INTER-RELIGIOUS HARMONY: A PANACEA FOR GOOD GOVERNACE IN NIGERIA

Yisa Segun Zubairu
ECWA Theological Seminary, Igbaja
P.O.BOx 20, Igbaja, Kwara State
z.pastor16@yahoo.ca
zubairuys@gmail.com
08032246793

And

Tenin Victoria Audu
UMCA Theological College, Ilorin
victoriatenin@yahoo.com

Abstract
Nigeria is the most populous country in West Africa and vested with religious diversities: Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion. These religions are intertwined with political activities in the country. Although, religion has been mostly used negatively in Nigerian politics since independence, the need for political stability in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. Indeed, all segments of the Nigerian society are interested in the political future of the nation. However, this interest is approached from various dimensions. A major interest in the Nigerian polity is the relationship between religion and governance. The curiosity to write on this topic came out of the complex relationship of Christians and Muslims in Nigeria, and the growing extremism and intolerance between them. The methods used in this paper are historical and descriptive. The paper is divided in sections: section one is the introduction, section two defines conceptual issues and its interrelatedness, section three discusses the overview of ethno religious crises in Nigeria, section four discusses the need for interreligious harmony, while section five is the findings, recommendations and conclusion. This paper discovers that religion can be both an integrative and divisive factor in any society. Conclusively, the government and her citizens are yet to accept fully both in theory and practice the stark realities of pluralism of religious beliefs and practices. These have made Nigeria permeated with violence, crime and insecurity; hence, an unstable government. The writers of this paper suggest inter- religious harmony as a panacea for good governance.

Keywords: Religion, Inter- Religious, Harmony, Panacea, Good governance.

Introduction

It is impossible to solve problems until people acknowledge them and face them openly, honestly and courageously.[1] Nigeria as a nation is faced with a multiplicity of challenges. Among others, current issues that attract attention include: those on effective leadership, accountability in governance, security, growing poverty, inequities and sliding socio-cultural values. An advance approach by apologists of rapid economic transformation and development as a platform for stable polity and peace appears to be largely exclusive and inadequate in addressing the myriad of problems faced by the Nigerian nation. Thus, the place of the Humanities and religion in analyzing and addressing national issues in

Nigeria appears evident. After all, religion has often been alive in Nigeria's national problems.[2] There is an incontrovertible connection between religion and politics. While the actual role that religion plays in politics has remained debatable, the nexus between the two concepts has been established for long. Religion does not make people good or bad. On the contrary, it is being used as an instrument of oppression and deceit in Nigeria.[3] The need for political stability in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. Cyril O. Imo opines that: "although there have been various attempts to entrench democratic culture in Nigeria at different times, there is not yet any reasonable and clearly visible sign of success due to various factors."[4]

Some of these factors are ethnicity, military leadership, corruption, aggrandizement, the pursuit of self-interest, lack of adequate political will and personality clash. Indeed, all segments of the Nigerian society are interested in the political future of the nation. However, this interest is approached from various dimensions. A major interest in the Nigerian polity is the relationship between religion and politics. The Nigerian society is religiously pluralized and this significantly influences political decisions and policies of the nation. On the other hand, there are people who hold the strong opinion that this relationship should not be stressed and that religion and politics should be allowed to operate separately without one interfering with the other.[5] Sarafa asserts that:

> Nigeria, undoubtedly, has paraded at all levels of governance corrigible, avarice, kleptomaniac and non-responsive leadership since her political independence in 1960 (sic). All these are reasons, not only for failure of governance but also evidence that Nigeria is a morally bankrupt society; citing Omoregbe who raised a fundamental question that is yet to be satisfactorily answered- How come we have those three things: religious devotion, moral corruption and bad governments simultaneously in Africa? The pervasiveness of religion in Nigeria's national political life has made some scholars to argue that religion has subsumed and subordinated other primordial and class contradictions. Therefore, rather than been a socio-political asset, religion has become a millstone, a potential source of conflicts and instabilities.[6]

Political actors have turned religious terrain into battle grounds for contesting perceived marginalisation and to gain political recognition, ascendance and support from their communities but never as instrument of service. The politicisation of religion for group and individual gain has been a careful and calculated means of survival for some opportunistic politically ambitious elite.[7] Moreover, Eugenia posits that:

> Since the Nigerian state returned to democratic governance in 1999 during the era of the "third wave of democratization", the nature of governance in the country has been the subject of intense debate by scholars of all divides. Admittedly, the rising concern about the governance project in Nigeria cannot be explained outside the country's historical experience, a

> history that has laid the "solid" foundation for the current wave of ethno-religious and politico-economic crisis in the land. This state of affairs importantly raises some serious concerns about the question of good governance in Nigeria, where the politics of deprivation and mismanagement of resources appears to be taking over the principles of accountability, transparency and responsibility. This has thrown up security challenges in the poverty-ridden society. The questions now are: what is the explanation for bad governance in Nigeria? How can these governance deficits be corrected?[8]

An attempt to answer these questions is what this paper has set out to achieve. The thesis of this paper is that Inter-religious harmony and good governance is the key instrument that oils a sustained peaceful, secured and over all development of the society. In other words, the survival of the society is dependent on how its leadership and people are committed to the ideals of good governance where the atmosphere of peace, equal rights, justice, and rule of law prevail.

Some Conceptual Issues

It is pertinent at this juncture to explore the relevant concepts which underpin this study in what follows below. This is with a view to clearly demonstrate their referents in the study.

What is Religion?

The task of giving a definition to religion has been very herculean. Many scholars have tried to define religion from the perspective of their academic discipline. Thus, scholars from the discipline of sociology have given the sociological definition of religion; those from psychology have defined religion in psychological terms. All others have offered definitions often coloured by their backgrounds and academic disciplines. An analysis of the different definitions of religion suggests that: "it is belief in other- than- man which influences people's relationship with others."[9] This "other- than- man" is anything apart from the believer, which the believer puts his trust in. Belief is a relationship established by the believer and this object. The object of worship could also be called Ultimate Reality or the Supreme Being, the Ultimate Reality is given different names in different cultures like God, *Chukwu*, *Allah*, *Olodumare*, *Soko*, etc.

Bowker views religion from the very Latin word *religio,* as something done with over-anxious or scrupulous attention to detail, and from that use, it was applied to what we call religion, because of the way in which people performed sacrifices in those early days. The word may come from a verb *religare*, meaning to bind things closely together, which tells us something very important about religions.[10] He therefore asserted that:

> Religion binds people together in common practices and beliefs, it draws them together in common goal of life. This goal may be "life" in the most literal sense since religions are the earliest protective systems we know about that enable people to have children and raise them to adulthood.

> Religion, therefore, bind people together and supply the means through which their lives can be lived with truth and purpose.Religions, therefore, have achieved a great deal. That is why they are so dangerous. People will die (and kill) for their religion. That is why religions are involved in most of the bloody and intransigent disputes around us.[11]

Anthony equally said that "Religion can be both an integrative and divisive factor in any society. When the divisive elements of religion are not properly handled and brought under strict control, they create tensions and unrest in a society."[12] Often, these manifest themselves in form of religious riots and intolerance which have always been very disastrous, involving loss of many lives, destruction of many valuable properties. However, in Nigeria, the government and her citizens are yet to accept fully both in theory and practice the stark realities of pluralism of religious beliefs and practices. The waves of religious crises and violence in recent and present times seem to confirm this observation. They spill over the political, economic and social spheres of the country's machinery.[13]

Religion has come to occupy a central stage in people's consciousness and academic discourses. Religion is the recognition of all duties as divine commands. The religionist is earnestly devoted and attached to religion. Pascal Boyer depicts religion as a psychological mechanism shared by all normal human minds. He gives the inseparability of religion from normal human living and argues that religion is a fabric of people's lives, strongly tied to their cultural identities as well as their effort to survive amidst life's contingencies and insecurities. It may also be seen as a form of behaviour, process or structure of which orientation is at least partially supernatural. Others have similarly reasoned that, religion is a set of rituals, rationalized by myth, which mobilizes supernatural power for the purpose of achieving or preventing the transformation of the state of man or nature.[14]

Inter-Religious Relations

Nigeria as it exists today is a pluralistic society with different cultural and religious groups. Therefore, a religious pluralistic society will refer to an environment where there are many religious beliefs, concepts or ideologies. Jan H. Boer making reference to a statement from the UN that:

> Cultural diversity is here to stay and to grow. States need to find ways of forging national unity amid this diversity. The world... cannot function unless people respect diversity and build unity through common bonds of humanity. In this age of globalisation, the demands for cultural recognition can no longer be ignored by any state or by the international community. The ways states manage this cultural diversity matters because cultural liberty...can be regarded as a human right.[15]

Also, Nickles puts the notion of pluralism thus:

> A pluralistic society is one in which there co-exist more than one religion, philosophy or weltanschauung... there are some degree of recognition by

> all the parties concerned that a fundamental incompatibility between them exist; and there is nevertheless some degree of awareness that this co-existence of incompatibles is of positive value, both to the community as a whole, and to each of the included organisms in themselves.[16]

Essentially, a pluralistic society is one in which there co-exist more than one Religion and Philosophy. The different religious traditions contain an overwhelming and complex variety of positions considered by each religion as the 'truths', or what are normally described as 'the particularities' or unique features of each religion.According to Boer,

> Pluralism is concept that embraces competing worldviews, multi-culturalism, multi-religion, multi-worldview everywhere. It covers all areas of life- economics and business, politics and government, religion and its primary institutions of church and mosque, etc. Religious pluralism does not erase the core differences among competing worldviews and is not meant to lead to either relativism or syncretism. Under pluralism, no worldview has a privileged position, whether religious or secular. They all have an equal place at the table. No secular, Muslim or Christian perspective will try to dominate and define the nature and limits of the others. As soon as one worldview tries to gain the upper hand by grabbing control, the pluralistic compact will either fight back or collapse.[17]

Pluralism demands a high degree of tolerance on the part of everyone. It does not require agreement with other points of view nor, strictly speaking, respect, though these will make tolerance easier to practice. Pluralism is simply the recognition that everyone has a right to her opinion, that every worldview has a right to a place at the table. Abolarin posits that:

> No man is an Island and so no religion is one. The adherents of these three religions live side by side in Nigeria. Critically observing the situation of Nigeria as a nation, it can be concluded that it is a heterogeneous society characterised with the issue of religious worship and belief which give rise to interaction between the three religions. In a multi-religious society, religious is not only necessary but compulsory if peace would be attained.[18]

Onimhawo and Ottuh equally asserts that:

> Inter-religions relations imply possible and practicable cordial relationship that exists between religions in a society. In other words, it means the peaceful co-existence among the adherents of different religions especially in a given society. However, it will be an expanding effort at interfaith dialogue (harmony), relations and working together, tolerance and acceptance that will be the true sign of a new era in the religious history of humanity. Interfaith has nothing to do with the development of some new religion. Interfaith dialogue is a concept that seeks a common ground on which diverse traditions can meet in mutual respect and sharing. It is not

> instead of our traditions, but in addition. It is a way to come to know people of other traditions and understand their perspective on various issues- to explore one mountain through many paths.[19]

Inter-religions relations may be considered a challenge to one's faith but one cannot run away from such a challenge. Through this challenge, we may find that our faith can grow. Most adherents may force this challenge upon themselves considering it to be a very rational observation, that is, one which may turn them around from believing that their religion is the only right one and been unable to acknowledge that there is truth in all other religions. On the contrary, they should be able to contemplate that if these other religions have survived for thousands of years and are followed by hundreds of millions, even a billion people, there must be some truth in them; if not, they would not have spread and lasted to date. It is a truism that learning about other people's religions can lead to a greater understanding of religious truth. In addition, an understanding of other beliefs can help strengthen one's own faith when one realizes how strongly people disagree with the other beliefs. Also, an understanding of other people's faiths can aid in one's relations with people of different world view about the world, God and the nature of humanity.[20] And so the process of interaction will definitely produce an effect on both parties involved. When two or more religions interact, they are all affected, because there would be exchange of ideas, goods and services.

Peace and Harmony

It is pertinent to look at the concept of peace vis-a-vis Harmony because Harmony is synonymous with peace, accord, unity and agreement. Therefore, the word peace and harmony is used interchangeably. Unity refers to the state of being in full agreement or condition of harmony.[21] It can be defined as the state or fact of being one; oneness; one single thing; something complete in itself or regarded as such; the state of being united.[22] In this context, it refers to the stability of a nation in all its areas of endeavour, e.g. political, social, economic, religious etc. Peace is often seen as the absence of war, and by logical extension, war is the absence of peace.

This perspective of peace is faulty because it really does not say anything about the meaning of peace.Eugenia citingIbeanuhas however attempted to explain peace in sociological terms as a condition of social harmony in which there are no social antagonisms. In other words, peace is a condition in which there is no social conflict and people are able to meet their needs, aspirations and expectations. Peace in this sense can be explained from the perspective of structural functionalism. Structural functionalism is a tradition of social analysis that sees society as a mosaic of functions and structures that perform them.[23]

For example, in order to survive, a society needs to educate its children, produce goods, govern its affairs and provide security for its members. These are functions which necessitate a number of structures such as: schools, industries, parliaments, courts, armed forces, etc. to perform their roles. Understandably, when these structures perform their roles or functions properly, there is order in society and in fact, the society inherently

moves in the direction of order and stability. Consequently, from a structural-functionalist perspective, peace is achieved where existing social structures perform their functions adequately, supported by the requisite culture, norms and values.[24]

In broadening the definition of peace, Galtunghad earlier outlined two dimensions of peace. The first is negative peace, that is the absence of direct violence, war and fear of the individual, nation, region and indeed at the international levels; the second dimension is positive peace which is the absence of unjust structures, unequal relationships, justice and inner peace of the individual. In sum, we can conceive peace to be the absence of fear, conflict, anxiety, exclusion, deprivation or suffering and violence. It is primarily concerned with creating and maintaining a just order in society.[25] Eugenia citing Galtung, has stated inter alia that:

> Peace and indeed peace theory is intimately connected not only with conflict theory, but equally with development theory. Therefore, a peace research must be one that looks into the conditions past, present and future for the realization of peace which is intricately connected with conflict research and indeed development research. Violent conflicts, whether social, political or environmental have seriously contributed to the crisis situation in terms of loss of human and material capital. Nigeria in the last decade especially has experienced the breach of peace from the six geopolitical zones: (a). North-Eastern States of Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe. (b). In the North-West States of Kaduna, Katsina, Kano, Kebbi, Sokoto, Jigawa and Zamfara. (c). The North-Central States of Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger and Plateau including the FCT which is not a state. (d). The South-Western States of Lagos, Ekiti, Oyo, Osun, Ondo and Ogun too have at one time or the other during this period witnessed conflicts. (e). In the South-South States of Akwa-Ibom, Cross River, Edo, Delta, Rivers and Bayelsa, the experience has not been any different. f. The South-Eastern States of Anambra, Imo, Ebonyi, and Abia have equally had their own share of violent conflicts.[26]

Ekwue opines that, all these violent conflicts have contributed to the state of underdevelopment in Nigeria and has also affects good governance in Nigeria. There has been loss of lives, livelihoods, destruction of infrastructure and natural resources, employment opportunities which coincides directly with a weakened social safety net and a decline in the capacity of the state to provide services such as: health, education and indeed security for the people. In a sentence, the peace and security and indeed wellbeing of the people of Nigeria has been seriously compromised. However, whatever name or terminology is used by religion for it, it signifies ''wholeness''. That is, total well-being. Every religion, in its own way claims a transcendental origin. Thus, the basis of what religion has to say about peace. Every religion has been described in terms of the way, path, or a system of path or way pointing away from man towards the fulfilment of a goal, harmony, integration and wholeness.[27]

On the point of peace, Idowu posits that, the message of every religion is that peace in man or in society is disrupted when man forgets that he is a being-in-relation, over emphasizes or exaggerates his personal autonomy; when he forgets that he was made to live selfishly and in conformity to the basic norm which established, maintains, and promotes shalom... peace in religion is not an abstract concepts; nor a mere sentiment. It is an urgent matter of life or death. It is to be bought, pursued, achieved, attained, and maintained.[28]

Good Governance

The growing global recognition and awareness of essence of good governance is almost being generally perceived as a catalyst for economic, social and political development in all nations.[29] Fakuyama sees Governance as a government's ability to make and enforce rules and to deliver service, regardless of whether that government is democratic or not.[30] Governance refers to "all processes of governing, whether undertaken by a government,market or network, whether over a family, tribe, formal or informal organization or territory and whether through laws, norms, power or language."[31] It relates to "the processes of interaction and decision-making among the actors involved in a collective problem that lead to the creation, reinforcement, or reproduction of social norms and institutions."[32] Generally, governance, according to the World Bank Report (1989) is the exercise of political power in the management of a nation's affairs. This definition thus implies that governance encompasses the state's institutional and structural arrangements, decision-making processes and implementation capacity, and the relationship between the governing apparatus and the governed-that is, the people in terms of their standard of living.

> Alamu asserts that: governance is generally defined as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social development. As a matter of fact, not every governance of a country is good. To assess therefore, the tenability of good and bad governance in a country, one must compare and consider the vitality of political and economic plurality which enhances choices made by the masses, but also the level of transparency and accountability.[33]

By extension, justice equitable allocation of scarce resources, organizational goals, all-encompassing and all-embracing conditions of political harmony are the condiments that favour governance. In the same development, bad governance has been described as, the poor management and low level of development in the developing world, and the literature on poverty and development has been enhanced globally on what good governance entails and the ethical problems encountered by administration in many countries enthroning it.Governance is the attainment of any worthwhile governmental objective which can only be possible in an environment devoid of rancor, ill-will, strife, struggle and disdain. Thus, good governance is a *sine qua non* for achieving functional and result-oriented goals, with the resultant overriding need, extending the frontier of welfares of the government of the governed.[34]

Governance typically emphasizes leadership which suggests the way political leaders who are the apparatus the state, use or misuse power, to promote social and economic development or to engage in those agendas that largely undermine the realization of the good things of life for the people. Good governance is in tandem with democratic governance which is largely characterized by high valued principles such as: rule of law, accountability, participation, transparency, human and civil rights. These governance qualities have the capacity to provide the development process of a country.[35] Speaking in Nairobi, Kenya, in August 2006, U.S. Senator Barack Obama pointed out that: " for all the progress that has been made, the African continent generally has not yet created a government that is transparent and accountable, one that serves its people and is free from corruption which undermines the governance process." Indeed Obama further noted that: Governance in Africa is crisis ridden and it is a crisis that is robbing honest people of the opportunities they fought for. Corruption erodes the state from the inside out, sickening the justice system until there is no justice to be found, poisoning the police forces until their presence becomes a source of insecurity rather than a source of security. In the end, if the people cannot trust their government to do the job for which it exists, to protect them and to promote their common welfare, all else is lost.[36]

Governance or its absence has not been able to provide the people of Nigeria and Africa generally public goods of: health care, education, clean water, electric power, physical security, a salutary environment, and decent transport infrastructure.Euginia further makes reference to: (a) Onifade (2011) who posed a critical question as to whether it's possible to have good governance without good leadership. The understanding of reality points to the fact that the former is logically derived from the latter because where there is effective and efficient leadership, there is bound to be good governance. (b) Achebe (1983) had argued convincingly in his seminal book, 'The Trouble with Nigeria', that the failure of leadership to rise to its responsibility and the challenges of personal exemplary life clearly shows why the nation has the problem of true leadership. It is exemplary leadership that can uplift the people, better the lives of the citizenry and see that the people as much as possible enjoy the public resources without ado as is the case in most advanced democracies such as the United States, Canada, Switzerland and some upcoming developing nations such as Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan and Korea. (c) Theoretical explanations have been advanced by scholars like, Migdal (1988) andZartman (1995) about the fact that, in the absence of good governance, a nation may experience state collapse or failure. This has been the lot of most African countries including Nigeria where lead governance has held sway. A state ideally is meant to be an organization, composed of several agencies led and coordinated by the state leadership (executive authority) which has capacity and authority to make and implement the finding rules for all the people and applying force if necessary to have its way. (d)Zartman (1995) specifically notes that the status of a state is reviewed as failed or collapsed when it exhibits inability to fulfill the functions of a state such as the sovereign authority, decision-making institution and security guarantor for its population. This can lead to structure, authority (legitimate power), law and political order falling apart.[37]

Religion and Politics: Nigeria Experience

Nigeria is a country where religion thrives in the form of Christianity, Islam and African indigenous religion. Both the governed and the governor claims to be an adherent of one religion and the other. Since most public officers claim to be either Muslims or Christianity they are usually sworn with the Holy Quran or the Holy Bible as they subscribe to the Oaths of Office and Allegiance. In view of this, it is expected that the public officers and political office holders will be guided by a high ethical conduct and prudency in the management of state affairs.[38] Religion has been an indispensable phenomenon in Nigeria. It had become an important factor in political discourse. The influence of religion is not only limited to politics but its power influences virtually all other facets of life. Political power affects economic prosperity, social relation, educational advancement, and the psyche of the society.[39]

The Pervasiveness of religion in Nigeria's national political life has made some scholars to argue that religion has subsumed and subordinated other primordial and class contradictions. Therefore, rather than been a socio-political asset, religion has become a millstone, a potential source of conflicts and instabilities. Political actors have turned religious terrain into battle grounds for contesting perceived marginalisation and to gain political recognition, ascendance and support from their communities but never as instrument of service. The politicisation of religion for group and individual gains has been a careful and calculated means of survival for some opportunistic politically ambitious elite.[40] Usually, there are three ways in which religion can influence politics, namely, by the direct involvement of religious men in politics, by fusing the two (religion and politics) as one and by subjecting politics or government to the doctrine or laws of religion, thereby carrying out politics or governance along the line of religious doctrine, ideals or laws.[41] All these are obvious in Nigerian politics and this makes religion and politics inseparable.

Religion and religious conflict have long been part of Nigerian politics and public life. Religion can bring aboutsustainablepolitical development through the inculcation of high sense of morality, sense of duty, selfless service, public accountability, respect for human lives, love of one's neighbour, sense of humanity, abhorrence of violence, love for peace, contentment with what one can legitimately have, corruption, justice etc. in the citizens as well as the leaders.[42] If a religion fails to inculcate a sense of morality in the people, then it has failed in its creed and is not in a position to help bring about good governance and sustain political development in a country where it has failed to raise the moral standard of the people. Adherence to religious tenets by the leaders and followers will greatly enrich political activity. Embedded in each religion are the beliefs, practices and ethics that serve as check for excesses in human behaviour. Thus, values in religion are viable mechanisms for political stability and development. In addition, religion can function as a unifying factor for political development, since religion influences every aspect of human lives and serves as a basis for human existence.

The Need for Inter Religious Harmony in Nigeria

In spite of Gowon's post war economic and political programmes of reconciliation, reconstruction and rehabilitation on the administrative canvas, religion was becoming tenuous between Christians and Muslims so much that it was threatening to lead the nation into the brink of bloodshed and collapse.[43] The government has set up series of committees of inquiry on the crisis nationwide and formed different Council on Religious Matters in States and Federal level like the establishment of Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) for the purpose of achieving peaceful co-existence among people of different religious backgrounds in Nigeria. It was established on September 1999 to provide religious leaders and traditional rulers with a variable forum to promote greater interaction and understanding among the leadership and their followers as well as lay foundation for sustainable peace and religion harmony in Nigeria.[44] But this monster is still alive, therefore, inter religious harmony is necessary for the following reasons:

1. It would lead to the deeper appreciation of other religions and deepens a participant's commitment to his or her religion. Therefore, religious tolerance would be attained.
2. Careless and provocative utterances would be avoided if inter religious harmony is given a chance.
3. It would promote peace, friendship and discourage violence in the society, thereby, allowing good governance.
4. The harmony of the three religions would uncover areas of differences and how to avoid offending each other.
5. It helps Christianity for example, to produce a theology to account for religious pluralism.[46]

Recommendations

From all the foregoing anomalies, it is apparent that there is deficit in the governance process. However, to have a panacea in Inter-religious harmony to enhance good governance in Nigeria, the following areas must be put in place:

1. The truth of each religion may be preached by their respective propagators without a compromise that can lead to syncretism, complacency and apostasy. In this regard, an ideal perspective in the current debate on inter-religious harmony in Nigeria should be for such religion to teach their truths absolutely but should be disciplined and understanding enough to allow for the freedom of adherents of other religions to propagate in the same way without clashes or questioning.
2. Unification theology which teaches that all religions are essentially the same and should be concretized is equally unhelpful in this regard. The road towards religious peace and harmony is therefore basically sociological rather than religious or spiritual. It is dependent on Nigerian's recognizing the equal rights of fellow Nigerians in the society as stipulated by the constitution.[47]
3. The culture of retaliation and revenge should be replaced with Paul's injunction in the Bible which says:

> Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalth heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Violence will continue to beget violent therefore, all religious groups should value life and desist from retaliating any evil against them.

1. In both the Muslim and Christian tradition, there exist deep spiritual heritages. Dialogue can exist at this level. Muslims and Christians can share their religious and mystical experiences with each other. Muslims can learn from Christians as well as Christians learning from Muslims. This will help to clarify the false positions held by both Nigerian Muslims and Christians: the Muslims in Nigeria would say Christians bow and worship images; and Christians accuse the Muslims of bowing and worshipping a stone. The proposal of the researchers is that, both Muslims and Christians Should be open to receive each other in their place of worship.
2. A loving spiritual approach should also be adopted. Divine love is uncaused and unselfish. Love between people of different religions could prohibit their antagonizing or hurting each other. Rather they could be challenged to cooperate for the collective good of all. This free spirit would not give room for unhealthy competition and rivalry of religions for dominance over the others. It is noteworthy however that this ideal may appear utopian and may not be taken for granted especially in contemporary Nigeria where the inter-religious gap is widening with time.[48]
3. Nigeria is a multi-ethic nation endowed with human and natural resources. From one era of leadership to another this multi ethnicity has been used to divide the people. Socialism will be an added advantage to reduce internal divisions that have given the advanced world the privilege to plunder the wealth of the continent and have a formidable force to fight their common enemies. This will make the various governments to implement the land reform policy.[49]
4. Religion can boost inter-religious dialogue which can ultimately bring about religious tolerance in the society. Inter-religious dialogue is a platform where religious leaders discuss and orientate people about the essence of religion and its efficacy in the society. Hence, it is important for religious leaders to guide against hypocritical teaching that can disrupt peace and political stability. Therefore, exchange of ideas removes ignorance and eliminates religious conflicts. Also, the observance of the oath of office by the political leaders will sustain political development. Political office holders should allow their religious tenets to guide them continuously.[50]
5. The only way religion can have a positive influence on governance is through the inculcation of a high sense of morality, honesty, sense of duty, selfless service,

public accountability, respect for human lives, love of one's neighbor, sense of humanity, abhorrence of violence, love for peace, contentment with what one can legitimately have, corruption, justice etc. in the citizens as well as the leaders.[51] If a religion fails to inculcate a sense of morality in the people, then it has failed in its creed and is not in a position to help bring about good governance and sustenance of political development in the country.

6. The government should give more power to the National Religious Advisory Board and the Nigeria Inter-religious Council in promoting inter-religious dialogue and religious tolerance through organizing seminars and workshops for religious adherents which will help in building sustainable political development. Haynes argues that when interfaith dialogue is skillfully organized and pursued, it can encourage those who have personally involved in conflict to work together towards peace accommodation.[52]

Conclusion

The writers of this paper have argued that Inter-religious harmony serves as a panacea for good governance in Nigeria and that it is also a critical element for peace, security, and sustainable development. More so, that religion has been used and is still being used to induce violence and has caused stunted growth to our political stability and sustainable development. The relationship between religion and politics in any society should be mutual, and if properly managed, bring about tranquility and development. On the other hand, if the relationship is not properly managed, it could generate conflict. This is because religion is about personal experience and access to divine powers, while politics is all about gaining political power for personal reasons. Since these are mutually and exclusively related, there is constant need for symbiotic relationship. Hence, religion can either bring conflict or peace, development or destruction, growth or retardation, stability or instability, security or insecurity. It depends on how it is made use of along with politics. The mixing of both religion and politics is not a problem, but the level of moral standard, patriotism towards the country and proper understanding of religion are the determining factor.[53]

Endnotes

[1]. Wilbur. O'Donovan, *Biblical Christianity in Modern Africa.*(UK: Paternoster Press, 2000), 2.
[2]. Celestina O. Isiramen, (eds.) *Religion and the Nigerian Nation: Some Topical Issues.* (Ibadan: En-Joy
Press & Books, 2010), xv.
[3].OluwaseunOlawaleAfolabi, The Role of Religion in Nigerian Politics and its Sustainability for Political
Development. *Net Journal of Social Sciences Vol. 3(2) {May 2015}: 42-49.*
[4].Cyril O.Imo, "Religion and Democratisation in Nigeria." In *Issues in the Practice of Religion in Nigeria,*
edited by Yahya, M.T. (Ilorin: Decency Printers & Stationeries Ltd, 2006): 1.
[5]. DanoyeOguntolaLaguda, *Religion and Politics in a Pluralistic Society: The Nigerian Experience.* Politologie Des Religions No 2/2008 : 123. Vol II.

[6]. OgundiyaIlufoyeSarafa, "Religious Ideals and Responsible Leadership: The Shepherd Model and Lessons for Nigeria's Fledging Democracy." *Current Research Journal of Social Sciences 2(4) {September 2010}: 242-248*
[7]. *ibid*
[8]. George-Genyi M.Euginia, "Good Governance: Antidote for Peace and Security in Nigeria." *European Journal of Business and Social Sciences, vol.2. No. 2, {May 2013}: 56-65.*http://www.ejbss.com/recent.aspx {accessed August15, 2015}.
[9]. Benjamin Chijioke Ekwue, "Utilization of Religion for Unity in Nigeria." In *Issues in the Practice of Religion in Nigeria,* edited byYahya, M.T. (Ilorin: Decency Printers & Stationeries Ltd.2006): 40-41.
[10]. John Bowker, *World Religion.* (New York: Dorling Kinderslay, 1997), 6-9.
[11]. *ibid*
[12]. N. O. Anthony, *Politics and Religious Intolerance: The Nigeria Experience.* (Enugu: Spiritan Publications, 1992), 5
[13]. Benjamin ChijiokeEkwue, "Utilization of Religion for Unity in Nigeria." 40
[14]. Friday J. Imaekhai, "The Importance of Religion in the Nigeria Society." In *Religion and the Nigerian Nation: Some Topical Issues,* edited byIsiramen, Celestina O. (Ibadan: En-Joy Press & books, 2010): 27.
[15]. Jan. H Boer, *Christians and Muslims: Parameters for Living Together. Studies in Christian-Muslim Relations- Volume 8, part 2.*(Jos: Honey City Press, 2009), 73.
[16]. A. Nickles, "Religion in a Pluralistic Society", in J.S. Pobee, (Eds.). *Religion in a Pluralistic Society.*(London: E.J Brill, 1976), 157.
[17]. Jan. H Boer, *Christians and Muslims:* 74.
[18]. Isaac A. Abolarin, "Inter-Religious Dialogue as a Means to Enhance Peace in Nigeria." In *Igbaja Journal of Theology Vol.1 No.1 2014:157-158.*
[19]. Onimhawo, J.A & P.O.O. Ottuh. "An Exploration of Inter-Religions Relations in Nigeria: The Christian-Muslim Experience." In *Issues in religious Studies and Philosophy,* edited byIsiramenCelestina O. (Ibadan: En-Joy Press &Books, 2010), 85-86.
[20]. *ibid*
[21]. A.S. Hornby, Oxford *Advance Learner's Dictionary of Current English.* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 924
[22]. Merriam Webster, Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Mobile Application Version 2.0, 2015
[23]. George-Genyi M.Euginia, "Good Governance: Antidote for Peace and Security in Nigeria."
[24]. *ibid*
[25]. J. Galtung, ''Cultural Violence'' In *Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 27 No.3.* 1990 See also, Galtung, J. 1991. ''Violence and Peace'' In Paul Smoker, R. Davis and B, Munske, ed., *A Reader in Peace Studies.* Oxford: Pergamin Press, 1991
[26]. George-Genyi M.Euginia, "Good Governance: Antidote for Peace and Security in Nigeria." 59.
[27]. Benjamin ChijiokeEkwue, "Utilization of Religion for Unity in Nigeria." 43.
[28].Bolaji E. Idowu, ''Religion on Peace.' In *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies 5:2* 1971:83-92.
[29]. A.E. Davis, "Reflections on the Imperative of Transparency and Accountability for Good Governance." *Ilorin Journal of Business and Social Science*, vol. 8, No 1 & 2, 2003:1.
[30]. FrancisFukuyama, ''what is Governance?''*Center for Global Development working Paper* 314.Washington, DC 2013, 3.http://www.cgdev.org {accessed August15, 2015}.
[31]. Mark Bevir, Governance*: A very short introduction.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013, 20.

[32]. Marc Hufty, "Investigating Policy Processes: The Governance Analytical Framework In Wiesmann, U., Hurni, H., et al. (eds). *Research for Sustainable Development: Foundations Experiences and Perspectives."* Bern: Geographical Bernensia, 2011: 403-424.
[33]A. G. Alamu, *God and Governance: A Christian Appraisal of Contemporary Nigerian Political Situation.2005: 114*
https://unilorin.edu.ng/publications/alamu/God%2520And%2520Governance (accessed August15, 2015).
[34]. *ibid*
[35]. George-Genyi M.Euginia, "Good Governance: Antidote for Peace and Security in Nigeria." 59
[36]. *ibid*
[37]. *ibid*
[38]. OgundiyallufoyeSarafa, "Religious Ideals and Responsible Leadership: The Shepherd Model and Lessons for Nigeria's Fledging Democracy." *Current Research Journal of Social Sciences 2(4) (September 2010): 242-248.*
[39]. OluwaseunOlawaleAfolabi, "The Role of Religion in Nigerian Politics and its Sustainability for Political Development." *Net Journal of Social Sciences Vol. 3(2) (May 2015): 42-49*
[40]. OgundiyallufoyeSarafa, "Religious Ideals and Responsible Leadership''
[41]. J. I. Omoregbe, "Religious Ideals and the Question of Governance in Africa." In *Philosophy, Democracy and Responsible Governance in Africa, ed.*, Ogucjiofor, J.O. (Brunswick & London: Transaction Publishers, 2003), 309.
[42]. *ibid.*
[43]. M. FehintolaAkangbe, ''Religious Crises in Nigeria: A Historical Survey From 1980-2009.'' In *UMCATC Journal of Theological Studies Vol.7 (October 2010):140-141.*
[44]. S. O. David Awokoya, ''Inter-Religious Dialogue as a Tool for Sustaining Peace and Unity in Nigeria.'' In *Igbaja Journal of Theology Vol.1 No.1 2014:51-52.*
[45]. Isaac A. Abolarin, "Inter-Religious Dialogue as a Means to Enhance Peace in Nigeria." 163-4
[46].OlugbengaOlagunju, ''Pauline Concept of Agape: It's Implication for Religious Peace and Harmony in Africa.'' In *UMCATC Journal of Theological Studies Vol.10 (July) 2013:132-136.*
[47]. *ibid*
[48]. Olukayode J.Adeogun, ''The Relevance of Biblical Theology in Nigeria in the 21st Century.'' In *West African Association of Theological Institutions.ed.*Ango, Samuel. P and J.D Adewale.(WAATI Nigeria Zone) 2006 and 2007 Papers. (Ilorin: Modern Impressions, 2008): 139.
[49].OluwaseunOlawaleAfolabi, "The Role of Religion in Nigerian Politics and its Sustainability for Political Development." 47-8.
[50]. J. I. Omoregbe, "Religious Ideals and the Question of Governance in Africa."
[51]. Haynes (2009:68) Haynes, J. 2009. *Conflict, conflict resolution and peace-building: The role of religion in Mozambique, Nigeria and Cambodia. Commonwealth and Comparative Politics, 47(1) 2009:52-75.*
[52]. OluwaseunOlawaleAfolabi, "The Role of Religion in Nigerian Politics and its Sustainability for Political Development." 47-8.

`Bibliography

Abolarin, Isaac A. Inter-Religious Dialogue as a Means to Enhance Peace in Nigeria. In Igbaja *Journal of Theology Vol.1 No.1 2014:157-158.*

Adeogun, J. Olukayode. "The Relevance of Biblical Theology in Nigeria in the 21st Century."In *West African Association of Theological Institutions.ed.*Ango, Samuel. P and J.D Adewale.(Nigeria Zone) 2006 and 2007 Papers. Ilorin: Modern Impressions, 2008.

Afolabi, OluwaseunOlawale."The Role of Religion in Nigerian Politics and its Sustainability for Political Development."*Net Journal of Social Sciences Vol. 3(2){May 2015}: 42-49*

Akangbe, M. Fehintola. Religious Crises in Nigeria: A Historical Survey From 1980-2009 In *UMCATC Journal of Theological Studies Vol.7 {October 2010}:140-141.*

Alamu, A. G.*God and Governance: A Christian Appraisal of Contemporary Nigerian Political Situation.* *2005* https://unilorin.edu.ng/publications/alamu/God%2520And%2520Governanvce{accessed August15, 2015}.

Anthony, N.O. *Politics and Religious Intolerance: The Nigeria Experience.* Enugu: Spiritan Publications, 1992.

Awokoya, S. O. David. "Inter-Religious Dialogue as a Tool for Sustaining Peace and Unity in Nigeria." In Igbaja *Journal of Theology Vol.1 No.1 2014:51-52.*

Bevir, Mark.*Governance: A very short introduction.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Boer, Jan. H. *Christians and Muslims: Parameters for Living Together. Studies in Christian-Muslim Relations- Volume 8, part 2.* Jos: Honey City Press, 2009.

Bowker, John. *World Religion.* New York: Dorling Kinderslay, 1997.

Davis, A.E. "Reflections on the Imperative of Transparency and Accountability for Good Governance", Ilorin *Journal of Business and Social Science*, vol. 8, No 1 &2, 2003:1.

Ekwue, Benjamin Chijioke.Utilization of Religion for Unity in Nigeria. In *Issues in the Practice of Religion in Nigeria, ed.*Yahya, M.T. Ilorin: Decency Printers & Stationeries Ltd, 2006: 40-1

Euginia, George-Genyi M. Good Governance: Antidote for Peace and Security in Nigeria. *European Journal of Business and Social Sciences, vol.2. No. 2, {May 2013}: 56-65.*http://www.ejbss.com/recent.aspx {accessed August15, 2015}.

Fukuyama, Francis.*"What is Governance?"*Center for Global Development working Paper 314. Washington, DC 2013: 36. http://www.cgdev.org {accessed August15, 2015}.

Galtung, J. "Cultural Violence" In *Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 27 No.3.*1990 See also Galtung, J. "Violence and Peace" In Paul Smoker, R. Davis and B, Munske, ed., *A Reader in Peace Studies.* Oxford: Pergamin Press, 1991

Haynes, J. *Conflict, conflict resolution and peace-building: The role of religion in Mozambique, Nigeria and Cambodia. Commonwealth and Comparative Politics, 47(1) 2009:52-75.*

Hornby, A.S.*Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary of Current English.*London: Oxford University Press, 1974

Hufty, Marc. "Investigating Policy Processes: The Governance Analytical Framework. In:Wiesmann, U., Hurni, H., et al. ed. *Research for Sustainable Development: Foundations, Experiences and Perspectives."* Bern: Geographical Bernensia, 2011: 403–424.

Idowu, E. Bolaji. "Religion on Peace", In *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies Vol.* 5:2 *1971:* 83-92

Imaekhai, Friday J.The Importance of Religion in the Nigeria Society. In *Religion and the Nigerian Nation: Some Topical Issues, ed.* Isiramen, Celestina O. Ibadan: En-Joy Press & books, 2010

Imo, Cyril O."Religion and Democratisation in Nigeria." In *Issues in the Practice of Religion in Nigeria, ed.*Yahya, M.T. Ilorin: Decency Printers & Stationeries Ltd, 2006.

Isiramen, Celestina O., (eds.)*Religion and the Nigerian Nation: Some Topical Issues.*Ibadan: En-Joy Press & Books, 2010.

Laguda, DanoyeOguntola. *Religion and Politics in a Pluralistic Society: The Nigerian Experience.* Politologie Des Religions No 2/2008.Vol II.

Nickles, A."Religion in a Pluralistic Society", in J.S. Pobee, ed. *Religion in a Pluralistic Society.* London: E.J Brill, 1976.

O'Donovan, Wilbur. *Biblical Christianity in Modern Africa.* UK: Paternoster Press, 2000.

Olagunju, Olugbenga. "Pauline Concept of Agape: It's Implication for Religious Peace and Harmony in Africa."In UMCATC *Journal of Theological Studies Vol.10 (July) 2013:132-136.*

Omoregbe, J. I."Religious Ideals and the Question of Governance in Africa." In *Philosophy, Democracy and Responsible Governance in Africa, ed.,* Ogucjiofor, J.O.Brunswick & London: Transaction Publishers, 2003:309

Onimhawo, J.A & P.O.O. Ottuh.An Exploration of Inter-Religions Relations inNigeria: The Christian-Muslim Experience. In *Issues in religious Studies and Pholosophy.ed.* IsiramenCelestina O. Ibadan: En-Joy Press &Books, 2010: 83-5

Sarafa, Ogundiyallufoye. Religious Ideals and Responsible Leadership: The Shepherd Model and Lessons for Nigeria's Fledging Democracy.*Current Research Journal of Social Sciences 2(4) {September 2010}: 242-248*

Webster, Merriam. 2015. Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Mobile Application Version 2.0