

Religion as Panacea for Peace, Conflict Resolution, Capacity Building and National Development In Nigeria

Nwangama, Edwin Ukpabi (Ph.D)

Department of Christian Religious Studies

Ebonyi State College of Educaiton, Ikwo, Nigeria.

Abstract

This paper examined religion as panacea for peace, conflict resolution, capacity building and national development in Nigeria. Its main thesis is that religion in spite of its shortcoming is a panacea for peace, conflict resolution, capacity building and national development in Nigeria. Adopting the analytical approach and anthropological theoretical base, this paper used the three major religions in Nigeria as examples to drive home the points that religion is still the best option for peace building and management as well as conflict resolution, capacity building and national development in Nigeria. The paper began with an introduction which highlighted the importance of religion to mankind. It maintained that religion is life and is as important as the food we eat. The paper also maintained that religion in spite of its shortcoming is still the best option for promoting morality, peace building, conflict resolution and management in society. Furthermore, the paper highlighted the various forms conflicts occur. It could be in form of religious rivalry, fanaticism, politicization of religion in a society. The paper maintained that whatever form conflict occurs, conflicts could be resolved through inter-religious dialogue and inter-faith worship. The paper similarly observed that religion would go a long way in enhancing capacity building and national development in Nigeria as the religions in the country play major roles in human development, entrenchment of moral values, eradication of illiteracy and diseases in the country. The paper finally offered its recommendations, highlighted its limitations and concluded among other things that Nigerians irrespective of their religious and political affiliations should strive to continue to live in peace and not in chaos.

Keywords: Religion, Panacea, Peace, Conflict Resolution, Capacity Building, National Development

INTRODUCTION

It has to be noted from the outset that there has never been a holistic effort used through religion for the enhancement of peace, conflict resolution, capacity building and national development in Nigeria. This paper therefore ensures that the gap in literature is covered. Secondly, traditional religion which is the foundation of traditional morality in the country is often neglected. This paper believes the three main religions in the country African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam shall work hand-in-hand in maintaining peace, good neighbourliness and good government in Nigeria. The paper covers exhaustively the importance of the three religions in morality, ethics, peace building and management in the country. The paper therefore becomes a desideratum for the enhancement of peace, conflict management and resolution as well as capacity building opportunity and national development in Nigerian society.

Religion is the most important part of the life of man. From time immemorial man has prayed and worshipped God or gods. It is often said that no group of human beings has ever been discovered which did not have religious beliefs. Nowadays religion is part and parcel of everyday life of man. This is because of the importance attached to religion by man. Mbiti (1969) says "Africans are notoriously

religious" and Nwangama (2008) says "human beings are incurably religious", that religion has been found in all societies throughout recorded history. This is perhaps the reason why Howkins (1972) observed that "Religion is life, and life is religion". Religion is indeed as important to man as food is to our body. Religion in the words of Forward (2001) "could best be regarded as the warp and woof of society". Religion indeed is the fabric of society and a thing that permeates into all the departments of life of man.

Religion is considered as a panacea for peace, conflict resolution and national development. Refocusing religion on peace, and conflict resolution is needed now more than ever before because of the mounting insecurity problem in Nigeria in particular and African countries as a whole.

It should not be forgotten however, that world religions particularly Judaism, Christianity and Islam have sad history of war over political and religious differences. One can recall the tragic and disgraceful history of wars and conflicts instigated by religion and religious ideologies. The destructive effects of religious prejudices and hatred are very fresh in our minds particularly the religious problem in the Middle East and other religions of the world. This is perhaps one of the reasons why Nwangama (2008) says "It is often said that it is no longer fashionable to

speak well of religion nowadays owing to its negative roles in the society". But in spite of its negative roles in society, religions can still be a force to be reckoned with in world peace. After all, religion is never the only factor that creates conflict in society as Andrews ((2015:5) observes:

Religion is hardly the sole factor in creating conflict. Nations and individuals come to blows over ideology, territory and the quest for resources. They fight each other over their perceived identities. Demographic pressure, too, can play a part, when an increasing population seeks space to live.

Brian D. Lepard in Sharma (2011:75-76) suggested that in spite of the shortcomings of religions,

World religions can and must become wholehearted supporters of world peace and in fact a durable and profound world peace cannot be achieved without respect for and adherence to fundamental moral teachings shared by all religions. Religion-inspired conflict is based on religious prejudice and fanaticism, which defy the essential teachings of the world religions themselves, as articulated in their most revered scriptures. If we look at these teachings, we see many commonalities that offer moral hope in a divided and traumatized world.

There is no doubt that most religions do not approve violence and war in settling disputes. Hill (2013:25) said it all when he noted that:

While it is true that the religions of the world have a history of warring over political and religious differences, most religions today strongly oppose violence and are vigorous advocates for peace. The notion of ahimsa or "do no harm" has always been strong in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. The Hebrew Prophets often called for peace among the chosen people. Jesus advocated loving one's enemies and turning the other cheek when hit, and he told his disciples to put away their swords when they tried to protect him. Muhammad advocated peace among the Arab tribes and allowed violence only in self-defense.

Religion has positive and negative roles in society. This is the reason why it is often said to be a double-edged sword that could cut both sides. It is therefore incumbent on all of us to guide against its negative roles in society.

Religion as a Panacea for Peace

Religion in spite of its shortcoming is still the best option for peace building and management. Amunnadi (2016) buttressed this point when he says "Religion though grossly abused both in ancient and contemporary times still remains when exploited positively a vital force for promoting peace both at the individual, national and international levels". Religion could enhance peace in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general through some moral principles, peace building, character moulding and religious education.

Although some moral theorists have argued very convincingly that morality derived its norms from society or is a product of common sense (Quarcoopome, 1987), religion nevertheless serves a useful function in society by teaching and encouraging morality. Religions whether African Traditional Religion, Christianity, Judaism, Islam, etc. teach important virtues in Nigerian society such as love, humility, altruism, kindness, peaceful co-existence of one another, etc. In Christianity, for instance, war is believed to be wrong. God wants everybody to live in peace. In the New Testament, Jesus of Nazareth in the Sermon on the Mount said that peacemakers would be called "children of God". He thought that people should not treat one another with hatred, but with love even if they were enemies.

There is no doubt religion promotes morality. Omoregbe (1993) said that the highest value and the highest achievement of religion is in the area of promoting morality in society. Kant according to Paterson (1928) said that the function of religion "was to support and to round off the moral life".

Furthermore, religion enhances peace building through the teaching and encouragement of morality in Nigerian society. Religion's role as character moulder, builder and restorer of justice and human dignity are as clear as crystal in the eyes of all Nigerians. The adherents of the three major religions in Nigeria - African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam strongly believe that character is of supreme importance. Idowu (1962) observed that "To the Yoruba man's character is of supreme importance and it is this which Olodumare Judges". The Igbo people also believe in good character. They believe that when they disregard the norms of the society, they commit sin against the society itself, God, divinities, mother earth and the ancestor. In this respect Ilogu (1974:137) argued that:

Sin is not therefore seen directly and primarily as rebellion against the deity or deities, but more often as departure from the norm, the prescribed "laws" or falling foul of *Omenani*; over which the earth goddess presides who is thereby indirectly rebelled against.

The earth goddess and the ancestors are the custodians of public morality and any contravention of the norms of the society is viewed seriously by them as Arinze (1970) observed that “The Iboman believes that when he sins, he makes the higher powers frown”.

Religion for peace building should be geared up for character moulding in our society for the influence of character cannot be underrated in developing countries such as ours. The influence of character the world over is very great. This is perhaps the reason why Smiles (2010:9) remarked that:

Character is one of the greatest motive powers in the world. In its noblest embodiments it exemplifies human nature in its highest forms, for it exhibits man at his best. Men of genuine excellence in every station of life - men of industry, of integrity, of high principle, of sterling honesty of purpose – command the spontaneous homage of mankind. It is natural to believe in such men, to have confidence in them, and to imitate them.

The importance of character surely prompted Heraclitus of Ephesus to have remarked in his day “character is destiny” and Ralph Waldo Emerson to have observed that “Character is higher than intellect” (Gough 1998). To commit sin is to diminish the good character in us and to do what displeased God, the earth spirit, the ancestors and our fellow men. The Akan people of Ghana believe that “the Earth spirit abhors suicide, and the spilling of blood and cohabitation in the bush” (Opoku 1978). To the Mende of Sierra-Leone, breach of communal regulations, incest, adultery and lack of respect for parents and elders constitute sin among them. Nwangama in Emezue, Koshch and Kangel (2014) also noted that “The Kono people of Sierra-Leone condemn murder”. In fact, all people of all walks of life see sin as what diminishes character, separates us from God and disrupts our well-being as well as the society we live. Good character is all that matters in life for without it life would be “solitary nasty, brutish and short”. Gough (1998: front lap or cover) observed that:

The quality of our lives is not determined by the happenstance of genetics or by the influence of environment; it is not measured in material possessions or in the trappings of youth; it is not dependent on personality or social acclaim. On the contrary, the intrinsic value of the lives we lead reflects the strength of a single trait: our personal character.

Religious Education in Nigeria should be geared toward character moulding of the students. Banjo (1953:187) once observed that:

There is a real danger today of paying too much attention to the acquisition of knowledge, book knowledge, and not enough to character training. The passing of an examination is held by many as the one and only goal of education. This is a very dangerous attitude, for experience shows that knowledge unsupported by good character leads to ultimate disaster.

In addition, African beliefs and customs which are of religious significance should be used as a basis for teaching the higher and nobler ideas about religion. Similarly, religious studies should emphasize the importance of religious education in the curriculum. Serious efforts should be made to impart religious and moral education to students. The importance of moral and religious instructions cannot be overemphasized nowadays there is moral decay in the society.

Furthermore, religion should also be geared up to the restoration of human dignity especially these days human rights abuses are rampant. Human dignity is considered as very important in Nigerian society. This is the reason why human rights are vital in the country. The right to life is indisputably the first followed by others such as the right to own property, freedom of speech, of association, of worship and the rest.

The right to life is considered all over Nigeria and the world in general as sacred and inalienable. Nigerians abhor what diminishes human dignity such as murder, theft, adultery, incest, rape, breaking taboos, desecration of holy places and objects of worship. These things are not supposed to be done by all Nigerians. It is believed that any contravention of these offences and others not mentioned above will surely incur the wrath of God who is the final guardian of law and order and of the moral and ethical code. However, God is not expected to be involved in day to day observance of the moral order. It is the duty of the divinities, ancestors, elders, priests, traditional rulers and government to act as daily guardians or police of human morality.

Religion should refocus on education of all Nigerians on religious instruction for religion particularly has played major role in ethical code as Amadi (1982:3) vividly portrayed that:

Religion has played a particularly important role in ethical philosophy all down the ages because it has been a useful instrument for enforcing moral

codes. One should do this and not do that because God has said so. Much of the ancient and medieval philosophy of the Western world hinged on religious precepts. The medieval philosophy found God a very useful resort, the point at which all arguments ended.

The moral values of any religious system tries to regulate the moral behaviour of its adherents. Religion enables us to stick to what is just and good and to desist from what is wrong, unjust and evil. Refocusing religious studies in Nigeria for peace will help a great deal in cultivating the following values by all Nigerians: respect for human dignity and human rights, respect for constituted authority, respect for democracy and freedom, social justice, and the development of moral character. All these will bring about peace, conflict resolution, national development and unity in the country.

Religion as a Panacea for Conflict Resolution

Conflict in a layman's language is a strong disagreement, a clash between opposing forces that may arise when there are incompatible goals, issues or contradictions which may eventually result in a fight, battle, etc. The conflict could be political, religious, cultural, tribal, ethnic, economic, etc. However, it has to be noted that it is not all that easy to categorize conflicts. Andrews (2015:xi) in this regard observed that:

Conflicts can have many, often overlapping causes, which makes it difficult to catalogue them by categories such as religion, race, territory, resources or ideology. The simplest solution surely is to categorise them by geography and country, even though many conflicts, especially in Africa and the Middle East, cross national boundaries.

The best example of this defiance of national frontiers is the rise of violent Islamism. Much of this can be traced back to the cold-war era in which the West supported Muslim mujahideen from the Arab world in their ultimately successful fight to expel Soviet troops from Afghanistan.

Conflict varies in intensity and range. According to Keltner (1987) it could be seen as (1) mild difference, (2) disagreement, (3) dispute, (4) campaign, (5) litigation, or (6) fight or war. Wilmot and Hocker (2001) defines conflict as "an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals". Conflict it seems is inevitable in society. Therefore it

is imperative that conflict resolution and management are desiderata in order to make our society a peaceful society.

Conflict as an inevitable fact of life has to be managed in such a way that it results in its resolution at the shortest possible time. Cormack (1989) observes when conflicts assault us, "we lose peace; we lose confidence; we lose sleep; we lose health, and eventually – if the inner struggles are not checked – we may lose our sanity and our very life". Huggett (1998) also tells us that "conflict can also generate fear, sap us of emotional energy, and, since it affects our relationship with God, deplete our spiritual resources also".

Conflict could come in different forms. It could be in form of religious crises – religious rivalry, religious fanaticism, politicization of religion in a state, etc. Whatever form it takes the following are some of the ways the conflict can be resolved: First, is inter-religious dialogue. Inter-religious dialogue is a veritable means of solving religious crises. Inter-religious dialogue in the words of Francis Cardinal Arinze in Akwanya and Onyeneke (1999:2)

Is a meeting of hearts and minds across religious frontiers. It is a meeting of sincere believers who want each to listen to the other, to try to understand the religion of the other, to identify the areas of convergence and divergence and to study together what they can do together. In inter-religious encounters and collaboration, each participant wants to remain open to the action of God in him or her, to get enriched by the encounter and to work with the other as far as possible, while keeping intact one's religious identity card.

According to Cardinal Arinze, inter-religious dialogue embraces "all forms of positive relations, contacts, collaboration or exchange between the followers of differing religions". Hill (2013: 358-359) further noted what inter-religious dialogue entails when he says:

Authentic inter-religious dialogue is a mutual sharing of beliefs, values, and rituals. It is a sincere sharing of religious journeys and searching where honest and trusting relationships are established. It is a process where mutual respect, understanding, and enrichment are established. It is a time to share one's faith life and one's religious concerns about world issues; it is an opportunity to explore how religions might join together in actions that will make the world better. Inter-religious dialogue recognizes the differences among religions. Different images or metaphors have been used to accept these

differences and yet still be able to relate and dialogue with those who have other beliefs.

Inter-religious dialogue will be efficacious and a veritable way of curbing religious conflict in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general if religious fanatics are ready to tone down their religious zeal.

The twentieth century has seen many efforts at dialogue between representatives of different religions. A typical example is the Jewish-Christian dialogue where a fresh look at the old hatred between them was examined in order to rediscover their areas of commonality. Fisher (1999:111) throws more light on twentieth century conferences when she observes:

The twentieth century also saw a spate of interfaith conferences, concerned to promote interfaith harmony. The first major assembly of this kind occurred in Chicago in 1893, as the Parliament of the World's Religions. Held before modern transportation and communication systems had shrunk the globe, the conference was an unprecedented display of cultural as well as religious differences.

Today attempts are made to bring adherents of different religions together in worship. Interfaith worship is a veritable channel of bringing the adherents of different faiths to a common roof for worship and to show that God is one although called different names by the worshippers of each religion.

Similarly, the Golden Rule in world religions is another means of conflict resolution among people. In this respect, Catoir (2004:xv) rightly observed that:

Though we are all different in our approaches to God, there are some startling similarities. The most obvious one is a common belief in the Golden Rule. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" is perhaps the most familiar and most basic ethical principle of mankind.

The golden rule appears in all the world religions though differently worded but essentially the same in meaning. Catoir (2004:xv-xvi) cited the golden rule among the world religions in his book *World Religions*. According to him, in Christianity the golden rule says: "All things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you so them: for this is the law and the prophets". (Mt . 7:12). In Buddhism, the golden rule says: "Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful". (Udana-Varga 5:18).

In Confucianism the golden rule says: "Is there one maxim which ought to be acted upon throughout one's whole life? Surely it is the maxim of loving-kindness: Do not unto others what you would not have them do unto you" (Analects 15:23).

In Hinduism, the golden also says: "This is the sum of duty: do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you". (Mahabharata 5:1517). Similarly in Islam, the golden rule says: "No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself. (Sunna).

Furthermore, in Judaism, the golden rule is: "What is hateful to you, do not to your fellowmen. That is the entire law; all the rest is commentary. (Talmud, Shabbat 31d). In Taoism, the golden rule says: "Regard your neighbour's gain as your own gain, and your neighbour's loss as your own loss". (Tai Shang Kan Ying P'ien). Finally, in Zoroastrianism the golden rule says: (That nature alone is good which refrains doing unto another whatsoever is not good for itself" (Dadisten-i-dinik, 94:5).

Patricia A. Keefe in Sharma (2011:74) in her conclusion of the discussion of the Golden Rule and World Peace observed that:

The golden rule has not died. In fact it has developed beyond its original conception and now has a deeper foundation through the work of nonviolent leaders and practitioners. In the Nonviolent peace-force, a global organization with ninety-five member organizations from all over the globe, the wisdom of nonviolence in the world's religions comes to bear on concrete problems and specific conflicts. The golden rule is not just an abstraction. It is as real as the anger of the gang in Sri Lanka and the nonviolent action of the nonviolent peace-force team based on the common humanity of all involved. It is as real as the nonviolent actors in the U.S. Civil Rights movement who faced angry crowds, water hoses, and death with the strength of nonviolence.

The Golden Rule makes it possible for the adherents of the world religions to treat one another with respect and decorum and thereby avoiding conflict. Benedict (2008) in *The Watkins Dictionary of Religions and Secular Faiths* noted that the Golden rule "is not a rule of revenge, the 'eye for an eye' principle, it is entirely about treating other people with the same kind of values and respect with which one would wish to be treated".

Religion Embracing Capacity Building Opportunity

Religions in particular and Nigerian education in general should also refocus on capacity building of teachers. Teachers' capacity building involves the process of developing and strengthening the skills, abilities, processes and resources of teachers for the enhancement of their teaching. Religious education should refocus on developing the abilities and skill of teachers. Teachers should be encouraged to undergo intensive training in Teachers' Training Colleges and Universities so as to be proficient in their job. They should be offered scholarship and in-service training. Seminars, workshops and conferences should be organized for them from time to time.

Infrastructural development in Nigerian educational system is a necessity. Most schools in Nigeria are grossly lacking in infrastructure. This area requires capacity building to enable schools have adequate buildings for classroom accommodation, laboratories and the rest of them. Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TET Fund) is playing a giant role in this regard.

Religion as a Panacea for National Development

Nigerian education should also be refocused on national development. At this juncture one may ask, what is national development? National development has been defined by scholars according to their discipline. It has been defined by the sociologists from the sociological perspective, by the economists from the economical perspective, political scientists from the political perspective, etc. Obasi (1987:3) stated it well when he observed that:

To the economist national development is seen in terms of man's ability to apply increasing levels of efficient technology to the control of nature's resources in order to bring about marked increases in the levels of growth of national output per capita of the population. In this case national development becomes synonymous with industrialization and technological advancement. To the sociologist national development is seen in terms of the complex differentiations that characterize modern societies in which new social structures emerge to assume new functions or take on functions hitherto performed by older or other structures. For the political scientist the focus is on how governments increase their capacity to legitimize themselves, innovate changes, respond to demands from pressure groups and resolve or diffuse social conflicts. To the humanist emphasis is on the collective socio-economic well being of members of society.

In fact, the phenomenon of national development is not easy to define because of its ambiguous nature and multiplicity of perception. National development in my view is a stage of advancement in economic, social, cultural, political, religious and technological change among developing countries such as Nigeria and other African countries generally referred to as the "Third World" nations. Development of a nation should encompass a complete transformation of all aspects of the people's life. This is in consonance with Igwe's (2005) definition of development as "all-round inter-connected progressive transformation of man, society, and nature, made possible by his incremental mastery over them". Kalu (1980:313) in his own observation noted that:

Development is not money profits, number of industries and such. The quality of the environment, the health of the nation, the types of education, the discipline of the citizenry and the quality of administration or organization are the more essential ingredients of development goals.

Omebe (2014) noted that "development is an elusive concept with several meanings, leading itself to a contextual definition". In other words, researchers define development according to the actual context in which they use the term.

National development in whatever context it is applied ought to embrace the education the citizens receive, the structure of the economy, the discipline of the citizens in terms of management of resources. It should also be seen as the process of emancipation of the people from poverty, exploitation, dirty environment and dependence on foreign countries for its survival. It also involves the manpower of the citizens and the moral integrity of the people.

In the past science was everything. It was extolled as the best course for speeding up national development of any country. Religion by then was looked down as a subject that did not contribute to the development of a nation. Kalu (1980) noted that "The glorification of the scientific period was characterized by a painting which portrayed a man emerging from darkness into light. Science brought light amidst the darkness of mystification created by religion". However, religion is now recognized as indispensable in nation-building. Kalu (1980) rightly observed that "One could not reasonably discuss nation building in our context without recognizing the religious factor which undergirds our moral values, traditions and thinking. Ezeanya (1980:322) was in full support of the indispensability of religion when he said that: "Any project for

the building of a nation which loses sight of, or ignores the spiritual and material well-being of man taken as a whole, cannot succeed in building a nation "in which no man is oppressed".

Frankly speaking science and religion work hand in hand. Perhaps that is the reason why Albert Einstein (Poole 1994) says "science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind". In traditional African society religion is indispensable. This is because religion is part and parcel of the people. This is the reason why Mbiti (1969:1) observed that:

Africans are notoriously religious, and each people has its own religious system with a set of beliefs and practices. Religion permeates into all the departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible always to isolate it... Religion is the strongest element in traditional backgrounds, and exerts probably the greatest influence upon the thinking and living of the people concerned.

African Traditional Religion breeds order, religious tolerance and helps to stabilize the moral system in present day Nigeria. The religion encourages high standard of morality of all the adherents including village and clan heads who are often spiritual leaders. African Traditional Religion is very well known for religious tolerance unlike Islam and Christianity that have failed woefully to tolerate each other. High premium is placed on God, the divinities and the ancestors for enforcing morality in the society. They are known to reward law-abiding people and to punish evil doers. Whatever the traditional African does is done in full awareness that God, the divinities, the ancestors and other spiritual forces are taking note of every moral act of the person for reward or punishment as the case may be. This is the reason why Ezeanya (1980:321) noted that:

It is this awareness of the unflinching sanction from the divinities that was responsible for the prevalence of law and order in the traditional society where before there were no policemen or soldiers to enforce the laws of state. Today on the other hand, our nation is plagued with armed robbery, bribery and corruption, embezzlement of public funds, wide-spread sexual immorality at all levels of society, cases of murder for various material ends, indiscipline in schools, shameless desecration of holy places by stealing and so on.

Apart from African Tradition Religion, Christianity also plays a major role in national development in Nigeria. The religion and its adherents help human

development, entrenchment of moral values, eradication of illiteracy and diseases in the country through opening up of schools-nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary institutions and hospitals in Nigeria.

Islam in turn is also a factor in national development in Nigeria. Islam as a religion and a culture permeates all the departments of the life of the Muslims. The religion claims total control over all aspect of life of its adherents both as individuals and as groups. As Kalu (1980) writes "Religion, it insists, must regulate not only matter of spiritual salvation and moral development but also economic and socio-political affairs".

The three religions in Nigeria namely, African Traditional Religion, Islam and Christianity are indispensable for nation building. The three religions provide the basic religious and moral structure for nation building that will stand the test of time. As Kalu (1980) once more observed. "In conclusion, our religious systems purvey ethical ideals for domesticating transfer of technology and for ensuring that development means the total liberation of our peoples".

CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE

1. The paper heighthed the importance of capacity building in man-power development, and infrastructure in developing the abilities and skills of teachers in colleges and universities.
2. The paper showed the relevance of peace, conflict resolution and management as a sine qua non for good governance in Nigeria and other countries of the world.
3. The paper finally revealed the importance of co-existence of all religions not only in Nigeria but the world over and the need to harness the good moral and ethical aspects of the religions for the moulding of the character of human beings which will go a long way in good governance, and general well-being of humanity.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following limitations of this research work should be noted.

- (1) Religion is often abused in the past and in contemporary times and instead of promoting peace brings about hatred, chaos and war. This should stop. Religion should be allowed to promote peace in society.
- (2) Religion is often used to generate conflict in Nigeria instead of serving as a panacea for peace and conflict resolution. A typical example is the conflict which often involves Christians and Muslims. The paper stressed

that the adherents of the religions should learn how to co-exist with one another.

- (3) The paper should never be used for generalization as religion is a double-edged sword that cuts both ways. It could enhance peace but wrongly used it creates war. The paper stressed that the bad aspects of religion should be discarded and embrace the good aspects for the good of man.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations should be taken into consideration for the enhancement of peace, conflict resolution and nation development in Nigeria.

1. Religion adherents of all religions should never approve violence and war in settling disputes.
2. People should strive to emphasize the positive roles of religion and guide against its negative roles in society.
3. Nigerians should abhor what diminishes human dignity such as murder, rape, adultery, incest, etc.
4. People should strive to nip conflict in the bud before it escalates.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Nigerians should strive to build a nation anchored on religion and peace building. Religion positively considered is the fabric of any society. There is no doubt of its role in enhancing conflict resolution and peaceful society. We should discard the bad aspects of religion that create hatred, religious fanaticism and war and embrace the basic principles of morality which if faithfully followed would bring about peaceful co-existence of all Nigerians irrespective of our religious and political differences.

REFERENCES

Akwanya, A.N. and Onyeneke, A. (eds)(1999). *World Needs Interreligious Dialogue*. Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd.

Amadi, E. (1982). *Ethics in Nigerian Culture*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books.

Amunnadi, C.A. (2016). *Religion, Peace and National Development: A Reflection*. Enugu: His Glory Publications.

Andrews, J. (2015). *The World in Conflict: Understanding the World's Troublespots*. London: Profile Books Ltd.

Arinze, F.A. (1970). *Sacrifice in Ibo Religion*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.

Banjo, S.A. (1953). *A West African Teacher's Handbook*. London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd.

Benedict, G. (2008). *The Watkins Dictionary of Religions and Secular Faiths*. London: Watkins Publishing.

Catoir, J.T. (2004). *World Religions: Beliefs behind Today's Headlines*. New York: The Society of St. Paul.

Cormack, D. (1989). *Peacing Together*. Europe: MARC

Ezeanya, S.N. (1980). "The Contribution of African Traditional Religion to Nation Building" in *Reading in Social Sciences: Issues in National Development* edited by E.C. Amucheazi. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing Co. Ltd; 332.

Fisher, M.P. (1999). *Religion in the Twenty-first Century*. London: Routledge.

Forward, M. (2001). *Religion: A Beginner's Guide*. Oxford: One World Publications.

Gough, R.W. (1998). *Character is Destiny*. New York: Crown Forum.

Hill, B.R. (2013). *World Religions and Contemporary Issues*. London: New London, CT.

Howkins, K.G. (1972). *The Challenge of Religious Studies*. Illinois: Inter-varsity Press.

Huggett, J. (1998). *Conflict*. London: Eagle.

Idowu, E.B. (1962). *Olodumare: God in Yoruba belief*. Ikeja: Longman.

Igwe, O. (2005). *Politics and Globe Dictionary (New edition)*. Abia: Eagle Publishers.

Ilogu, E. (1974). *Christianity and Igbo Culture*. London: Nok Publisher.

Kalu, O.U. (1980). "Religion as a Factor in National Development" in *Readings in Social Sciences: Issues in National Development* by E.C. Amucheazi. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing Company, 311.

Keefe, P.A. (2011). "The Golden Rule and World Peace" in *The World's Religions: A Contemporary Reader*, edited by Arrind Sharma. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 74.

Keltner, J.W. (1987). *Mediation: Toward a Civilized System of Dispute Resolution*. Annandale, Va: Speech Communication Association.

Lepard, B.D. (2011). "World Religions and World Peace: Toward a New Partnership" in *The World's Religions: A Contemporary Reader*, edited by Arvind Sharma. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 75-76.

Mbiti, J.S. (1969). *African Religions and Philosophy*. London: Heinemann.

Nwangama, E.U. (2008). *The Origin and Development of Religion*. Enugu: Snaap Press Limited.

Nwangama, E.U. (2014). "Traditional Religious Concepts and Practices that reflect Justice and Human Dignity in Contemporary Africa" in *Justice and Human Dignity in Africa (collection of Essays in Honour of Professor Austin Chukwu)* edited by G.M.T. Emeue, K. Inye, and K. Maurice. Lagos: HPC Books, 619.

- Obasi, E. (1987). *Understanding Education and Society in Nigeria*. Owerri: Kay Beecee Publications Ltd.
- Omebe, S.E. (2014). *Guidance and Counselling: Panacea for National Development* (3rd Inaugural Lecture delivered on 11th December, 2014 at Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki). Awka, Anambra State: Love-Isaac Consultancy Services.
- Omogbe, J. (1993). *A Philosophical Look at Religion*. Lagos: Joja Educational Research and Publishers Ltd.
- Opoku, K.A. (1978). *West African Traditional Religion*. Accra: FEB Intational Private Limited.
- Paterson, W.P. (1928). *Nature of Religion*. London: Hodder ad Stoughton Ltd.
- Poole, M.W. (1994). *A Guide to Science and Belief*. England: Lion Publishing Plc.
- Quarcoopome T.N.O. (1987). *West African Traditional Religion*. Ibadan: African Universities Press
- Smiles, S. (2010). *Character*. Mumbai: Better Yourself Books.
- Wilmot, W.W. and Hocker, J.L. (2001). *Interpersonal Conflict*. New York: McGraw-Hill.