed heavily some cultural elements by adopting local drums, vestments, singing in local languages, hand clapping and dancing with African rhythm and the likes. There were obviously ostensible signs for the recovery of Nigeria cultural values, which further aided more development of Nigeria indigenous languages. There was equally great expansion in the traditional, Islamic and Christian education in Nigeria. All of these culminated in the fight against all forms of corruption, injustice, molestation of the girl child and the advocacy for women empowerment to enhance the dignity of the human person in Nigeria.

### **THE VISIBLE CAUSES OF RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA**

Several causes of religious in Nigeria have been identified in the literature (Agwu, 2009; Gofwen 2004; Salawu 2010; Iwara 2006; Kwaja 2009; Omotosho 2003; Sanusi 2009; Sani no date). Whereas most of these cause conflict, emphasis in the literature is on the underlying socio-political, economic and governance factors that gestate not only religious conflicts, but violent conflicts in Nigeria generally. In this article however, the focus is on the immediate and visible factors that generate violence rather than the remote precipitating and other social factors that animate it.

A cursory perusal of extant literature on the remote socio-political, economic and governance factors that drive religious violence in Nigeria does show, however, that government neglect, oppression, domination, exploitation, victimization, discrimination, marginalization, nepotism and bigotry are some of the predisposing factors (Salawu 2010:348). In his treatise, Kwaja (2009:107) also identifies fragility of the institutions of the state in terms of their ability and capacity to manage diversity, corruption, rising inequality between the rich and poor, gross violation of human rights, environmental degradation, contestations over land, among others, as the underlying causes of violent conflicts in Nigeria since the enthronement of democratic rule in 1999. In his view, Danjibo (no date:3) believes the failure of governance is responsible for the recurring sectarian violence in Nigeria; while Omotosho (2003) recognizes disparaging literature/publications by both Christian and Muslim elites as the major cause of religious violence in the country. Contributing to the debate, Achunike (2008:287) opined that the wrong perception of other people's religion or faith, wrong religious orientation, the low literacy level of religious adherents, selfishness on the part of religious personalities, pervasive poverty, government involvement in religious matters, among others, are responsible for interreligious conflicts in Nigeria.

Sani (no date) has made a comprehensive but unelaborated list of 70 causes of religious conflicts in Nigeria. While identifying both the remote sociopolitical and economic drivers as well as the immediate factors that generate religious violence in Nigeria, he has failed to critically analyse how these factors generate religious disturbances. Nonetheless, it suffices to state that he identified poverty, corruption, non-implementation of previous probe panel reports, impunity of past perpetrators of the violence, proliferation of preachers and worship centres, provocative and inciting utterances, sensational journalism, political manipulation of religion, incitement in the social media and mobile telephony, among others, as key causes of religious violence in northern Nigeria.

These causes are quite comprehensive and indeed cover most of the factors discussed in this article. However, I shall take a step further to demonstrate how some of these issues generate religious violence and further suggest an approach to state management.

## **THE FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH**

### **Religious Conflict and Its Manifestation in Nigeria**

Before delving into the discussion of religious conflict in Nigeria, it will be useful to devote some space to introduce the country's religious communities that form the conflict parties. Nigeria has three major religions. These are African Religions (Afrel), Christianity and Islam. With a population of about 170 million, Muslims are estimated to be 50%, Christians 40% and practitioners of African Religions are put at 10%. This estimation excludes practitioners of alternative religious ideologies from the eastern world. The current population estimate is being disputed by the Christians and African Religions, who argue that the long (1966-1979;1983-1999) domination of the nation's polity by military dictators, who are mostly Moslem from the Northern part of the country, placed them into the best positions to manipulate the figures in favour of Muslims.

Christianity was introduced into Nigeria via the southern part of the country, obviously due to its coastal nature. There were, however, three stages of its introduction. In this vein, Aderibigbe, (1988) suggest: Christianity found its way into Nigeria in different stages. The first contact came probably through Christian Berbers or Tuaregs. The second came through the Portuguese in 1488 in the neighbourhood of Benin and Warri but failed to make lasting impact. Finally, Christianity began to take permanent root in Nigeria as from 1842 with the coming of the English speaking Christian mission in Badagry The quick spread of this faith in this region, especially Badagry and Abeokuta, was facilitated by some freed slaves who had been converted to Christianity and decided to contribute in its propagation. Following the establishment of Christianity in the southern part of Nigeria, it was introduced to the northern part of the country. The introduction and spread of Islam in Nigeria is somewhat more difficult to describe. According to Olurode (1989), as summarized herein, it appears that Islam first came into Nigeria through Bornu in about the 13<sup>th</sup> century but was confined to the cities along the Trans-Sahara trade route. Islam spread beyond the cities following the conquest of the Hausa States by the Fulanis. A dominant presence of Islam was noticeable after the Fulani conquest in 1802, which left the conquered Hausa States to be governed as Islamic states. The Fulanis also spearheaded the gradual spread of Islam to the south via the Ilorin axis. Olurode further suggest the Fulanis were initially invited by their Yoruba friends who desired their (Fulanis) Chief Priest, Alimi, to exert some control on the rule of Afonja, a Yoruba warrior. Subsequently, the Fulanis imposed civil leadership on the Yorubas of Ilorin and eventually Islam took root in the interiors of Yoruba, the southern community where it currently has a large number of followers.

### **THE EFFECTS OF THE CONFLICTS/CRISES**

The resultant effects of religious conflicts in Nigeria are enormous. It pervades all the sectors of the economy. Generally, conflicts breed security, discrimination, mutual distrust and slow economic and educational development. This is the case in Nigeria where in addition to the gratuitous killings and maiming of thousands of persons, properties worth billions of naira have been destroyed. Certainly, these huge losses have deprived the nation of needed manpower and services for the growth of its wobbling economy.

Religious conflicts in Nigeria have also left its effect on investment options in the crises ridden areas. The political instability, arising from the insecurity and uncertainty that pervades the region, does not inspire the confidence of foreign investors and thereby deprives the notion of the economic gains. In some instances, the enterprising southerners who had established thriving businesses in the troubled areas in the North have relocated to other and safer places. Further, religious conflicts in Nigeria have left in its trail a broken society: communities that hitherto co-existed peacefully now treat each other with mistrust and latent or open aggression. Consequently, settlement patterns begins to follow the boundaries of religion in these areas so that adherents can be swiftly mobilized in the event of future riots. The disrupted social harmony is sometimes felt in places far from the crisis scene and thus account for the reprisal riots in other parts of Nigeria.

### **THE FUTURE OF RELIGION IN NIGERIA**

Given the above, it may not be an over statement to forecast that, the three dominant religious in Nigeria will outlive the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The future of ATR, Islam and Christianity appears to be very bright in Nigeria. The Pentecostal churches are really proliferating in Nigeria. For instance The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) has vouchsafed to plant churches within five minutes walking distance in every city and town of developing countries (<http://mainrccg/churchministry/missionstatementmain/htm>).

The Roman Catholic Church and the Baptist Church are exponential growth in Northern Nigeria which has not been the case in the 1960s (McCain 1999). There is the likelihood too that Islam will blossom in Nigeria. The greatest concentration of Muslims is in the Northern States, forming about three fourths of the entire northern population, but today Islam is the dominant faith in a few of the Southern States, which equally is gradually penetrating the Eastern States (Falola 2011). The reason for this spread of Islam may not be farfetched. Islam adopts a very simple way of life and most of its propagators are traders who usually spread their tentacles everywhere. Again, Islam has successfully mixed substantial portion of its belief with indigenous beliefs especially belief in magic and medicine for protection which seems appealing to most people in this crisis prone Nigeria (Danfulani 2002). The question of whether ATR will survive in Nigeria or not is in the affirmative. According to Mbiti (1978) "In matters of deeper things of life such as birth, marriage and death, they (both Christian and Muslims) have remained largely followers of African Religion" (p. 189). There is also an upsurge of interest in traditional medicines in Nigeria. People in Nigeria are zealously patronizing traditional medicine healers for obvious reasons. Sickneses are all around us today in Nigeria. Some of them have defied medical sciences or orthodox medication and consequently people find relief in the application of native herbs.

Today, there is a registered body of Traditional Medicine Practioners in Nigeria who from time to time, organized trade fair for traditional medicine with so much clientele (Akuehi 1999). Civil, ethnic and religious crisis in Nigeria have always pushed most people to seeking protection from native doctors which in a way help in expanding the trade. It may probably be right also to say that, most of the practitioners of prayer houses in Nigeria are essentially native doctors that have recently learnt the Pentecostal styles of administering healing and, who probably have incorporated and injected Pentecostals prayer methods into their practice. Added to this is the fact that some so-called Pentecostal pastors are beginning to patronize native doctors in order to obtain power to grow large followership in their churches. This helps in no small way to brightening the future of ATR in Nigeria (Akiode in Iheanochacho 2009)

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The paper considers the following recommendations apposite:

- Nigerians should consider her diverse cultures a blessing and live in peace with each other. After all, from all indications, nature thrives on diversity. Look at the permutations of weather during the day, much less a month or year. The climates differ from one part of the earth to another. The flora and fauna exhibit great variety and differ markedly from one region to another. The continents and their geographies differ. No two snowflakes are exactly alike. The stars, constellations and other heavenly bodies appear to be changing and our learned astronomers tell us that many changes are constantly taking place. It is the balance in all these patterns and forces that help nature thrive. Nigerians should adopt nature as their guiding force and draw energy from the earth.
- Nigeria needs an Inter Religious Commission with branches in all the States of the Federation. This Commission would work out modalities for religious tolerance among Nigerians.
- Adherents of Christianity and Islam should be able to come together and identify the problems of the nation so that they could jointly fight such problems. The emphasis should be on a collective and genuine religious practice that could lead to the development of the nation. Religion should lay much emphasis in the areas of alleviating human suffering, poverty, war, political and economic justice among all citizens. All religions should put into action forces that would lead to the promotion of the welfare of the people.
- Since all religious bodies preach love as a virtue, religious leaders should ensure that they emphasize this. Where love exists, there must, of necessity, be the absence of suspicion, religious discrimination, rivalry and competition, strife and tension (Kayode, 2000). Secularism should not just be concerned as the withdrawal of the Nigerian State from religious affairs but as a guarantee of religious freedom to every Nigerian.
- Strict adherence to the teaching of various religions especially as they border on the need for tolerance and love for one another will be an advantage.
- We should relate Christian mentality to our lifestyle (Fan, Ekpe and Ita, 2008). The formation of a Christian mentality means that religion must be related to life. In a Christian society the Ten Commandments lead. These principles should serve as our Code of Conduct at all times and at all places (Fan, Usoroh, Ettah and Edinyang, 2009).
- Basic tenets of various religions should be built into moral and religious instructions in secondary schools and made a core subject at this level, nation-wide.
- Ethnic militias should be prevented from determining inter-ethnic relations. Place of the minorities in Nigerian should be enhanced.
- There is need to shift grounds on spontaneous military approach to solving disputes to really focus on evolving a basic amicable framework of co-existence between groups in a society. Akinsanya et al., (2014) suggest that emphasis should shift from the distribution of the cake along ethnic lines to its distribution along lines of the contribution to its production.
- The agitation for an adequate revenue sharing formula should be given due consideration while culture of tolerance, trust and dialogue in inter-ethnic and interreligious issues must be built.

## **CONCLUSION**

The expectation here is that in the spirit of secularization, Muslims and Christians must learn to tolerate one another's view points as it relates to social, economic, legal and political issues. In addition, issues of revenue allocation and equitable distribution of resources should be addressed by the government as this has dominated religious programming.

In the interest of public safety and peace, the media must be careful in terms of how crisis events are reported so as to reduce elements of escalation. It is not proper to use religion to destroy one another. Love and peace must be allowed to reign in the lives of the people. It is necessary to always remember that there is the law of retributive justice, because what a person sows, that he would surely reap.

There is hope however, for a better Nigeria where peace and stability would reign. This was attested to by President Umaru Yar'Adua through the Vice President, Goodluck Jonathan, during an interdenominational church service held at the National Christian Centre, Abuja, to mark Nigeria's 47<sup>th</sup> anniversary on October 1, 2007. According to him, the Federal Government of Nigeria will soon address the lingering religious conflicts in the country, especially the ongoing conflicts between the Muslims and Christian faithful in Kano and other parts of Nigeria. To what extent the government has succeeded in this regard leaves much to be desired.

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