

RELIGION AND THE CHALLENGES OF FANATICISM IN NATION BUILDING

By

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Abstract

This paper investigates the challenges of forms of religious fanaticism in our society today. The culture of violence is a steadily growing social phenomenon in the entire world today. It is so bad that violence has metamorphosed into various shapes, forms and definitions. The expansion of the forms and methods of incubating, hatching, and generating violence across the global community has transformed it into criminality. From this stand point religious violence has assumed new forms and dimensions. Violence from the pulpit has been discovered to be so injurious to faith adherents but remained subtle and very damaging. The subtle nature of violence issuing out from the pulpit cannot be divorced from the naivety of religious worshippers. Men and women of God capitalize on this religious ambivalence and opportunity to unleash subtle violence on the psyche of unsuspecting worshippers. Over time, this privileged position of servants of God in various religions has become means of fulfilling self's interests especially, power, intimidation, wickedness and material acquisition. The security of lives and property should be high in the policies and programmes of any government in power. It then stands to reason that religious fanaticism is criminal, distasteful and retards national progress. The method of inquiry used in this piece is religious phenomenology. It tries to capture and explain the metamorphosis of religion in relation to its definition, understanding and practice. This work discovered that religious fanaticism begins with personal idiosyncrasies and uncontrolled passion for authority and wealth. This work is of the opinion that government of the day and recognized bodies like Christian Association of Nigeria, Catholic Bishops conference of Nigeria and Pentecostal fellowship of Nigeria should check the excesses of its clergy in parishes and formation houses while delivering ministerial, national and social duties.

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Introduction

Religion in Durkheim's sociological theory is a creation of society (1958). From this standpoint religion has been able to transform human society in many positive ways to include interlink between God and people He created, creation of moral standards as social laws, creation of functional relationship between state and religion. Others include economic well-being of some members of the state and as channels of job opportunities for many adherents of religion. This positive appraisal of nature of religion attracts many people to its side. Nation building becomes strong and expansive when fanaticism and other forms of anti religion are low. We intend to look at religion from the perspective of phenomenology, the science of experience. This reason is anchored on the fact that religion has been defined and re-defined many times by authorities either in theology, sociology, anthropology, psychology or philosophy. Our topic: Religion and the challenges of fanaticism in nation building implies that, we look in the direction of understanding religion from phenomenological background in Nigeria. Present day religion exhibits some kinds of existential realities which force any objective researcher to study religion in contemporary garments as a social force or phenomenon. Current happening in religion especially in its trajectories show a visible shift from original conception, role and focus to something showing series of influence from politics, economics and other influential or contending ideologies.

The phenomenological investigation into contending religious issues at stake underscores the interrogation into the role of fanatics in the contemporary perception of religion by the general public. Fanatical orientation is a negation of religion's value for freedom of worship, relationship, and association. Though it had its origin in Zealots in Ancient Israel, it nonetheless, shows cases of serious negative impact on contemporary religious practice. This negative influence has created serious security concerns for families, individuals, groups, governments and relatives. One of the shortcomings of religion is in the negative actions of its ministers and officials over the years. Men and women of God have steadily and unmindfully unleashed violence unto the congregation with little or no reaction from adherents. The non reactionary posture of the congregation arises from the fact that many believe that no one should question the

actions of men and women of God. This naivety has led to abuse of office and privilege of some servants of God. The work therefore discovers that violence comes to the congregation in forms of deceit, avarice, murder, wickedness, inciting comments, rape, greed and vocation truncation etc. Any act by men and women of God not in consonance with the commandments of God and provisions from the constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria, is criminal and a violent act.

Fanatical acts in religion show rejection and intolerance of other people's religious understanding by a fanatic. Fanatics are always overzealous about their cherished religious tenets and practices to the disadvantage of others in the society. It shows aversion to the spirit of tolerance and respect for the religions and the freedom of worship of other members of the public. The excessive practice of religion can lead one to challenges or disturb the freedom of worship of other people in the public in terms of using loud public address system during prayers and crusades. It can lead one to disturb public peace and movement by trying to block public road like one done by Shiites Muslims at Katsina, Kaduna and Abuja respectively. Another example is covering of public road by a Christian church along Lagos/Ibadan, express way during crusades and services ours. Any challenge from a different religion or non-Christian member of the church, can always lead to some degree of conflict ranging from physical to emotional conflicts.

This paper aims at pointing out the various forms and methods of religious violence and social implications coming out from it. The work will briefly look at the nature of religion and its appearance and subsequent interpretation of its activities by the Nigerian society and various worshipping communities in the present era. It tries to use religious phenomenology to interpret social phenomena of violence, fanaticism in nation building. A nation that has less fanatical religious orientation of her citizens will have freedom of worship. It will promote the secular state as specified in the constitution of the Nation. It can enhance communal living at inter communal and interstate levels respectively.

Definition of Terms

Religion: in the understanding of Arinze (1970:8) Religion could be defined subjectively and objectively. Subjectively, religion is the very consciousness of depending on a transcendent being and the very propensity

or inclination to exhibit cult or worship. Objectively, religion is a complex of truth, law and rites by which man is subordinated to the transcendent being.

Gedrat (1972:10) regards religion as the normative institution, which has several forms each of which has social implications. Kenny (1984: 111 – 128) defines religion as any system relating to man's ultimate values.

To Ekpunobi (1993:9) religion is the belief in and worshipping other than man which influences people's relationship with others. The author sees religion as expression of all religious activities of mankind which seeks to understand, relate with and attract all manners of favour from the dependable and more powerful supernatural beings through the channels of belief, tenets and liturgy. Favour seeking mankind looks for security of life and its propagation in regards to wealth, peace and progress while one earths life journey.

Duckheim (1948) defines religion as: unified system of beliefs and practice relative to sacred thing, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden, beliefs and practices which unites into a single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them.

According to Oxford dictionary, religion is the belief in and worshipping of a super human controlling power especially a personal God or gods.

Religious fanaticism: Wikipedia online dictionary defines religious fanaticism as uncritical zeal or with an obsessive enthusiasm to one's own or one's group's devotion to religion; it is following a set of rules even to extent of killing other individual.

Fanatic: *Wikipedia online dictionary* regards a fanatic as enthusiast, zealot, bigot, hothead, militant, devotee, a person showing more than ordinary support for adherence to or interest in a cause, point of view or activity.

Violence: advanced learners Dictionary (2006) understand violence as a violent behaviour that is intended to hurt or kill a physical or emotional force and energy vocation.

Insecurity: according to *Oxford online dictionary* insecurity is uncertainty or anxiety about oneself, lack of confidence. The state of being open to danger or threat: lack of protection.

National Development: in the opinion of Answers.com (2014) as cited in Ejikeme (2014) national development is the ability of a country to improve the social welfare of the people: for example, by providing social amenities like quality education, potable water, transportation, infrastructure and medical care.

Terrorism: *United States code of Federal regulations* (1996:2656F) defines terrorism as "the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives. Collins online English dictionary (7/12/2019) defines a terrorist as a person who uses violence, especially murder and bombing in order cause pain and injury to a person or group.

Religious fanaticism: According to this paper, religious fanaticism is a disturbance or negation of freedom of worship accorded citizens of any state by its social and constitutional laws by a fanatic or groups of religious bigots or fundamentalists. It is an infraction on the true nature of religious practice which allows for plurality of practice.

Vocation: The Igbo word for vocation is "*Okpukpo Oku*". When translated it means response to a divine call *Okpukpo*. Oku is different from ordinary or conventional call known to Igbo society. The difference is that it is a call which establishes an everlasting relationship between God and one being called. Unlike other social calls, divine call or vocation has serious implications for the respondent. It may mean embarking on a spiritual journey of uncertainties, a life full of sacrifice and rejection. This kind of call entails a form of kenosis and submission of will as supreme sacrifices. To *Wikipedia online dictionary* (8/12/2019), vocation means a call or summon. It is an occupation to which a person is specially drawn for which they are suited, trained or qualified. In the understanding of *Dubugue dictionary*, vocation is one's response to a call from beyond oneself to use one's strength and gifts to make the world a better place through service. *Meridian Webster dictionary* sees vocation as a summon or strong inclination to a particular state or course of action especially a divine call. Majority of the authorities cited above submitted that vocation is a divine call with response and responsibility.

Theoretical Frame work

This work adopts sociological and phenomenological approaches. The two theories relate and operate more frequently in human society such that they can be employed to address and explain such social problem as fanaticism of religion and insecurity. Theory of phenomenology allows worship as religious element or structure to be explained or analyzed or investigated objectively. This procedure can be employed to check and describe the personal and group experiences from a worshipping community.

This theory questions the role of religion in contrast to its truest nature and purpose especially in this contemporary era. The answer expected from this inquiry can explain why terrorism is the consequences of negative religion prevalent in Nigeria and other places in the world today.

Phenomenological theory adopted here explains how anti religious actions like fanaticism, terrorism and violence from the pulpit is a bye product of a misconceived religion in terms of practice in relation to the general public. Ways of explaining religion and its effects come from personal and public experiences. The practice of religion begins from personal encounter with the divine, public worship takes it from here. The history of Judaism, Islam and Christianity actually began with religious experience of the founders of these universal religions. Public participation or history of religious experience is what we call followership, adherents, Church and followers of the way.

The theory of phenomenology describes and explains religious attitude and practice of fanaticism in relation to present circumstance. Nation building evolves the collaboration of all facets of national life viz: security, good religious education, vibrant economy, sound education, efficiently judicial system and sincere political leaders. Religious bigotrous group like, Boko Haram can disturb national development if its threats against the nation is taking for granted.

To enclopedia.com sociological theory of religion seeks to understand humanly constructed aspects of religion in their social context. The enthusiasts of religion construct or develop a new way of practicing religion from their own personal interpretation contrary conventional liturgy, theology and hermeneutics. Human anti religious acts like terrorism, murder in the name of religion, faked miracles, priest craps and various forms of exploitation in religious garments are humanly made. This dangerous and

irreligious act portrays society's influence on religious practice and understanding.

Sociology theory employed in this work underscored sociology as the study of human relationships. It seeks to understand when and why people meet. Onu (2017) explains that sociological studies involve all aspects of human social behaviour, the usual and unusual, the conformist as well as the deviants; the impersonal and the personal (31). An individual's religious activity can be termed conformist when it is tailored forward social cohesion and compatibility. Social deviant actions like terrorism and others forms of religious extremism in society belongs to the categorization of deviance and non conformist social behaviour respectively. To Gells and Levine (1999) sociology investigates the relationship between groups in human society, how social structures and cultures are created on maintained or how change involves from within. Religion is a social structure with attendant rites and rituals which undergoes change due to pressure coming from outside and inside. These forms of social pressure undermine the natural purpose and objective of religion. These theories will no doubt help in explaining the connect or disconnect seen in practice of religion in nation building.

The Nature of Religion

Under covering the nature of religion is essential especially now that many adherents have begun to reinterpret the conventional understanding, practice and dedication of religion to human society. The idealistic disposition of religion makes it rather difficult to say specifically what religion really is. This stance does not suggest that we cannot create mechanisms of observation, relationship, intuition and rational judgment worthy to make valuable theory of knowledge about religion. Omoregbe (1999) suggests that historical approach to the study of religion can aid a researcher unravel the mystery surrounding religions. According to Omoregbe,

Religion is such a prominent feature in human society that it cannot be simply ignored. World history would not be complete without reference to religion, nor can the history of any nation be written without reference to its religion. Religion is as old as man on earth and will probably remain on earth for long as man remains on it. It has aided social progress, educational development, interpersonal and international cooperation as well as mutual understanding among people. On the other hand, religion has also been the underlying

force behind conflicts, civil as well as international wars, social stagnation or even retrogression, oppression, discrimination etc (p. 10.)

In Omoregbe's opinion, the nature of religion is a bipolar position. At one side, it unities and builds up and at the other side, it disunites and scatters people. There is another window in the understanding of religion namely, sociological perspective. Sociologists imply that religion can be approached by looking at its social roles, functions and connections with other social forces influencing social cohesion. Sociological perspective is related to historical process of religious identity. Both phenomenological science of experience and man's rational judgment help humanity understand the true nature of religion. Iheanacho (2016) explains that the nature of a thing, physical or ideological like religion, incorporates natural essences that can easily be distinguished, classified or judged according to its relation to other things. A well-established problem of religion in our world today is its pluralistic nature. This natural disposition of religion and its practices make religion very complex. Religion is a social phenomenon, a social ideology as well as a social structure. The complex nature of religion explains its multiple functions in human society's development. In nation building, religion acts as a powerful catalyst for social integration, obedience to common laws and the propagation of the nation's enterprise for unity and purpose. In our modern world, religious ideology has produced many channels or pathways of expressing human – divine relationship.

In the definition of *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* (2006) ideology is a set of beliefs, especially one held by group of people that influences the way they behave (p. 593). Ideology is synonymous with people's world views or theories of life. It is from this background that people develop economic, political, religious, social, scientific and technological ideologies that rule and influence the world today. Religious ideology for instance, created various ways of worshipping God or the pathways. Madu (1996) explains that religions sprung from existing diversity in human society such that reality is conceived from many variables, opinions, beliefs and experiences. To him therefore,

The fact that the different people answer different questions about reality is an indication that there is bound to be differences in religion, thus religious pluralism. In Nigeria, it is not difficult to isolate a Christian from Muslim or traditionalist since their dominant beliefs

betray them neatly in many spheres of life, and therefore, portrays religious pluralism in our nation. Religious pluralism implies that individual religious groups lay claim to some kind of truth (P 10).

Imo (1990) understands religious pluralism as a concept that has deeper meaning within the socio – political context especially as societies in transition are concerned. We may describe religious pluralism as the result of social transformations which gives rise to people of different beliefs, values and customs being brought together by the forces of history in social relationship.

Phenomenology of religion: A tool for interpreting modern religious practice

Any serious and sincere discussion on religion, fanaticism and security today will focus on the individual's perceptions as well as group judgments on the overall performance of religion in nation building. Religion as a social agent of transformation has played impactful roles in human society both in the negative and positive dimensions. Fortunately for us, these roles have been noticed by many adherents of religious pathways. *Google free encyclopedia* (2006) defines phenomenology as:

A study of experience and how we experience situations. It studies structure of conscious experience as experienced from a subjective or first person point of view, along with its intentionality. It then leads to analyses of conditions of the possibility of intentionality of motor skills, and habits, background social practices and, often language.

Experience of life events is both personal and collective. Religious experience contains personal and group stories or explanation as justifications. Religion is a social convention or force that is best judged from, personal attitudes, social connectivity and group collaboration. There is intentionality or ones motive or conviction in religious practice. Religion has natural attraction in itself which makes it easier for members of the society to accept its invitation or reject it. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2013) says: Phenomenology is the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first person's point of view. The central structure of an experience is its intentionality, its being directed towards something, as it is an experience of or about some object. An experience is directed towards subjects by virtue of its content or meaning (which represents the object together with

appropriate enabling conditions). Basically, phenomenology studies the structure of various types of experience ranging from perception, thought, memory, imagination, emotion, desire and volition to bodily awareness.

Heidegger (1977) held that, we and our activities are always in the world, our being is being – in the world so, we do not study our activities by bracketing the world, rather we interpret our activities and the meaning things have for us by looking at our contextual relations to things in the world (EI, 25, 27,28). Heidegger's position is that human activities are sources of our experience of the world. Meaning extracted from things of the world is part of human consciousness. No man can separate subjective perception from our knowledge of the world. By this consideration, phenomenology becomes an art or practice of letting things show themselves. This position encourages more authentic knowledge of something instead of speculation. Though it is descriptive in nature and application, it nonetheless speaks the truth or expresses reality about things being discussed or investigated.

Phenomenology of religion then analyzes religious practices as it presents itself in our contemporary experience. Madu (1997) elucidates further,

Phenomenology of religion therefore accepts as the subject matters of all its enquiry all data presented by religious beliefs, cults and morals. The business of phenomenology of religion is to make an analytic description of those data presented by different religious traditions in order to find out where they converge or separate (p. 58).

Phenomenology as presented by Madu is a critical tool to judge the performance of religion via its three cardinal or cores areas or focuses – tenets, cult or worships and morals or teaching/laws demanded by religion from its adherents. Madu (1997) argues further that phenomenological study of religion allows religious events, worships, belief (religious data) to speak for itself in a manner that leads to clarity of religious terms and inherent practice. In the understanding of Essien (1978) phenomenology is careful, analytic description of phenomenon or phenomena. It lets one to see that which shows itself (namely the phenomenon) by removing, as far as possible concealment, distractions and whatsoever else might prevent us from seeing the phenomenon as it actually gives itself (p. 12). The nature of religion therefore makes it to be interpreted variously as the next paragraph tries to elucidate. Ejizu does not sing a discordant tone here. He explains that,

phenomenology is helpful in revealing how the various aspects of a particular religion hang together, and permeate the various levels of social life (p. 17). Phenomenology then is vital and necessary as we investigate how far religion has impacted on the development and advancement of our nation, Nigeria. It will also underscore the import of religious worship in securing human life and as well as transforming citizens of the state. One thing the phenomenology of religion will discover is the place of fanaticism in religious practice.

Fanaticism in Religious Practice

In Aristotle's classification of virtues or good conduct, extremism is a vice while defect does not measure up the categorization of virtue. He further states that, virtue lies in the middle meaning that, anything good especially human social, conduct should be done such that they must not go contrary to social laws or below social expectation which he regarded as a defect (*Nichomachean ethics*)

Any social convention be it law, culture, tradition or education that runs contrary to general expectation of appropriate behaviour becomes a social menace or social problem so to speak. Religious and political fanaticisms are extreme cases and basically surface in religious practices and political expressions. This ambience may not be unconnected with the volatile nature of both religion and politics. Both ideologies speak to the feelings of humanity concerning immediate and future benefits in relation to security, material and spiritual benefits. Fanaticism is defined by *Advanced Learners Dictionary* (2006) as extreme beliefs or behaviour, especially in connection with religion or politics. Also, it denotes a fanatic as a person who is extremely enthusiastic about something. It identifies a fanatic as a person with extreme or dangerous opinions. (p. 421) Extreme opinion is an inverse of positive or balanced opinion about an issue, idea or phenomenon. It is a diversion in generally accepted ways of doing things which is heavily influenced by personal idiosyncrasies. Amalados (1995) identifies the root cause of fanaticism to a parochial mindset of an individual. He explains that,

Sometimes, people idealize a particular ideal into an ideology. The particular ideal is often good in itself. Social justice, ethnic identity, economic well-being, political freedom, defence of religion. To him, ideal is isolated and made into the only value worth pursuing. Every other value or ideal is subordinated to it. Every means to attain the goal becomes permissible. The end justifies the means. There is no

room for dissenters; they are done away with. This is how terrorist movements are born (p.112).

Fanaticism is therefore a religious craft by an adherent who intends to reinterpret religious ideal and worship the way it appeals to him or her. Serious efforts are deployed to bring this about. A religious fanatic cannot do it alone, he must make move to get public audience and sympathy, he must indoctrinate less foresighted and unsuspecting members of his religion, Naivety of mind is always the breeding ground of fanatics of religion. Many founders of religion like Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha, Confucius etc were regarded as fanatics and persecuted as such in their original religious climates or backgrounds.

Causes of religious fanaticism

There are many factors underneath religious fanaticism in Nigeria. The causative factors include political, religious, economic, idiosyncrasy, poor education and negative perception of another's religion.

Political factor: Religious fanaticism in Nigeria especially in Northern part has influence of politics in its uprising and utility. Politicians use their connections in religious sphere to get support and importance especially during periods of elections. Some religious extremists have support from political leaders both inside and outside. For instance, Boko Haram an Islamic religious fanatical group operating in the north East of Nigeria is said to be sponsored by Saudi Arabia. According to Ogundipe (2012) as quotes a spokesperson of Boko Haram who said that they receive monthly allowances from the then governors of Kano state, Ibrahim Shekarau and that of Bauchi State, Isa Yuguda. Even though political leaders in the affected Northern states may deny such allegation, because of social and political implication, the facts remains that people who engage in any form of religious extremism have people or leaders behind them. Religious roots in Nigeria have always had political and economic colorations.

Religious/ Doctrinal Reason: This is the foundation of many religious fanatical expressions in Nigeria; some religious bigots refuse to accept the freedom of other people to practice their religion in the same environment. This level of religious intolerance occurs among members of the same fate. Take for instance, the mutual suspicion between Shiites and Sumi Muslims in

Nigeria. There is doctrinal difference between Catholics and Protestants, and the conflicts between Christian and Muslims. There is one between foreign religions in Nigeria and traditional African worshippers.

Udoidem (1997: P 152-183) states that, Islamic philosophy divides the world into two camps believers and infidels. Infidels are to be humiliated, to be deprived of the due process of law and ultimately to be killed or converted as prescribed by the Holy Koran. For the Christians, Udoidem states also that basic belief of Christians is that the son of God is sent to redeem mankind and is the savior of the world. Christianity is the true religion and therefore, they seek to convert others to Christian religion so that they can attain salvation. Udoidem concludes that, these contradictory religious doctrines have practical implications in the relationship between Muslims and Christians.

Economic factor: lack of basic needs in life may directly and indirectly cause some form of religious antagonism or the other. People who have no genuine work to earn a living may become frustrated in life and thereby resort to religion for comfort. Things may not always go the way we plan. For Eze and Ngwu (2017), Dallard's et el (1939) aggression frustration theory can be used in this case. It states that frustration leads to aggression. Though some people neglect the applicability of this theory in all aggression cases, it stands then reason that the Almajiri in Northern part of Nigeria can be truly frustrated about life because of severe economic problems of food, security and shelter. To this effect, most of them are said to be used for religious riots or related anti social acts as burning of churches and destruction of public property.

Personal ambition: Ambition is an ardent desire for rank, fame or power. This culminates in dominance over others. Personal ambition is the psychological drive that influences a social religions problem like religious fanaticism or political violence. Linked to this is personal idiosyncrasy where by an individual makes effort to re-interpret common conventions of belief systems according to his or her personal ideas, perception or understanding. By any chance such individual mounts position authority either in church, mosque or any other social institution for that matter, the ambition will be put on test and eventually subvert social laws or religious tenets. Some leaders of Christian and Moslems fanatical groups possess this negative ideology to subvert true religion.

Poor Educational background: this is tied to the last reason that influences religious fanaticisms. Lack of adequate education which is key to enlightenment in our present age causes improper and one sided evaluation of issues set before an individual. Iloeje (2017:1-10) sees education as panacea to religious and other forms of terrorism in Nigeria. He says:

Education, tolerance, good governance, political stability, economic employment, equity and equality in distribution of national resources, certainly ranks high as panaceas to the menace and occurrence of terrorism in Nigeria. The bedrock to all the above listed panaceas is of course education and this is where liberal study like General studies becomes apt. Such a course will ensure that our Nigerian graduates acquire the intellectual capacities to understand appropriate and promote peaceful co-existence, mutual understanding and patriotism.

Offshoots of Religious Fanaticism

Religious fanaticism expresses itself in many negative acts, colours and behaviours. These include:

Hate Speech

Hate speech as the phrase implies, is expression of hateful feeling, antagonism, disregard and rejection by someone against another. It opens up the mind of the speaker on several issues agitating the mind. It is said that the mouth utters from the abundance of the mind. Without the unlocking of the mouth, the human mind or heart remains sealed and locked – up.

Deep expression of animosity and rejection, reveal to some extent, behaviour of someone. It can mean that a hate speaker is a psychopath, and social personality or a religious, political or cultural fanatic. When hate speech is acted out, the effect is very dangerous and very dehumanizing. Hate speech can culminate into terrorism, murder, deprivation, destruction of lives and property, destruction of religion and its practice etc. In the opinion of Martin Luther, King, as quoted by Nelson (1989), Hatred Paralyzes life: Love releases it, hatred confuses life, love harmonizes it, hatred darkens life; love illuminates it. Hate speech lacks any definition of love or relationship. Nelson (1989) teaches that,

The quality of how you relate is important. Ideally, in relationships, people strive to enhance each other through the giving, receiving and sharing of affection. Loving relationships do not just involve sharing

your strengths. They involve trying to confront and satisfactorily manage your own and others.

In the preface to Anthony Ekweunife's book (1992) "*Politics and Religious Intolerance: The Nigerian Experiences*", Chukwudum Okolo says, "Religion and politics blend well in an individual for man is both a religious as well as a political animal. Religion and politics are admittedly quite natural to man. But in concrete situations, in groups particularly in pluralistic societies, they usually fall apart. Religion often times turns out to be a divisible factor, a means of oppression and tragic intolerance among different ethnic groups. The degrees of intolerance and of subtle persecution usually manifest itself (p. 7). Hate speech is a negative and destructive language. Ezema and Udensi (2017) opine that language brings about cooperation while misuse of it brings confrontation (pp. 98 - 107).

Religious Intolerance

Religious intolerance is another aspect and expression of religious fanaticism. It is a serious threat to nation building and peaceful coexistence in a pluralistic society like Nigeria. Ekwunife (1992) holds that 'by religious intolerance, we mean a blind and fixated mental and psychological negative attitude towards religious beliefs and practices that are contrary to ones cherished beliefs and practices (p. 10). In Ekwunife's view, religious intolerance does not accept other contrary religious practice or view. This mental state becomes an attitude such that it sedates the individual by controlling both the psychological and mental powers of the person. Ezema and Udensi argue that language is so pervasive that humanity depends on it for its use. It is very essential in terms of birth, death and change. It can make or prevent wars. It can create understanding or inflame prejudice (pp. 78 - 107). Ibenwa and Iheanacho (2017) are of the opinion that those who propagate the crisis of religious intolerance in human society have not come to terms that religion is both a personal experience as well as a group activity. To them, a religiously intolerant person is not open to the reality that religion first and foremost is a personal thing, a personal experience of God by a follower. It deals strongly with emotions from the recesses of human desires and aspirations. On a second count, religious intolerance happen because religious leaders force or make their followers behave in a manner similar to their religious convictions (pp. 41. 53).

The submission of Ibenwa and Iheanacho (pp. 41-53) stresses the fact that ignorance plays a dominant role in a fanatic's understanding of the nature, role or objective of religion to human environment. Fanatical religious act expresses bias or parochial feelings and subsequent negative actions towards adherent of other religious systems.

Violence from Pulpit and its inflictions

The pulpit is the office or platform from which Christian Ministers and other church workers preach the word of God to the congregation or talk about God's kingdom. The message of salvation and what is expected from the listening audience spring up from here. After readings from the scripture, Christian adherents open up their minds and hearts to listen to what God has to say to them people through the priest or other men and women of God. At Jesus' congresses, people sat on the ground for this singular purpose. In our own era, we sit down on the pews in church and listen to homily from God's servants. To some extent, some exegeses from the sermons address some perennial issues affecting worshippers of God, and at some other time, what comes out from men and women of God from the pulpit creates social, psychological, spiritual and economic violence that leaves one surprised.

The violence coming out from the pulpit includes the following, hateful sermons, segregate homilies, and inciting comments. Other aspects of violence from the pulpit include actions from men and women in authority in religious formation houses, priests in parishes, and reverend sisters at convents. What about the violence at Pentecostal and evangelical churches when it comes to succession to church throne? Udegbumam (2017) explains the concept of violence this way,

Many scholars discuss violence in two broad types: direct and structural. However, a more detailed typology is adopted. They are physical, structural, psychological, cultural, environmental and spiritual violence. Physical violence could further be classified as either personal or mass violence. Personal violence are usually acts of violence committed in inter – personal relationships and may take the form of rape, robbery, attacks and beating. Fear of terrorist attacks makes many people to avoid public places especially places of worship in most countries grappling with terrorism. Students, who panic inside a lecturers office may be experiencing psychological violence (pp. 21 -40).

Udegbonam's submission has ex-rayed various aspects of violence in our society today. All these have multiplier effects on the people affected. Amaladoss (1995) underscored selfishness as the force behind most violent acts in human interrelations. He opines that "the reason for violence is rarely a passion for justice. Often it is selfishness, desire to dominate, envy, hatred, frustration (p. 106). He went further to assert that violence act against another happens because an individual considers another as insignificant and less value to himself or herself. This psychological disposition can account for the way and manner many officials of religion relates to members of their congregations. When someone considers himself or herself of having superior profession, physical strength, economic power, position, rational power and social status, the tendency to violate another's dignity begins to manifest.

Expulsion from Catholic seminaries convents and other formation houses

Expulsion is the official act of sending someone away from a group be it political, social, ecclesial, school or any similar organization for that matter. The act of expelling someone from a group is the natural function of the reigning authority. Some expulsions are based on reason, adduced by the management as contravening the status quo, stubbornness, disobedience, unproductiveness, quarrelsomeness. Other reasons may include intra – party quarrels, working against the aims and objectives of a particular group – that is being anti-group so to speak. There are other reasons that may occasion the sending out of a person from a group. These include personal grudges, wickedness, injustice, authority high handedness, bias, prejudice and hasty conclusion.

Some expulsions from Catholic seminaries, convents and other houses of formation more or less are based on personal reasons as mentioned above. God given vocations are treated with levity and bias. Most times flimsy reasons are given for a vocation to be terminated. Formators with low human engineering or mentorship faculty are put to forms would be servants of God. In this process a lot of damages are done to Priests and religious vocations.

We can only classify the above injustices as violence from the pulpit. It is more tormentous than other forms of violence. It has the same capacity and psychological damage and effect as terrorism in the north – east of Nigeria and other parts of the world. It has a lasting psychological, social and economic effect on those expelled.

This has lasted for such a long time in some Catholic formation house unchallenged. How rational is that for instance, out of twenty vocations only four will make the end. At times a whole set is lost to the careless administration of vocation handlers. What ironic practice! From practical evidence, in places of work including parishes "Bishop's boys or mother general's girls" are never the best everywhere. While men and women of God are busy condemning terrorism outside the walls of mosques and churches, they should look inwards. This is because psychological terrorism is being engaged between the formators and students, Bishops and the clergy, senior pastors and junior ones, church founders and the congregation and among members of a particular church group. All these groups of people engage in one form of psychological warfare or the other against another. It is violence from the pulpit.

Inciting comments: Religious leaders are also leaders of the people. Because of this, they must be careful about what they say regarding political, cultural, social and judicial processes of the land. During the last presidential election in Nigeria many clergy were seen and heard making inciting comments on some candidates. They however, showcased reasons why their chosen candidates were the preferred choice. Some of the inciting comments build up doubts and disenchantment in the minds of the electorates. The same scenario happened at Mosques on Fridays where Imams were understood to have preached in favour of a preferred candidate. The personal integrity of the other candidate was down played. Such subterfuge messages can be misunderstood generating polemics of interest which might open up violence. It can create religious intolerance. This may not be unconnected with religious wars fought in the country before now. Ekwunife (1992) elucidates. The seed of religious intolerance in Nigeria was quietly sown through the agencies of colonialism, Islam and Christianity. However at the time it was sown no one regarded it as a problem till late in history of this emerging nation (pp.18 - 19). Both Islam and Christian missionaries become their allies.

Now, some of these expressions have been found to be freely expressed by some men and women office who speak from the pulpit.

Religion and Approaches to religious fanaticism

Religious fanaticism casts lots doubt or creates negative perceptions upon true religious practice in our society today. Many are left in doubt as to the

way forward. Others ask the fundamental question, how has religion handled the issues of fanaticism within its fold. We shall attempt these questions with the believe that charity will come at the end. The following are therefore the steps taken by religion to address the perennial issues of fundamentalism among its adherents.

- a. **Peace Education:** Religion preaches peace to her followers. Islam for instance, is a religion of peace, Christianity anchors its basic tenets on love and peace. African traditional religions centers it believes and practice in justice brings peace to the people and society at large. Jesus, the founder of Christianity greeted his apostles and disciples this way; "Peace be unto you". He went on to call peace makers Sons of God. He regarded their mental disposition as "being happy". Some other places like Psalm 34:14, the Psalmist said "Never yield to evil, practice good, seek peace, and pursue it.

African religion is also a religion of peace because it tolerates the presence of other religions on its soil right from the time foreign religions like Islam and Christianity entered Africa. In the view of (Orji and Ezeme 2017), peace is of great value in our contemporary world. Peace education refers to teachings about peace, what it does, why it does not exist and how to achieve it. According to Hanis (2008), Peace Education is about empowering people with the skills, attitudes and knowledge. A religious fanatic needs peace education to co-exist with others in his immediate environment. Overzealous religious needs to accept the important of peace over conflict.

b. Prayer

To many conscious Nigerians, the problems created by religious fanatical groups like Boko Haram and those in Christian churches, can only be controlled and eliminated if the Nation resorts to prayer. This is because prayer is the key to problems as far as our faith in God Almighty can carry us. To some also, religious fanaticism is spiritual as well as psychological problem. Spiritual problems are better solved spiritually that is, going back to God on our knees for solution. It is the believe of Odoemene (2017) that through the instrument of prayer, one can ask God to interfere in the course of events, to maintain or bring harmony (pp 69 – 82). Prayers help to bring back dilapidated human situation like war, hatred, injustice and political exploitation of people.

In the same line of thought, Uche (2008. 100-116) explores the act of praying together in regard to common problems affecting very many people. He states that:

It is observed that adherents of religion have joined hand to rise against the exploitation in the society which the poor, the oppressed and the underprivileged groups prayed fervently against such vices as apartheid system, racism and other social discriminations which promoted social dichotomy. In this way, prayer becomes a connecting socio-religious factor used in championing the course of the oppressed, the weak and the poor in the society. (Pp 100-116)

Religion can use it very effective instrument "Prayer to God" to control religious fanaticism because God answers sincere prayers from His people.

Religion and nation building

Religion came on board human society as a social control mechanism. Essentially, it was created to unite various segments of human society in relation to God or gods and humans. It was created as a buffer against angry gods, goddesses and evil people looking for people to devour or diminish. It may not have been created to divide our peaceful world and terrorize us in every aspect of our lives. Iheanacho (2018) outlines the roles of religion in nation building. He itemized the roles of religion to nation building to include, intellectual formation of members of human society and economic well-being of religious worshippers (Pp. 8 - 16). In the understanding of Iheanacho (2018) religion in our present experience constitutes a means of economic empowerment to Nigeria and elsewhere in the world. He says, religion in our modern world has become a means of livelihood for many. It has become a lucrative means of livelihood. It boosts the economic well being of pastors, church workers and church owners.

Nation building or development is primarily focused on the citizen of the state. Other aspects of national development include advancement in science and technology, education, culture and social interaction, among others hybrids of development. When evaluated on value and most important to nation building, human formation and development come first and rank higher. Ajayi (1981) points out the function of religion to the development of man and society .He infers that, religion is a universal phenomenon which has exercised tremendous power on every society either

in Africa, Asia or Europe. It affects man's social customs, his behaviours, his ordinances and his day to day transactions (pp. 24).

Udezo (2007) argues that Christian theology serves the life and mission of the church on earth. Christian theology is the church's channel of explaining salvation as enunciated by its founder Jesus Christ. It explicates soteriology of Jesus in its context thereby providing salvation at the door steps of Christian believers. Udezo recognizes the synergy between Christian theology and national development thus – the linkage of theology and development raises a number of intriguing prospects and questions for church practice, as well as for theoretical reflection. The linkage introduces an additional aspect of power to development and that this is the power of belief and practice. Christian religion, we must note, insists that its ethos must regulate not only matters of salvation and moral development of its adherents, but also economic and social affairs (pp. 128 -144).

Iheanacho (2018: 8 – 16) believes that religion has contributed to human and national development in the contemporary era. He says: the visible appraisal of religion is in the act of or performance of religions activities. It begins with teaching on morality, hard work, ethics and the intellectual development of man. Ibenwa and Iheanacho (2017: 41 – 54) reinforces this opinion thus:

Religion can be measured through other valuable cognitive and thrust worthy means by the society and adherents of its many pathways. One sure way of accessing the role, importance and credibility of religion in our present enlightenment is to look at outcrops of its effect on the society in which it originated. Outcrop of its effects constitutes and measures its overall value. Proper application and utilization of the messages of religion in our society will make religion human's greatest companion in social cohesion, management of crisis, tolerance and display of filial to members of the society among other values of religion.

Fanaticism and National Development

Fanaticism is a negative, compulsive and overbearing religious practice. Negative religion is defined by Iheanacho (2018) as, the opposite of positive or friendly religion which promotes peace, tolerance and understanding among members of the complex human society. Negative religion incorporates hate speech, intolerance, discord, conflict and bias against other people who by one reason or the other belongs to another form of

religion or the same religion but adopts different liturgy in worship (pp. 8 - 16), Ejikeme (2018) sees terrorism as a potential threat to national development he argues that,

Terrorism is dangerous because apart from the wanton destruction of lives and properties, it creates a psychological trauma of living in fear and even of death in human society. It also creates an indoctrinated reason for action in a way that brings about twisted and left – wing ideologies. Another major danger is the idea that the younger generation of a terrorist infested country may overtime breed a generation of young people who see violence as normal way of life. (Pp 35 - 49)

Emesownm (2008) gave an insight into some causes of terrorism as a negative expression of religion, he asserts that,

Through history, the dimension of terrorism has been changing just as the reasons for carrying it out also change. Its cause might be political most potentially, economic, religious and in some cases, by the combination of these factors. Terrorism does not flourish or have the fertile ground to grow in societies where the governments have constant surveillance over their citizen and activities. (p. 4)

Findings

The following constitute the findings of this paper.

- (a) That religious fanaticism is a product of selfish religious bigots with hidden intentions.
- (b) Religious fundamentalism has political and economic colouration which must be distangled from religion.
- (c) Religious fundamentalism is insidious to the true essence of religion because it has interior motives.
- (d) Religious leaders to some extent fail in monitoring the activities of its officials and members of the faith. This kid glove attitude give rise to emergence fanatics
- (e) Governments of the day seems slow investigate the activities of wealthy and over ambitious religious leaders.

Recommendations

This paper suggests the following as a panacea to religious fanaticism in Nigeria and other societies with similar religious attitude.

- (a) Religious bodies should formulate enduring operational ethical standards for its officials.
- (b) Should take appropriate actions against religious officials who tend to derail from prescribed regulations regarding office, work place, Church or Mosques in relation to the congregation in particular and society in general.
- (c) Government of the day should rise above sentiments of belonging to one particular religion or affiliation to handle any negative form of religion that threatens social peace and national development.
- (d) Believers or adherents of religious systems should rise to the occasion by not tolerating any form of religious violence from any authority or fellow adherents.
- (e) The theory of religious tolerance or peaceful coexistence should pervade the religious space for social cohesion and advancement.

Summary and conclusion

Religious fanaticisms in the forms of hate speech, religious intolerance and terrorism have cast a black light on religious practice in Nigeria. There is social security for citizens when religion preaches obedience to laws of the state, philanthropism and provision of jobs for people working in religious institutions. Nonetheless, governments of Nigeria should do more to advance the general development of peoples of Nigeria.

Our investigation into the subject matter; Religion and the challenges of fanaticism and insecurity in Nation Building has revealed that the social function of religion has been negatively affected by various forms of religious fanaticism. The matter of religious fundamentalism began infiltrating the minds of unsuspecting worshippers because fanatics are deceptive from the onset. Part of this problem is that religious leaders sometimes neglect their works by not carrying out enough suspension on those officials in charge of various forms of formation and tenets indoctrination. The leaders of religious bodies' operative in Nigeria should intensify their supervisory roles to checkmate the teaching of false doctrine or manipulation of already existing texts.

Proper formation of religious teachers and leaders will promote security of lives and property in the society. Citizens will go about their normal exercises without fear of attack, rape, murder, intimidation or loss of valuables properties. Nation building can only come along when citizens of the state are taught to respects the laws of the land concerning sanctity of

human life, freedom of worship, tolerance for other religious convictions and encouragement of peaceful coexistence among members of the society.

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