Religious Bigotry: A Challenge to Security and Development in the Contemporary Nigeria

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Abstract

A nation that witnesses security and development is expected to relatively put every facet of the state in check. Religion remains an integral part of the society. Nigeria as a country has three major religions namely: Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion. As it is, religion has a strong grip on its members. A pluralistic country like Nigeria with Muslim majority North and Christian majority South has to be careful on how religious issues are handled. Religious bigotry has become a clog on the wheels of security and development of Nigeria. The present research holds that a great number of religious violence ranging from clashes, bombing and so on, has been witnessed in Nigeria in the fourth republic. This is orchestrated by the antagonistic nature of Christians and Muslims especially in the North, the menace of the Islamic Fulani Herdsmen, lopsided appointments, and inability of the government of the day to arrest and prosecute perpetrators of these crimes instead they are termed repentant, all have religious undertone and amount to injustice. These are challenges to security and development. As a result, lives and properties are consistently lost, investors scared, food security farfetched and the like. To arrest the increasing challenges, the leaders should disabuse their minds from priding one religion above others; the Nigerian constitution that allows freedom of worship should be upheld; religious value reorientation and proper religious socialisation should be promoted while the perpetrators of violence should be punished according to the laws of the land as solutions to the problem.
Keywords: Religious bigotry, crises, security, development.

Introduction

Religion remains undoubtedly an important part of the society with its functions in human interactions. It is capable of uniting according to Anozie (2006) when practised with tolerance and capable of disintegrating when it goes to the extreme. This extremism has its root in religious bigotry where one sees his religion as superior to the other. This breeds intolerance which in turn breeds insecurity challenges that eventually become counter-productive in areas of development of any nation. Izuegbu (2012) holds that "unguided religious practices may likely lead to suspicion, distrust, intolerance, hostility, aggression and destruction of life and property which are counter-productive to any society" (p. 399). Religious bigotry remains counter-productive in any given society. Nigeria as a nation state has witnessed violence, destruction of lives and property emanated from religious bigotry. Sulaiman (2016) affirms that the problem of religious

violence casts serious doubt to the stability order of the country. This fact remains clear to the citizens of Nigeria. Where there is no stability, there could be no development. Ikenga-Metuh (1994) asserts that the country has recorded very bizarre experiences in the domain of religious violence.

There have been various security challenges in Nigeria from the past till the present orchestrated by religious bigotry. This grows because sometimes those to handle the menace are wittingly or unwittingly religious bigots. To this fact, it remains a thorn in the security and development of Nigeria. The Northern part of the country has witnessed a high number of religious violence emanating from bigotry. A critical look at the beginning of the ongoing *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria today exposes what religious bigotry is capable of doing. Hence, the North East and other parts of the North have been witnessing great dangers. Ebeh (2015) made a striking observation. According to him

> There has been tendency right from independence to view national security in Nigeria as an elusive domain of the coercive agencies of the government. In assessing security arrangements, greater focus has always been on internal security. In this respect, the main thrust of security was to suppress the Nigeria people. This approach to national security is premised on the fact that security is always seen not from the causes but from the effects. Hence, security has always come to be viewed from the criminality of the people and not what turns them into criminals. (p. 2).

The above position is very apt to the current article as it points out one of the root causes of security challenges in Nigeria. The current research goes beyond the criminality of the people to one of the major causes of security problems in Nigeria, religious bigotry.

According to Ugwueye (2009), "Nigeria is a deeply religious country" (p. 258). It is obvious that Nigeria as a nation has three major religions namely: Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion. Among these three, there has been intolerance which is a product of religious bigotry especially between the adherents of Christianity and adherents of Islam. Churches and mosques have been burnt down in the country. Sulaiman (2016) pointed out that most of the conflicts exist in Northern part of Nigeria where the main protagonists are Hausa/Fulani Muslims and Christian ethnic minorities.

It is therefore evident with the happenings in Nigeria that development and security of the country is problematic. With this glaring problem, it is clear that religious bigotry poses a great challenge to the security and development of Nigeria especially now. Investors are scared, properties worth billions have been lost, and people have been rendered homeless and internally displaced as many lives have been lost. The disheartening of all these is that religion which could be for social cohesion is the root

cause of majority of the problems. It is in the light of the above that the present research investigates religious bigotry and its attendant consequences as counterproductive to the security and development of Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification

Religion

There has been no consensus definition of religion. Most definitions given about religion reflect the background of each person that defines the concept. Though there is no consensus definition, however, religion has some essentials. One thing about all the definitions is that each contains one or more of the essentials. The essentials according to Obiefuna (2011) include human, supernatural power, rituals, morals, reward and punishment. Religion has what one may call aspects which include: the subject (man), the object (supernatural being), the reason (purpose of worship), and worship (the action). Definition of religion should equally appreciate the vertical and horizontal dimensions of religion. Man's relationship with the Supreme Being is the vertical dimension while man's relationship with his fellow man is the horizontal dimension. Therefore, for the present research, religion is defined as a belief in a divine being, expressed through worship which in turn shapes one's relationship with his fellow man in the society.

Religious Bigotry

Bigotry here is taken to mean an obstinate or intolerant devotion to one's own opinions and prejudices. It is the possession or expression of strong, unreasonable prejudices or opinions. A bigot is intolerant of other ideas, races, and religions. Religious bigotry therefore is the act of demonstrating strong and unfair hate and intolerance to other people's religious viewpoints or even the adherents of other religions. Religious bigotry in other words may be seen as religious intolerance. In the course of the present research therefore, religious bigotry and religious intolerance are used interchangeably.

Development

Development is seen as improvement in country's economic and social conditions. It deals with improvement in ways of managing an area's natural and human resources in order to create wealth and improve people's lives. Umeanolue (2020) holds that development is a process through which the potentials of a nation are enhanced until it reaches its stable position. It is a process of allowing people to meet their own aspirations.

Hence, the sharpening of human abilities and the productive organisation of nation's mentality are utmost important for development because the agents and beneficiaries of development are humans of a given nation. (p. 141).

It is therefore safe in the present research to view development from the point of conscious effort aimed at productive building of both material and human resources of a nation which is continuous in order to get to the point of stability for the good of the nation's citizens and a conducive ecosystem.

Security

Security as a term may be seen as freedom from threat, danger or anxiety. It is a state of being protected. Ebeh (2015) opines that when security has to do with a nation, it connotes conditions of peace, stability, order and progress. In this regard, peace to a nation like Nigeria involves a situation where the nation experiences harmonious co-existence, social, political and economic stability. Ebeh further states that

> National security question involves a lot of issues. It practically touches on all spheres of human existence. ...a dislocation in any particular area of the system is bound to have an overlapping effect on other areas. It ranges from food security to issues of environmental degradation. It touches on health matters. It encompasses psychological security as well as arms security. (p. 4).

The above position has shown that security of a nation touches all spheres of the nation for it is a system. Any malfunction in any part of the system affects the whole. He emphasizes that

> A number of factors may expose a nation to danger. To that extent, national security may also be viewed as a multidimensional process whose purpose is to safeguard national values. The most fundamental values of any nation is its survival, self-preservation, and self-perpetuation. A nation that is capable of protecting herself from harm equally enjoys immense capacity for enviable development. We may therefore posit that national security and national development are complementary and inseparable phenomena. (p. 5).

By the above assertions, the current research relies on the understanding of security (national security) for its findings. Again, the present work acknowledges the fact that security and development remain inseparable. Security of a nation therefore has various factors that must be considered for it to be achieved especially the root causes of security

challenges. Among the root causes in Nigeria is religious bigotry which this work addresses.

Reasons for Experiencing Religious Bigotry in a Society

Religion remains and will continue to remain part and parcel of human society. Religion itself came as a way of answering questions about the mysterious universe. There are important roles religion plays in any given society. However, certain character of religion has degenerated into intolerance hence, a multi-religious society like Nigeria stands to suffer it. These aspects of religion that have created a kind of schism between members of a particular religion and members of other religious faith are briefly discussed. In his observation, Obasi (2009) holds that "it is clear that religion, because of narrow-mindedness, misunderstanding, fundamentalism, or fanaticism, may also block social progress, and breakdown the social order" (p. 313). The religious characters captured in this assertion no doubt are detrimental to the progress and development of any nation as they breed insecurity. Izuegbu (2012) presents certain characteristics of religion which may account for the intolerance emanating from religion and posing great challenges to the security and development of the nation. According to Izuegbu

> Religion integrates and controls its members and gives them sense of belonging as well as special identity. This unifying element may lead to isolation of members from other members thereby creating a kind of disparity in the society. In a society where there are multi-denominations or multi-religions, it may lead to mutual suspicion, distrust, intolerance, hostility, aggression and destruction of life and property which are counterproductive to any society. (pp. 398-399).

A nation like Nigeria where the picture above is witnessed must be faced by challenges. It becomes a truism that religion can easily separate a people in such a way that humans become enemies against humans because of religion. This is bigotry in action, and in such a scenario, security and development is farfetched.

The narrow thinking which is orchestrated by religious practices of some individuals is another character of religion that breeds bigotry which challenges security and development of a nation. This is shown in authority and dogmatism. The rigidity in belief system in most cases does not call for societal progress. The idea that Western education should be abhorred by some sects in Nigeria due to their religious belief

remains detrimental to the expected development of the country. Such narrow thinking goes to engineer division, rivalry, disruption and aggression. Isidore (2012) states that

> The history of the encounter of religions has shown how religious dichotomy could ruin the world peace and harmony. Judaism and Christianity experienced a terrible movement of conflict that nearly destroyed the history of Israel and Palestine. A similar story could be told of the encounter between Christianity, Judaism and Islam when Muhammad entered the scene in the 6th century AD. The wars and jihad variously rendered the medieval period almost inhabitable for mankind. (p. 5).

This is what authority and dogmatism may cause. Such goes to blind humans in their expected interpersonal relationship. It is religious superiority in action. Izuegbu (2012) in view of this mentions that "starting from families, kindreds, clans, villages, towns, to the national levels, one can see traces of these negative attitudes in the name of religion. Instead of unity, one experiences division, rivalry in place of harmony" (p. 399). In this regard, Ebeh (2015) included religion as one of fundamental roots of national insecurity. For him, a lot of crises experienced in Nigeria have religious undertone. However, it is not religion itself that breeds the crises but religious bigotry.

Religious Bigotry and Its Attendant Challenges: A Reality in Nigeria

Nigeria, a nation with all that it takes to be progressive has been witnessing various setbacks orchestrated by different factors. These factors include religion which has led to backwardness in security and development of the country. Ubong (2016) identified ethno-religious conflicts as a major source of insecurity in Nigeria. Ethno-religious conflict defined as a situation in which the relationship between members of one ethnic or religious group and another of such group in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society is characterised by lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion and fear, and tendency of violent clashes or confrontations. This no doubt is the case of Nigeria. Lives and property have been lost, fear of unknown, mutual suspicion among other anti-peace tendencies are witnessed. Frequent persistent ethnic conflicts and religious conflicts between Islam and Christianity present the country with a major security challenge. In their position, Ugwoke and Ituma (2020) captured that:

> The Global Terrorism Index (2019) shows that in 2018 alone, more than 2000 people lost their lives, whilst 300,000 people were displaced through the

insurgence of Fulani herdsmen and Boko Haram in Nigeria. It is worrisome to note that the rate of killings through various insurgency attacks has been on the rise.... Nigeria's terrorism index rose from 36th to 3rd from 2002 to 2018.... the terrorists attacks also involved the destruction of property and displacement of people, which goes a long way in destabilizing the economy of the nation. (p. 1).

The report above is a worrisome one which posits a great danger to the security and development of Nigeria for in effects, it retards development. A brief excursion on religious conflicts in Nigeria in the fourth republic is necessary at this point. The common denominator of these crises is religious bigotry.

The fourth republic in Nigeria has witnessed series of religious conflicts. Greater percentage of the religious crises is mostly in the northern part of the country according to Ezeanokwasa (2009). Sampson (2012) states some of the religious crises in the fourth republic. The crises which Sampson observed include: violent clashes between Yoruba traditional worshippers and Hausa groups in Sagamu, Ondo state on July 1, 1999. This brought a reprisal crisis of Kano on 22nd July, 1999. In Kwara State, Muslim fundamentalists attacked and destroyed over 14 churches in Ilorin on December 20, 1999 where properties worth millions of naira were destroyed. In February 2000, there was riot in Kaduna over the introduction of Sharia where about 3000 people lost their lives. This had reprisal at Aba, Abia State where over 450 people were killed. There was Kaltungo religious crisis in Gombe in September 2000 over implementation of Sharia in the state.

Furthermore, in October, 2001, as observed by Sampson (2012), crises rocked Kano as a protest to US invasion of Afghanistan over Osama bin Laden. Over 150 lives were lost. Jos witnessed religious crisis in September, 2001 where mosques, churches and several properties were damaged. The 2002 article authored by Isioma Daniel in This Day Newspaper led to crisis in Kaduna where the Muslims attacked Christians and churches. This was because of 'Miss World' beauty contest. Over 250 people lost their lives. Numan town in Adamawa in 2004 witnessed religious conflict between Christians and Muslims which was caused by the location of the town's central mosque close to Bachama paramount palace. The Danish cartoon of Prophet Mohammed in Jyllands-Posten Newspapaer caused religious conflict between Christians and Muslims in Maiduguri of Borno State in 2006. Over 50 people were killed, churches destroyed, shops, houses, vehicles were destroyed.

In 2009, Nigeria witnessed the rise of *Boko Haram* sect that unleashed violence on Christians in Bauchi, Borno, Kano and Yobe States. Over 700 persons were reportedly killed, many were internally displaced, children were made orphans, many became widows and widowers. The Kala-Kato sect violence on Christians in Bauchi in the same year was equally witnessed. In 2010, Plateau State witnessed several religious crises. The bombing of a Christian church at Madala, Niger State in December, 2011 is an evidence of the unabated religious bigotry in Nigeria. In 2012, gunmen stormed Deeper Life Church in Gombe and Boko Haram claimed responsibility of the killing.

Further still, Book Haram which according to Idowu (2015) started as a fundamentalist Islamic sect with the purpose of helping the Northern Region government achieve the intention of implementing the shariah law throughout the region has been a serious threat to the security of the nation especially the north. This is a clear religious sect that is against western education (which has its root in Christianity) in Nigeria. The abduction and killing of the chairman of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Rev Lawan Andimi in January, 2020 as reported by Guardian Newspaper of 22nd January 2020 after the sect rejected N50m ransom is still an evidence of religious bigotry. Again, the case of Leah Shuaibu who was abducted along with other girls by the Boko Haram sect and has not been granted freedom even when other girls were released is a height of religious bigotry. She remained in the custody because according to reports, she refused to renounce her Christian faith.

The Fulani Islamic herdsmen have for a period of time been a serious clog on the wheels of security and development of Nigeria. Some communities have been evaded, lives lost, property destroyed, and farmlands damaged along agricultural products. The attack on the people of Nimbo, Enugu State where about 40 people were reportedly killed according to Vanguard Newspaper on April 26, 2016 and in Agatu, Benue State according to Wikipedia (n. d) where between 300-500 persons were killed and at least 7000 displaced is a clear challenge to the security of Nigeria. In 2018, 19 Christians including two priests were killed in Benue State in the church by herdsmen as reported by Vanguard Newspaper of April 25, 2018. In the same year, over 200 persons were killed in herder-farmer attack in Plateau State, over 50 houses were burnt down. Bassa equally witnessed the same attack where 19 persons lost their lives. In Southern Kaduna (which is predominantly Christians) in the same 2018, there was report of the killing of 15 persons and over 20 injured. In 2019, Kajuru Local Government Area of Kaduna State

witnessed the killing of both villagers and herdsmen. The attacks have continued unabated. Recently, in Ebonyi State, 17 persons including a Methodist priest were killed on Monday, March 29, 2021 as recorded in Vanguard Newspaper of March 31, 2021. The killings and attacks in this article are not exhaustive but a sample of havocs that have been wrecked by the Islamic Fulani Herdsmen in Nigeria. However, the most disturbing part of this problem is that the government and her agencies seem to be handling the situation with white gloves. Proper arrests and clear prosecutions have not been seen in all these attacks. Such silence is counterproductive to security and development of Nigeria. Most of these attacks are on Christians which justifies bigotry in a highest echelon.

The position of Ebeh (2015) that injustice and corruption are the two major causes of national insecurity remains apt. If there are set of citizens that could go scot-free when they carry out certain actions and make certain utterances that are against the security of a nation, it means there is a serious problem of injustice in the land. Such injustice Ebeh holds could lead to frustrations which are often ventilated through unprecedented rise in war. Frustrations may equally precipitate gang warfare, kidnapping and assassinations. This is evident in Nigerian nation where clashes have been witnessed across the nation. Ebeh stated that a lot of crises experienced in Nigeria have traces of religious undertone. This is a truism and that is religious bigotry in action.

The Nigerian electoral process is not immune from religious bigotry. Elections have been held along religious affiliations which invariably blind people from thinking of the integrity of candidates as well as values they represent. Campaigns sometimes witness religious bigotry of candidates. Umeanolue (2020) recalled that in 2003 presidential election, Major General Buhari who was the candidate of All Nigerians Peoples Party (ANPP) was quoted to have said that Muslims should not vote for Christians. In the same vein, as reported in News24 of 27th August, 2001, General Buhari expressed that he was committed to implementing Sharia in the country. These utterances are indications of religious bigotry which are capable of undermining the security and development of Nigeria because such statements are counterproductive. The politics of refusal to swear in the Deputy Governor of Kaduna State in 2010 who is a Christian when the then President Goodluck Jonathan adopted the Governor Namadi Sambo as the vice president remains a sign of religious bigotry.

In Nigeria today, it has become normal for any statement made by individuals to be viewed from the point of religious affiliation. The attitude has so far made it that the import of messages is not followed instead, people are blinded religiously. The 2020 Christmas message of Bishop Kukah of Catholic Diocese of Sokoto generated a lot of controversies. Such controversies came because of religious affiliation. Many Nigerians could not go beyond who spoke to critical examination of the points raised by the cleric. Muslim groups attacked the cleric. For instance, in a January 6, 2021 statement by the secretary of Jama'atu Nasril Islam, Khalid Abubakar Aliyu described the message as "irresponsible and seditious". According to him, the message was a poisoned arrow fired at the heart of Islam and Muslims in Nigeria. Similarly, the Ummah Movement with its headquarters at the National Islamic Centre, Zaria, issued her own position, condemning Kukah's message and opined that the cleric should resign his membership of National Peace Committee. These threats that followed the message could not allow for adequate critical thinking over the message. Christians on their side were hailing the courage of the bishop. In this regard, it becomes obvious that what the nation has now is more of religious defence. Actions are judged by religious affiliation. Such scenario is not healthy for security and development of Nigeria.

Effects of Religious Bigotry on Security and Development on Nigeria

From the foregoing, religious bigotry has led to clashes in the country. These clashes lead to loss of lives and property, instilling fear among the citizens. Sampson (2012) recorded over 6914 deaths to the crises between 1999 and 2012. This figure is outrageous and till date, the intolerance and killings remain high. Jegede (2019) states that wanton destruction of lives and properties is an implication of religious crises in Nigeria. The security of the country is therefore not guaranteed in the face of religious bigotry. To achieve proper security in a nation with intolerance as regards faith may be utopian. Wanton destruction of lives and property because of religious crises which has its root cause in religious bigotry has widened the porosity of the nation's security. This is getting unabated. As it affects human lives so it affects infrastructures. This implies that religious bigotry affects both human and material resources of the nation negatively thereby affecting the security and development of the nation.

Economic development or stability of the nation is seriously affected by religious bigotry. If appointments are affected by religion instead of capability and equity, it becomes

obvious that things are economically wrong. To drive a nation's economy, it requires best hands. Should anything happen that the best hands are replaced with those of same faith with the person at the helm of affairs, the economy of the nation must suffer. By implication, when economy is bad, it breeds certain levels of criminality which in effect pose challenges to the security of the nation.

In the face of insecurity due to religious bigotry, foreign investors that could help in building the nation's economy are scared away. Jegede (2019) recalled that as Olusegun Obasanjo (the former President of Nigeria) assumed office in 1999, in order to revamp the economy of the nation appealed to foreign investors to invest in Nigeria. Regrettably, the appeal yielded little or no result. It is clear that whenever and wherever there are crises due to religion, businesses there suffer and investors may have no choice than to relocate or avoid that area. Jegede pointed out this truism in Kaduna and Jos. Therefore, intolerance because of religious belief is capable of hindering economic progress of Nigeria.

The agitations being witnessed today at various sections of Nigeria are by implication offshoots of religious bigotry directly and indirectly. In Jegede (2019)'s observation

> Religion has continued to destabilize the peace of the nation. The Muslims, in the northern parts, with a damn claim to numerical advantage have severally attempted to nationalize the Islamic faith to the highest level of the nation's governance through various means like the Shariah Debate, OIC saga, and the introduction of Shariah in some northern states by the northern governors. (p. 65).

However, not religion itself destabilizing the peace of Nigeria, but religious bigotry of the leaders. Nigeria should be a secular state. It is therefore bigotry trying to establish one religious faith above others in the nation. Clearly, any attempt at opposing the move had led to violent crises thereby affecting the security and development of Nigeria. The resultant effect is the number of agitations ongoing in the nation today. The call for disintegration of Nigeria cannot be totally exonerated from religious bigotry that is so far witnessed in the country.

With what is going on because of religious bigotry, many families not only suffer from the trauma of losing humans and property but today, there is food shortage in various parts of the country especially the South. Most farmlands and crops were destroyed by the Islamic cattle rearers. This has resulted to high inflation on food items leading many to hunger and widening the level of poverty in the land. It is clear that if the government eschewed religious bigotry and arrested the menace of herdsmen earlier within the

ambits of the law, the level of hunger in the land would be reduced. Some who took to agriculture as they had no alternatives even among them are the people who took loan to farm, are discouraged to continue as their farmlands met destruction from the cattle herders. The government who should have protected them has not been proactive in doing so. This poses challenge to the security and development of Nigeria.

Way Forward

The effects of religious bigotry on the security and development are glaring. However, as mentioned earlier, religion itself is good. The problem of religion is humans involved in religion. With this view in mind, it is humans that should bring solutions to the problems orchestrated by religious bigotry which this work has so far identified.

Nigeria is a federal state with her constitution. Constitutionalism demands that the principles in the constitution are keenly observed. The Nigerian constitution provides for freedom of religion. According to the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) with amendments in 2011,

> Every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including the freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom (either alone or in community with others, and in public or in private) to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance. Section 38(1).

The above section of the constitution is capable of solving the problem of religious bigotry in Nigeria if those who took oath of office to protect the constitution of the country are alive to their responsibility. It is paradoxical to have a constitution that allows freedom of religion and yet, people are bombed during worship, killed during morning cry (preaching) and some people are openly called infidels that deserve to die. To have a constitution is one thing but to protect and practice the dictates of the constitution (constitutionalism) is more important. It becomes pertinent that if religious bigotry is to be tackled in Nigeria, the provision of the constitution of the land should be applied. Where this is done, the security and development problems facing the country would be on decrease.

Again, there is need that those at the helm of affairs are not wittingly or unwittingly influenced by their religious faith in the matters that affect Nigeria project. Nigeria is a secular state and not a theocratic state. It does not augur well to be influenced by religious affiliation rather than competence in appointing managers of both human and material resources of the nation. Such appointments if influenced by religion are detrimental to

the state of the nation. Religion is a sensitive phenomenon and at that, if the leaders are not guided by principles of competence and equity, there is bound to be uneasy calm and crisis in the country which are in turn serious problem to the security and development of the nation. Therefore, appointments should be basically on competence and equity for proper security and development of the country.

Furthermore, the rule of law should take upper place in the land. The law is respecter of no man. To that end, the leaders should not in any way treat a set of citizens as sacred that could get away with every atrocity committed. There should not be different ways of handling perpetrators of evil in the land. There should be no attempt at having citizens and subjects in the country. It is a serious issue to allow murders freedom in the society. There is right to life and as such no one should take the life of another person intentionally. Doing so must be resisted by the law of the land in the spirit of the law. When the law has taken its course, it serves as deterrent to others. Those who because of religion perpetuate evil would quit as soon as the law takes its course. Therefore, to put an end to this menace, rule of law remains a solution.

Proper orientation and reorientation is required in Nigeria. With what is happening, religious leaders need to do thorough work on their members to value human life and emphasis on need for peaceful co-existence is required. Nigeria cannot grow with the level of religious bigotry in it. Religious bigotry brings with it division in such a way that the project of building the nation is not taken seriously rather, people are so much divided and mutual suspicion in existence.

Conclusion

Religious bigotry is a dangerous attitude to any given society. Man, who is the subject of religion by his conscience is free to embrace any faith of his choice. This faith should not in any way be detrimental to the common good. Once adherents of one religion are in discomfort with other people's religion, it is religious bigotry and such poses serious challenge to the nation. Religious bigotry is clearly iconoclastic to the security and development of a country. Nigeria has so far witnessed great number of violent crises because of religion. It is not religion itself that is the problem but the bigotry exhibited by the adherents. Terrorist attacks have been seen in Nigeria as lives and property are constantly destroyed. People are living in fear and the level of poverty is on the increase. With the people at the helm of affairs not firmly arresting the situation, the security and

development of Nigeria is endangered. It is the import of this research that the issue of religious bigotry should be addressed if the nation is to witness relative peace which would trigger security and development. Equity and fairness should be enthroned and law taken its course on anyone or group using religion as a weapon of insecurity in the nation. Adherents of different religions in Nigeria should promote peace by being tolerant for there cannot be a time everyone would have the same religious faith.

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