

**ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN ENSURING PEACE AND HARMONY IN  
THE NIGERIA**

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## **CERTIFICATION**

This is to certify that this project was carried out by **ANITA ESE USIFOH** with Matriculation Number **ART1701780**

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## **DEDICATION**

This project is dedicated to God Almighty

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Firstly, with sincere and deep sense of appreciation, I want to express my profound gratitude to Almighty God, who out of His mercy and love has protected me through the hurdles and temptations that came my way in the course of this undergraduate university education. May His name be highly praised (Amen).

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**CHRIST APOSTIC CHURCH IN BENIN: AN EXPOSITORY STUDY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Peace is a concept of societal friendship and harmony in the absence of hostility and violence (Wikipedia 2020). In a social sense, peace is commonly used to mean a lack of conflict (such as war) and freedom from fear of violence between individuals or groups.

Relevant studies have shown that Nigeria has been tagged “a security risk nation”, because of the incessant crises, social vices, and lack of cordial relationship among its ethnic and religious groups. This project also showed the implication of conflicts as it affects peaceful co-existence in Nigeria and the roles of Christianity in solving the violence or conflicts in the nation. However, so much good has been done in the name of religion. Tasi (2002) reiterates that religion per se does not create problems, particularly the three main religions of Nigeria- African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1.0 GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background to the Study**

Peace is a concept of societal friendship and harmony in the absence of hostility and violence (Wikipedia 2020). In a social sense, peace is commonly used to mean a lack of conflict (such as war) and freedom from fear of violence between individuals or groups. Throughout history leaders have used peace-making and diplomacy to establish a certain type of behavioural restraint that has resulted in the establishment of regional peace or economic growth through various forms of agreements or peace treaties. Such behavioural restraint has often resulted in the reduction of conflicts, greater economic interactivity, and consequently substantial prosperity.

Nigeria is comprised of around 250 (two hundred and fifty) ethnic group gatherings. She is wealthy in differing societies (Ejikeme, 2016). The prevailing religions incorporate Christianity, Islam, and African conventional religion. Because of contrast in clans and strict convictions, there are various rates of threats, bringing about obliteration of lives and properties. Threats are recorded along the line of clans and religions. The components that underline strife as indicated by

Higazi (2011) incorporate "ethnicity, governmental issues and religion". The threats have become so articulated that solidarity of the country is under danger. A portion of these dangers are political emergency, militancy, land debates, exchange questions, and strict emergency among others. It has gotten hard for a person to live in an alternate culture or religion in Nigeria without fearing being slaughtered. This is most likely why Olawale (2013) labelled Nigeria a "security chance country" to which numerous universal networks have warned their countries not to live or even travel to Nigeria. Nigeria has been encountering various emergencies, social indecencies, and absence of cheerful relationship among her residents since autonomy. The different political emergency that prompted the 1967-1970 civil war have effectively affected solidarity and peaceful concurrence in Nigeria. Nigeria suffers a variety of complex political problems including inequality, corruption, oil disputes, national disunity, and the Boko Haram insurgency.

This seven year conflict and humanitarian crisis in the north has killed 20,000 and displaced 2.6 million people. Despite the government's announcement in 2016, that the group had been 'crushed,' attacks have continued throughout 2017 from Maiduguri city to the Lake Chad Basin in IDP camps, universities, and mosques. The plight of refugees fleeing the violence is also worsening with the current severe drought and impending famine across northeast Nigeria. Violence

has also intensified in rural areas between Fulani herdsmen and farmers amid claims of trespassing and sabotage.

The Christian custom has made critical commitments to peace and harmony in the world at various levels (Albert, 2011). Among these are open explanations by Church pioneers, projects of activity at nearby and worldwide levels, associations devoted to achieving peace and harmony, courses of study, dedicatory days and so forth. In on-going decades, Church pioneers have much of the time offered expressions on the support and encouragement of peace and harmony. Now and again these expressions have been explicit interests for peace and harmony in specific conditions; in any case, on different events they have additionally distributed progressively far reaching explanations on the requirement for peace and harmony and the methods for accomplishing it. The lessons and teachings of Christianity which is guided by the dictates of the holy book (Bible) have continually urged the individuals to guarantee peace and harmony in the general public.

Peace is an all-inclusive marvel that everybody wants and wishes to appreciate unendingly. Conventions, societies, religions and social orders do have various solutions to accomplishing and to getting a charge out of peace. At whatever point and any place there is peace there will in general be advancement and life span are getting a charge out of (Salawu 2010). To this end, Christianity, which is one of

the overwhelming religions on the planet today shows peace and urges all disciples to the beliefs to seek after peace and live peacefully with each other. The above explanation currently is by all accounts faulty with the ascent of intra, bury, and ethno-strict clashes on the planet. While most Arab and some European nations are confronted with intra-religious clashes, an African nation like Nigeria is confronted with both intra-religious and inter-religious clashes. Nigeria, which is famously known as Africa's most-crowded Black Country with a population of now around 200 million individuals, with in more than 250 ethnic groups has Christianity and Islam as its transcendent religions, however there is still in the presence of the African Traditional Religion (ATR).

Christianity as a word implies devotees of Christ or Christ like. Christians hence are the individuals who follow and act the teachings of Christ in all lifestyles. One of the peaks of Christianity or Christian ideals is peace. Christians are urged in the Good book to grasp and live peacefully with their neighbours. The following scriptures confirm this: Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it (Psalm 34 vs 14). Blessed are the Peace makers for they shall be called the children of God Matthew 5 vs 9). Let him eschew evil and do good; let him seek peace and ensue it (1 Peter 3 vs 11). Follow peace with all men and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord (Hebrews 12 vs 14). If it be possible, as much as it lieth in you, live peaceably with all men (Rom 12 vs 18).

The word Peace in Christianity is translated from the Hebrew word ‘Shalom’, which is a key word in the Bible and it’s at the centre of how God wants us to live on earth. One of the key things Jesus came to give humanity is Peace and expects us to live in peace as cited in the scriptural verses above. Peace was not only what Jesus taught but He also lived it, this in most cases is what scholars call pacifism, as Jesus never taught violence, even at his arrest by the Pharisees and one of his disciples struck the ears of the priest, Jesus rebuked the disciple and said that “those who live by the sword shall die by the sword” (Mathew 26:52, NKJV). In another place Jesus taught the people not to retaliate any evil done to them as it used to be, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, if one should strike you on the right cheek, turn the left cheek (Mathew 5:38-39, NKJV) but now to always forgive those that offend them and he charged them to forgive their neighbours even seventy times seven (Matthew 18:22, KJV).

## **1.2 Definition of Terms**

The importance of definition of terms in any academic work cannot be over emphasized. It is therefore necessary to define some terms in this work.

1. Christianity: At its most basic, Christianity is the faith tradition that focuses on the figure of Jesus Christ

2. Christians: are people who follow or adhere to Christianity based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. The term “Christian,” as we understand it, refers to anyone, man, woman, or child, who trusts in Jesus Christ as his or her Savior and Lord.
3. Peace: Peace is a concept of societal friendship and harmony in the absence of hostility and violence. In a social sense, peace is commonly used to mean a lack of conflict
4. Peace Building: Peacebuilding is a long-term process that occurs after violent conflict has slowed down or come to a halt. Thus, it is the phase of the peace process that takes place after peacemaking and peacekeeping.
5. Co-existence: Rupisinghl (1991) defines co-existence as “to exist together (in time or place) and to exist in mutual tolerance”.
6. Religion: from Anglo-Norman “religion”, from Latin “religiō” is a belief in a spiritual reality
7. Church: Alan (1950:46), explains that “Church is generally derived from Greek “Kuriakon” the Lord’s house, a building for Christian worship”. Church in New Testament is translated to Greek “ecclesia”, which always means an assembly of people and cannot mean building. For Davis (1944:111), “Church is the Lord’s house and an organized community or people acknowledging the Lord Jesus Christ as their Supreme Ruler, and

meeting steadily or as opportunities offered, for religious worship". Okwueze (2003:152) defines it as an organized body of followers of Jesus. In the context of this research work, church has to do with people and not building.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

The Christian religion has consistently taught its members on the demonstration of maintaining peace as instructed by Jesus which assists with retaining violence as opposed to raising it, thus every pattern of viciousness inciting retribution, which incites more brutality is broken by the basic demonstration of enduring the savagery and staying away from reprisal. In actuality, there have been expanded instances of interruption to peace and harmony on the planet today regardless of the church lessons of peace as specified by Jesus Christ. In any case, this research is looking at the role of the church in ensuring peace and harmony in Nigeria.

### **1.4 Aim and Objectives of the Study**

- i. To analyse the role of the church in ensuring peace and harmony in the Nigeria.
- ii. To analyse the effect of violent acts in Nigeria.
- iii. To analyse the aim of the church in respects to peace and harmony.
- iv. To distinguish the elements disturbing the peace and harmony in Nigeria.

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study is very significant because peace is very important in the society and the results will be deemed useful to anyone and everyone that comes across this research project and it will also help the church to avert conflicts and also help other researchers looking to curb conflicts in the society. The findings of this study will be useful for the government, church leaders and the general public on the role of the church in ensuring sustainable peace and harmony in the society.

## **1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

This study will cover the position of the church and Christianity in general as regards the issue of societal peace and harmony. Financial constraint and insufficient fund tend to impede the efficiency of the researcher in sourcing for the relevant materials, literature or information and in the process of data collection (internet, questionnaire and interview). In addition, time constraint was also another issue This essay will simultaneously be engaged with other academic works and This consequently will cut down on the time devoted for the research work.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Peace

Peace is regarded “as the absence of war, fear, conflict, anxiety, suffering and violence and about peaceful coexistence” (Francis, 2006; Igbuzor, 2011). Although this definition has captured elements of peace, it was criticized by scholars like Ibeanu (2006) for lacking the adequate concept of peace. To overcome this limitation, Ibeanu (2006) thus defined peace as a “process involving activities that are directly or indirectly linked to increasing development and reducing conflict, both within specific societies and in the wider international community”. In this respect, peace therefore connotes the absence of violence or war, the presence of justice, equality and development; the existence of rule of law, respect for human life and dignity, and tolerance among and between people; maintenance of a balanced ecosphere and more importantly, having inner peace and wholeness. To add to this debate, Johan Galtung, a renowned Norwegian theorist provided three types of violence (direct, structural and cultural) to help understand the concept of peace across the globe.

Galtung (2011) considers direct violence as the physical, emotional and psychological aggression caused by a direct attack through fighting or war thereby resulting in to deaths, destruction of property, and displacements of citizens among

other consequences. He sees structural violence as caused by an unjust structure not to be equated with an act of God which involves structures that cause human suffering and death which are quite avoidable if good governance exists. In his view cultural violence occurs as a result of the assumptions that bind one to structural violence. For instance, one may be indifferent toward the plight of the poor which create discrimination, injustice and suffering thereby leading to the absence of peace in the society. In addition, Galtung's positive and negative peace framework is the most widely used model by most scholars. While negative peace refers to the absence of direct violence, conflict and war at international, national, community and individual levels, positive peace refers to the absence of indirect and structural violence, inequality and injustice, unjust structures and policies and inner peace at individual levels. Due to its comprehensives, this conception becomes the most widely used by peace and conflict researchers. As earlier stated, Ibeanu (2006) has attempted to provide an understanding of peace which centres on increasing sustainable development and reducing conflict, both within societies and in the wider international community. He further pointed out that despite the general knowledge of peace; there are variations its meaning especially through the lenses of philosophy, sociology and politics. According to a philosopher, peace “is a natural, God-given state of human existence without the corruptive tendencies of man”.

According to sociologists, peace refers to a condition of social harmony in which there are no social antagonisms among people or group in a given community. For the political scientists, peace is a political condition that makes justice possible in any given society thereby entailing political order. Similarly, cultures and civilization have different viewpoints of peace. For instance, in a society that is constantly perpetuated with violence and armed conflict, it will view peace as the absence of war and violence. In a political community governed by unjust policies, it may interpret peace with the presence of freedom and justice. In a society that is materially deprived or in poverty situation, it may perceive peace as equality, development and have the basic needs of life. From whichever perspective, renowned scholars, practitioners and activist of peace have attributed different related meanings of peace into six:

1. Peace is the absence of war
2. Peace is the absence of direct violence
3. Peace is the absence of injustice
4. Peace is the absence of fear 5.
5. Peace is the presence of respect and
6. Peace is the presence of tolerance

Although several conceptions and models of peace have been advanced in which peace research might prosper (Ibeanu, 2006; Francis, 2006; Galtung, 2011; Igbuzor, 2011), it should further be understood that peace is a natural social condition, and war is not. For peace scholars, students and advocates, such information is good enough for a rational group of decision makers to avoid conflict, violence or war. This is because, violence is considered morally sinful, and therefore non-violence which is virtuous should be cultivated in the society as advanced by a variety of religious traditions (Christianity; Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, etc). Indeed, its importance lies in the fact that:

- a) Peace is a sine qua non to development.
- b) It is being eroded by perennial conflicts.
- c) Their occurrence pervades virtually all spheres of the national life.
- d) The effects of the conflicts are many and multi-dimensional.
- e) Insecurity of lives and properties is one of the consequences of conflicts.
- f) Steps should be taken to control conflicts and ensure peace in society through preventive measures instead of reactive measures.

## 2.2 Conflict

The definition of conflict like peace is also contentious. However, most scholars are of the opinion that conflict usually reflects a clash of interest or goal between parties, which may be individuals or group of individuals, or ethnic groups or states. Conflict according to most scholars occurs “when two or more people engage in a struggle over values and claims to status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals. He further explained that conflict emerges whenever one party perceives that one or more goals or purposes or means of achieving a good or preference is being threatened or hindered by the activities of one or more parties.” Put together, in conflict parties perceive or treat each other as a stumbling block that results in frustrating the other in attaining a set of goals, or even furthering one’s interest through their attitudes, behaviours or actions (Akpuru-Aja, 1997).

Generally, the conflict has been considered an obstacle to progress, political stability, economic prosperity and overall socio-economic development of any society because of its destructive impact. This therefore means that conflict must be timely averted or managed properly as failure to do so will reflect a determined action or struggle over a goal, which may be overt or subtle; manifest or imaginary. While it is not easy to classify conflicts in a categorical way, not all conflicts in

Nigeria are of the same kind as can be seen from dimensions of ethnicity, religion, politics and economy, etc.

The word Peace in Christianity is translated from the Hebrew word ‘Shalom’, which is a key word in the Bible and it’s at the centre of how God wants us to live on earth. One of the key things Jesus came to give humanity is Peace and expects us to live in peace as cited in the scriptural verses above. Peace was not only what Jesus taught but He also lived it, this in most cases is what scholars call pacifism, as Jesus never taught violence, even at his arrest by the Pharisees and one of his disciples struck the ears of the priest, Jesus rebuked the disciple and said that “those who live by the sword shall die by the sword” (Mathew 26:52, NKJV). In another place Jesus taught the people not to retaliate any evil done to them as it used to be, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, if one should strike you on the right cheek, turn the left cheek (Mathew 5:38-39, NKJV) but now to always forgive those that offend them and he charged them to forgive their neighbours even seventy times seven (Matthew 18:22, KJV).

In most states of the federation, one hears stories of violent conflict involving individuals or groups. For instance, Odi Massacre in Bayelsa state, Urhobo - Iteskiri crisis in Warri, Jimeta clash in Jos (Egwu, 2001 and Alanamu,

2004). Boko haram uprising in the northern states, among others. In these conflicts, “people are displaced, properties are destroyed and lives are lost” (Orude, 2009).

Obuseh (2016) is of the view that Nigeria cannot live in peace because “of selfishness”“. Supporting this view on why Nigerians would not co-exist peacefully is Oluwaseun (2014) who sees religion as a threat to Nigeria’s peaceful co-existence. According to him, “it is easy for a Yoruba to marry an Efik than for a Muslim to marry a Christian” and vice versa. This also shows religious intolerance as a threat to unity. And the questions, what ought to be the relationship between Christianity and peace building? Some scholars are of the view that Christianity cannot play any role towards peace building because “religion is arguably one of the single most significant causes of war and turmoil in human history (Abu-Nimer 2001, Gopin 1997 & Diez de Velasco 2007).

So much malevolence has been done in the name of religion (Ayer 1976, Cited in Collins et al. 2006). However, so much good has also been done in the name of religion. The successful expansion of the Christian missions in Nigeria “began in the 19th century through the activities of freed slaves from Sierra Leone” (Anene, 1991). Missionaries’ activities carried with it the building of schools, churches, roads, hospitals and of course other institutions of government. It should be borne in mind that social reforms came with Christianity-commitment to

national, moral and political advancement. Christianity featured prominently in the “series of events that led to the development of Nigerian nation, and were able to bring about certain political, economic and technological changes in the region” (Ajayi, 1991). Their activities helped to break down ethnic prejudices and to bring their converts in loyalty transcending ethnicities. Hence, patriotic Nigerians came to believe that by practicing Christianity they were paving the way for the creation of the Nigerian nation. The Nigeria state of their dream was one in which Christianity would flourish, inter-tribal wars would cease and the industrial, technological and intellectual revolutions which had occurred in Europe would repeat themselves in Nigeria. By encouraging a common consciousness, Christianity would reduce to a minimum all other sectional loyalties such as the many incipient tribal/crisis groups that divided Nigeria. It becomes very necessary to ask if Christianity, being a major religion in Nigeria, has no capacity to contribute to Nigeria’s peaceful co-existence.

Peaceful co-existence in Nigeria means Christians, Muslims and African Traditional religionists engaging in ecumenical discourse and working together in different contexts to engage with and proffer solutions to social, political, economic and cultural problems instead of the hate-filled antagonistic discourse of superiority and dominance. Whether Islam or Christian, what is common to both sides is that adherents of both faiths are human beings and faith also binds them

together as Nigerians. Adherents of both religions love their country and God. However, it has been observed in recent times that some of the potent tools used by mischief-makers to cause dissatisfaction, hatred, disunity and tribal war are ethnicity and religion. Rupisinghl (1991) defines co-existence as “to exist together (in time or place) and to exist in mutual tolerance”.

Peaceful co-existence in Nigeria implies recognizing our differences and appreciating them. Importantly, Nigerians should focus on areas where they concur and work together to strengthen the common ties and design a mechanism that will enable them to actually appreciate their areas of disagreement with mutual respect for one another. It is the responsibility of Nigerians to work collectively to protect and safeguard our co-existence. In doing so, Nigerians must avoid extremism, exercise caution by recognizing the religious differences, show high level of understanding and respect for one another such that all and sundry are given equal opportunity so that Nigerians can live in peace with one another irrespective of their tribal and religious affiliations. What practical ways and potential responsibilities can be explored by Christianity so as to sustain peaceful co-existence? These are the problems that this research resolves. The research adopted historical phenomenological in view of need to draw conclusions from the historical setting of problems associated with the quest for peaceful co-existence.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3.0 The Crisis of Conflict in Nigeria

Conflict brings about all manner of outcomes such as poverty, death, destruction, food shortage and disease, etc. The first major sign of conflict which brought tension among Nigerians came on the 15th of January 1966. As a result of coup, the Eastern Region made up of majority of Igbo people declared a republic known as Biafra. The rest of Nigerians led by Northern Nigeria declared war on the Igbo in July 1967. However, the war ended in January 1970. Since then, peace has eluded the regions. Between 1999 till date, Nigeria experienced critical events that undermined her co-existence. The crisis reached its peak according to Okwueze (2003) during the military regime especially “under Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha as Nigeria was already facing serious economic and political problems”.

Some of the major crises of peace in Nigeria are as follows;

1. Sharia Crisis
2. Niger Delta Crisis (Militancy)
3. Kidnapping
4. Political Crisis
5. Religious Crisis
6. Disputes

7. Land

8. Trade Disputes

### **Sharia Crisis**

According to Iduh (2007), “in November 1999, the introduction of Sharia law (Islamic civil and criminal code) in the twelve Northern States of Nigeria met aggressive resistance that caused the religious crisis of February 2000”. The implementation of Sharia has often in the opinion of Harnischfeger (2008) “sparked national controversies since the days of its proposal in 1999 by Zamfara governor, Sani Ahmad Yerima”. The government of the Federation or of a state shall not adopt any religion as “a State of Religion” and should also make her position known on Sharia law in the constitution.

Niger Delta Crisis (Militancy):

According to Human Rights Watch (1999) “12 policemen were murdered in Odi, Bayelsa State in the oil rich Niger Delta in Nigeria, the military invaded the community and committed mass murder”. In Choba community in Rivers State, “soldiers killed four people and raped a large number of women when they were deployed to disperse protests outside the gates of Willbros Nigeria Limited, the

subsidiary of an American pipeline Construction Company” Human Rights Watch (1999). In the 2005 World Report of the Human Rights Watch, they identified on Nigerian prisons and other detention centers across the country practices like “flogging with whips, beating with batons and machetes, and denying suspect”s foods, water and medical treatment”. They observed that it was a widespread practice in the police custody, prevalent in the Criminal Investigation Department (CID). Restiveness of the Niger Delta region where youths of the region unable to reconcile the wealth the region gives the nation with the extremely poor condition which the region lives with has taken to actions which create anxiety, tension and conflict. According to Iduh (2007) “this has necessitated the formation of ethnic militia whose goal appears to be to effect violent changes where peaceful changes are impossible. Since then, ethnic militants have taken over the Niger Delta region making it a no-peace environment”.

In June 2009, BBC News revisited the Niger Delta crisis. The government announced that it would grant amnesty and unconditional pardon to militants in the Niger Delta which would last for 60 days beginning on 6th August 2009 and ending 4th October 2009. The amnesty office has worked to make them productive, primarily by placing and sponsoring them in vocational and higher education courses in Nigeria and abroad. With Nigeria President Goodluck Jonathan’s defeat in March 2015 elections, the amnesty programs likely end in December 2015 and

patronage to former militant leaders terminated, local discontent is Deeping (BBC News2015). From Iri news (2009), thousands of Nigerians have fled from their villages and hundreds of people may have been feared dead because of the offense.

## **Kidnapping**

The crisis in Nigeria has been variously reported by various scholars like Whitney Young (2001) who opines that “armed youths occupied shell oil company buildings in Lagos and held hostage 30 Nigerian employees and four guards of the Anglo-Dutch-owned Company. The Nigerian army overcame the group releasing 34 hostages. According to Basse (2006), 2000 armed militant’s kidnapped 40 persons, 15 being Britons, 15 French, and 10 Korean citizens from residences belonging to EIF Oil Company in Port Harcourt according. The 40 hostages were released unharmed several hours later. It was later suspected that the kidnapping was carried out by disgruntled men. Agbuegba, (2006) reported how the Niger Delta armed militants kidnapped 22 Nigerian citizens and two unidentified foreign nationals working for Chevron, a U.S Oil Company. The militants later released all of them. Whitney Young (2001) stated that armed youths stormed Oil drilling rigs, taking 165 persons hostage. The hostages include 145 Nigerians, 7 U.S citizens, 5 Britons, 8 Australian, and Lebanese nationals. All were employed by service contractors of Shell Oil Company. However, all the hostages were later released

unharmful. The problem of ethnic militia and their activities has brought numerous crises in Nigeria. The groups like the Odua People's Congress, Bakassi Boys, Egbesu movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Arewa People's Congress, etc., is on the increase. The above is just few cases of the crisis in Nigeria. This data gives us an idea about the crisis in Nigeria in particular and the world in general. Nigeria is gradually degenerating into a state of terror and fear and the crisis today is damaging the country's international image.

### **Political Crisis**

In Benue state, central Nigeria in 2001 experienced another military assault as affirmed by Terwase ((2012) "a planned military operation was carried out in revenge for the killing of 19 soldiers, over 200 unarmed civilians were killed". The government failed to condemn any of the attacks. The nation is not confronted with external aggression, yet Nigeria is losing more lives and prominent citizens alike. There were series of assassinations in Nigeria, like on the 23rd of December 2001, according to Edemodu (2002) "the former Attorney-general of the federation Chief Bola Igwe was assassinated in his residence and the killers are still at large". Nwokocha (2005) reported that on March 5 2003, Marshall Harry-the national vice chairman for the south-south zone of the All Nigeria People's Party(ANPP) was

murdered at home, when the police was alerted, they said they had no fuel in their vehicle. Barnabas Igwe the chairman of the Nigeria Bar Association Onitsha Branch and his wife were assassinated on September 1, 2002 according to Ikelegbe (2004). Alliance for Democracy (2005) states that on November 1, 2000 Prophet Eddie Okeke was murdered, and in February 2001, Chief Eze-ochumegwu Okonkwo a chairman of a local government was also killed. In 2006, Engineer Funsho Williams and Dr. Ayodeji Daramola suffered similar fates was reported by Offiong (2007). The two men were governorship aspirants of Lagos state and Ekiti state respectively. It is so disheartening and painful, if security of lives and properties cannot be guaranteed in a democratic state.

### **Religious Crisis**

According to Human Rights Watch (2003), in November 2002, Nigeria witnessed another religious crisis motivated by Miss World Pageant. Because Nigeria won the 2001 miss world contest by Agbani Darego, it was to host the 2002 miss world in Nigeria but the timing coincided with the Muslim Ramadan Festival and it met stumbling block from the Islamic clerics". The massive public protest and riots that followed caused loss of lives, many injured and properties worth millions of naira damaged. There is also the problem of sectarian religious killings perpetuated by Boko haram in many parts of the Northern Nigeria.

According to Brianna Burt (2016), Boko Haram was founded in Maiduguri, northern Nigeria in 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf and has its political goal to create an Islamic state. The organization sees Western style education as a sin. Adam (2011) affirmed that Boko Haram carried out “series of attack on police stations and other state buildings in Maiduguri, Yola, Kano, Kaduna, etc. The federal government and Boko Haram members have been at war since. Also during Shehu Shagari’s government, there was an attempt to take the country into the organization of Islamic conference (OIC)”.

In April 2014, Amnesty International published a briefing expressing concern over actions by both “Boko Haram, the Nigerian militant Islamist group, and the Nigerian state security forces that may constitute “war crimes” and “crimes against humanity”, urging the immediate investigation of violations of International humanitarian law. The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P) also warned of the gravity of such acts stating, “Indiscriminate violence heightens the risk of further mass atrocities, including possible crimes against humanity”. In May 2014, one month after Boko Haram’s abduction and continued detention of 276 Chibok school girls, the Internal Criminal Prosecutor, Fatou (2014) said that crimes committed by Boko Haram fell within the jurisdiction of the court, which has authority, over cases of war crimes, crimes against humanity and

genocide. Religious intolerance has over the years been the major causes of conflicts in Nigeria.

According to Nehi Igbinijesu (2013), Muslim-Christian tensions turned violent in Jos, with at least 400 people killed and 18,000 displaced before the military restored order. Korb (2011) stated that “Muslims are engaging in Jihad in the state in order to Islamize Nigeria”. This belief of a religiously-based conflict combined prejudicial attitudes of the “other religion” results in considerable fear and plays a major role in ongoing conflict (Higazi, 2011). Nigeria Civil Society on the crisis stated that “the incident has escalated into mass violence in which residents from different communities in the city attacked one another”. In response, Human Rights Watch (2005) stated “this is not the first outbreak of deadly violence in Jos, but the government has failed to hold anyone accountable. Reports by HRW also maintained accusing the Nigeria military and police units of responding to the violence with excessive force against civilians. Adam (2010) reported “a massacre south of Jos that left at least 200 villagers dead”. The International Crisis Group recorded the two other attacks on villages by Muslim Fulani gangs the same day, “which was in apparent retaliation for January violence”, raising the day’s death count to 500, mostly Christian women and children. Such events led to the Global Centre for the Responsibility to protect

(GCR2P) to suggest that these atrocities may rise to the level of crimes against humanity.

HRW'S wrote Report 2013 addressed further episodes of Inter-communal violence in the Plateau and Kaduna state of the middle belt. Over 300 people were killed in 2012 in these locations with victims "hacked to death, shot, and buried alive-in many cases simply based on their ethnic or religious identity". The report also mentioned discriminatory state and local policies towards "non-indigenes" people, which "continue to aggravate inter-communal tensions and perpetuate ethnic based divisions. The country has also witnessed "the rise of radical groups like the Maitatsine, Darul Islam", Alli (1993). Many splinter groups have been known to emerge from minor doctrinal disputes that led to several denominations. However, Kraemer (1938) described the age in which Nigeria is an age of perpetual conflict and turmoil". To this end, many countries of the world, Nigeria in particular have not known peace over the years. It is this reason that necessitated the formation of many international organizations whose objectives were and still the maintenance of world peace and security.

## **Land Disputes**

There are also land disputes which have caused conflicts across the country. Examples according to Mustafa (2010) are: “the communities of Aguleri and Umuleri in Anambra state, the Brass and Nembe communities of Bayelsa and Rivers states are typical examples of conflicts emanating from prolonged boundary disputes”. Even the Bakassi Peninsula internal boundary dispute between Nigeria and Cameroun almost evolved into war when Cameroonian soldiers opened fire and killed Nigerian soldiers patrolling the river Apka Yafi on 16h May 1981. Cameroun apologized and later won the dispute at the International court of Justice at Hague in 2001, Nehi Igbinjesu (2013). Currently, Nigeria is facing ethnic diversity conflicts involving the farmers and Fulani herdsmen in Nasarawa, Abia and Enugu. The herdsmen attacked these states, killing thousands of people and properties worth millions of Naira were destroyed.

### Trade Disputes

Trade related disputes are another area of conflict in Nigeria. Another crisis that occurred in Nigeria was the removal of fuel subsidy Nigeria is a country where the majority of the population live below poverty level. Removal of subsidy on fuel will no doubt worsen an already existing difficult situation for the people. The government has failed to provide amenities for the people, education is not well funded, the roads are dilapidated, railways have packed up and healthcare

deteriorated. There is the issue of tribalism as a crises situation in Nigeria whereby people favour their wards when it comes to appointments and contracts. Favouritism is the order of the day and the game of jungle justice exists. During the crises situation, lives were lost, properties worth millions of naira are destroyed, economic activities are grounded to a halt, some people even become refugees in their own land, foreign investors are afraid to come in, government attention will be diverted to providing security rather than focusing on sustainable development. All these do not ensure peaceful co-existence.

Images showing some crises situation in Nigeria.



Baby killed by Boko Haram during their 2011 Christmas Day bombing of churches.

Source: Nigeria Masterweb Citizen News.

<http://nigeriamasterweb.com/blog/index.php/2012/01/18/nigeria-a-country-in-crisis>



Fuel Protesters Burn Tyres in Lagos

Source: Nigeria Masterweb Citizen News.

<http://nigeriamasterweb.com/blog/index.php/2012/01/18/nigeria-a-country-in-crisis>.

The following is a list of massacres that have occurred in Nigeria (numbers may be approximate):

NAME	DATE	LOCATION	DEATHS	NOTES
Asaba massacre	7 October 1967	Asaba, Delta	Up to 500 men	Occurred during Biafran Civil War
Odi massacre	20 November 1999	Odi, Bayelsa State	43	Nigerian military attacked the village of Odi, as part of the Conflict in the Niger Delta.
2000 Kaduna riots	21 February-23 May 2000	Kaduna	2,000-5,000	Religious riots between Christians and Muslims over the introduction of sharia law in Kaduna State start of the religious riots phase of the Sharia conflict in Nigeria.
2001 Jos riots	7–17 September 2001	Jos	500–5000	Religious riots between Christians and Muslims.
Miss World riots	November 22, 2002	Kaduna	200+	Inter-religious riots that started on 22 November in Kaduna, along with many houses of worship being burned by religious zealots. Cause: article in <i>Thisday</i> about the 2002 Miss World beauty contest (to be held in Abuja), in which Muslims took offence.

Yelwa massacre	February–May 2004	Yelwa, Shendam and Kano	975	Religiously motivated killings between Christians and Muslims.
Muhammad cartoons crisis	18 February 2006	Maiduguri	50+	The international crisis reached the Nigerian city of Maiduguri, in which over 50 people were killed and many buildings destroyed or damaged by rioting Muslims, outraged because of cartoons about Muhammad in the Danish newspaper <i>Jyllands-Posten</i> .
2008 Jos riots	28–29 November 2008	Jos	381	Religious riots between Christians and Muslims over the result of a local election.
2009 Boko Haram Uprising	July 2009	Maiduguri, Bauchi, Potiskum, Wudil	1,000+	Islamic militants killed over a thousand people between 26 and 29 July; during the violence, Christians were killed for refusing to convert to Islam
2010 Jos massacre	2010	Jos	992	Religious rioting; victims were mostly Christians killed by Muslims
2011 Abuja United Nations bombing	26 August 2011	Abuja	21	73 injured; Boko Haram attacked a United Nations compound
2011 Damaturu attacks	4 November 2011	Damaturu	100-150	Islamic militants associated with Boko Haram attacked police stations, churches, and banks
December 2011 Nigeria clashes	December 2011	Maiduguri and Damaturu	68+	Islamic militants associated with Boko Haram clashed with security forces between 22 and 23 December
2011 Nigeria bombings	25 December 2011	Madalla	41+	73 injured; Muslim militants bombed a Catholic church during Christmas mass
January 5–6, 2012 Nigeria attacks	January 2012	Mubi, Yola, Gombi, and Maiduguri	37+	Islamic terrorists attacked churches and Christian businesses; Boko Haram claimed responsibility
January 20, 2012 Nigeria attacks	20 January 2012	Kano	185	Islamic terrorists attacked churches and Christian businesses; Boko Haram claimed responsibility
April 2012 Kaduna massacre	8 April 2012	Kaduna	38	Islamic terrorists bombed a church on Easter

June 2012 Kaduna church bombings	17 June 2012	Kaduna, Wusasa, and Sabon Gari	12-19	80 injured; Islamic terrorists bombed three churches
Deeper Life Church shooting	7 August 2012	Okene	19	Islamic militants attacked a church; the pastor was among the dead

Table 1.0: Some major crises in Nigeria.

Source: ADOPTED FROM: ISAAC TERWASE SAMPSON, "Religious violence in Nigeria: Causal diagnoses and strategic recommendations to the state and religious communities", African Journal on Conflict Resolution (2012) p. 107-112.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **4.0 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

#### **4.1 The Role of Christianity in the Search for Peace**

Before peace can be said to exist anywhere, the citizens must be free from all forms of violence, be it political, economic, social, or religion. Gaiya (2011), is of the opinion that religion infuse every aspect of Nigerian life, from fundamental greetings (we thank God) to name of businesses (God's favor restaurant). Engaging it in conflict settings can provide unique opportunities to intervene in ongoing conflicts or to reduce the risk that violence will erupt. The following are some of the ways that this research proposes on how Christianity can influence peace initiatives in Nigeria:

##### **i. Christian Teachings**

Christian teachings can provide values, norms, and motivations that support non-violent approaches to raising and confronting differences. It can also provide empathy and compassion that can sustain reconciliation and problem solving across divisions. One of the ways Christianity has helped in securing peace in Nigeria is by appealing to the conscience of the people through ethical teachings.

Conscience is a judge or guide. According to Abogurin (1986) it is seen as “the science of moral conduct”.

## **ii. Church Humanitarian Efforts**

The Church in the course of her humanitarian activities has brought relief to the oppressed by improving their living standards. In many places, the church has been in the vanguard against crises and injustice. Using Nigeria as a case study, the church's peace and humanitarian initiatives has been demonstrated as follows: Since the start of Nigeria civil war which lasted from 1967 to 1970, apart from public declaration in condemnation of the civil war, the church made several efforts to bring assistance to the Biafran people. The church embarked upon campaigns making several trips abroad to appeal to international humanitarian agencies to come to the rescue of the Biafrans. However, food, clothing and drugs were donated in large quantity by such humanitarian bodies as UNICEF, WHO, UNESCO, WCC and the Red Cross Society. Long before the outbreak of the war, Christian leaders campaigned vigorously to stop the war hostilities. On March 21, 1967, according to Okwueze (2003), a delegation of church leaders made up of representatives of the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Communion, the Methodist, the Presbyterian Church and the Salvation Army called on the Military Head of State, Col. Yakubu Gowon (as he then was), the aim of this visit was to appeal to the head of the military faction to see reason and vote for peace.

To alleviate the sufferings of the helpless civilians on the Biafra side, the church got Caritas International, a humanitarian organization, who supplied food and medication in abundance. Among the Biafrans, the name Caritas became synonymous with charity. While the war was on, the church was helping to fight hunger and disease and this was possible by the assistance which they got from the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Vatican.

### **iii. Christian Organizations' Efforts**

Religious organizations did not keep quiet in all these crises. The Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), issued a statement aimed at achieving peace. The statement as signed by its president, Dr. Mike Okonkwo read: "The spate of ethnic and religious violence and the kid gloves with which the federal government is handling the matter is fast sending dangerous signals to this nascent democracy. PFN noted that the federal government is quick to take very hard decisions on helpless civilians whenever there is social unrest in areas that are predominantly inhabited by Christians". The statement went further to add: "we are therefore, calling on the federal government to do everything possible to call these Jihadists to order, so as to avoid a looming crisis".

### **iv. Christian Association of Nigeria**

The Christian Association of Nigerian (CAN) has risen in condemnation of religious crisis in Nigeria. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) made headlines statements about Boko Haram. Oritsejafor (2012), head of the Christian Association of Nigeria, stated that “I will now make a final call to the Nigerian government to use all resources available to it to clearly define and neutralize the problem as other nations have done. He further stated that “the church leadership has hitherto put great restraint on the restive and aggrieved millions of Nigerians, but can no longer guarantee such cooperation if the trend of terror is not halted immediately”.

The Kaduna State Chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) has said that the continued attacks of the Boko Haram sect on Christians and churches across the Northern States, is a deliberate attempt to wipe Christians from the region. Chairman of CAN in the state, Reverend Sam Kraakevik Keyiyat, in a statement said the attacks and killings of Christians in Ahmadu Bayero University, Kano were barbaric (Daily Trust, 2016). This shows that there are reasonable people in CAN, who are working as hard as they can for peace. However, religious group laments increased killings by Boko Haram. The North-Central CAN Chairman, Yakubu Pam, according to Vanguard November 16, 2014), led other Christian leaders to visit the state police commissioner, noting that latest statistics revealed over 264 deaths had been recorded in Riyom and Barkari Ladi local

government areas of Zaria after the 2015 elections. The president of CAN, Pastor Oritsejafor urged the federal government not to negotiate with Boko Haram. It is a waste of time, energy and effort because people are being killed on a daily basis. Rather he suggested four way solutions:

- i. Christians must not relent in their prayers. There have to be a divine input into what is happening. Christian leaders to address the Christian politicians regularly and to monitor how they sustain peaceful co-existence.
- ii. Secondly, the military must not relent. They must buckle up. Though there is a serious problem in our security agency, the problem of sabotage. They leak information every day to the Boko Haram themselves and reporters even get the stories. The saboteurs are using the equipment against government in the sense that they are handing them over to the insurgents.
- iii. Thirdly, Muslim clerics, Muslim political leaders and traditional rulers should come together and use their doctrines in Wahhabi and Salafi to engage them probably through some of these their Quranic Studies and Scholars, they may be able to get to a point where they can discourage some of their activities and gradually get them to become mentally healthy again.
- iv. Fourthly, for these same religious clerics to help us go to the grassroots and start convincing the average person on the streets or in the Mosques that

Boko Haram is not fighting for them or for their good. And lastly, the government should play their part by arming the military.

#### **v. Ecumenical Efforts**

Furthermore, the Ecumenical center at Abuja is not left out. They are aimed at bringing about peace in a crisis nation. Recently, the Lagos Diocese of the Catholic Church organized a get together for Christians and Non-Christians alike. This type of coming together helps to bring about peace. The inter religions conflicts that are ravaging different parts of our country Nigeria can be stemmed down through dialogue and interfaith worships and conferences. During the General Sani Abacha years, the different religions in Nigeria, namely Christianity and Islam held series of meetings together aimed at bringing sanity, stability and peace in Nigeria.

In one of such meetings, Emmanuel Gbonigi, Anglican Bishop of Akwa insisted that the military must go to pave way for peace. Reverend Father Mathew Kukah of the Catholic Secretariat, Lagos asked for the release of all the detainees and a restructuring of the military in order to achieve the much desired peace. Lateef Adegbite, secretary of the Nigeria Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, (SCIA) was among those who called for a government of National unity to ensure that peace reigned.

#### **vi. Prayers**

Christians always pray for peace in our country Nigeria whenever adherents gather to worship. In the Anglican Church, there is a collect for “peace”, which must be prayed at least in every Sunday service. There is also a special prayer for peace in Nigeria, which is said every mass celebrated by a Catholic priest. For peace in Nigeria, at Kaduna, there are the following:

1. Christian and Muslim women pray for Nigeria, CAN offers praying ground for Muslims in Kaduna, and Christian-Muslim youth embark on peace (2012). In fact, the church prays that the world and Nigeria in particular should be blessed with peace.
2. In November, 1999, according to Uzuegbunam (2002), a five day conference of all religions of the world opened in Jordan. The theme of the conference is “Religion for peace”. Representatives from all the major religious denominations were there. Representatives from the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches, in addition to delegates from Islam, Hindu and Sikh religions. King Abdullah, King of Jordan remarked that the time has come for the religions of the world to forge a united co-operative front towards the promotion of peace in the world. He further explained that “only in a congenial atmosphere can genuine progress be made in a world of increasing complicated temperament”.

3. The world conference on Religion and peace is a non-governmental organization begun in 1970 by Christians, Buddhists, Muslims and others to promote peace. It has helped to promote peace and harmony in the Balkans, in Sierra Leone and in the Middle East (Okwueze, 2003).

This is an attempt at taking a critical look at the efforts made so far by many Christian bodies in Nigeria so that peace reigns in spite of the hostile tendencies of man. However, some scholars have raised many criticisms within the processes of religious peace-building, that the greatest challenge to religious peacebuilding is the ambivalence of religion. Appleby (2008:272) stated that “some religious peacebuilding situations require additional skills and knowledge of contemporary peacebuilding theory and practice”. In some locations, religious actors may join the field without the benefit of professional training and experience”. According to Shenk (1993) opines that “some individuals and groups will be against working with actors of a different religion or categorically opposed to intersection of religion and peacebuilding”. However its success, at times religious actors will simply be unwelcome or inappropriate. In addition, sometimes religious actors will find it difficult to work with their co-religionists.

Despite this opposition or criticisms of using religion for peaceful co-existence of the various tribes and religious groups in Nigeria, there are practical contributions that the church has made towards peaceful co-existence in Nigeria

apart from praying and preaching. Some of those practical contributions are: The church has set up indigenous churches everywhere in Nigeria. According to Hanks (1998), in the 20th century different mission bodies seriously evangelized and “founded schools and colleges and opened clinics and hospitals, introduced more advanced methods of farming, reduced the native language to writing and began translating the Bible”. Going through the country, one sees these institutions all over Nigeria.

In the opinion of (McCain, 1999), there equally seems to be increasing numbers of Junior and Higher Islamic schools and colleges in Nigeria. “There are over 400 Seminaries/Bible Colleges, and Christian universities established by the Catholic, Protestant and the Pentecostals in the present Nigeria. There are also numerous shrines, covens and prayer houses where apprentices are being taught the traditions of the Africans. These institutions have produced more clerics, Priests, Bishops, priest healers, Imams and the likes. More Nigerians are becoming lecturers in the colleges and universities. The church has greatly assisted in wiping out illiteracy (Ugwu 2002, Ayadele 1966). The church has played significant roles in the evolvement of a literature culture in Nigeria. This was through the establishments of various missionary and quoranic schools in Nigeria (Lemu, 2002).

#### **viii. Christianity, Morality and Humility**

Christianity according to Mbachirin (2011) has made great achievements in the areas of healthcare and rural development since its inception in Nigeria. The church encourages people to live moral lives by providing them with the virtues of humility. Omoregbe (1996), states that one of the virtues taught by the church is the virtues of humility. This provides man with a new dimension to the concept of leadership and greatness. The church has over the years produced great leaders in Nigeria who has championed the cause of leadership (Dike, 1957).

Beginning from the 18th century, Nigeria started witnessing the emergence of nationalities with seasoned leadership qualities like Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Sir Ahmadu Bello, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, General Muhammed Buhari, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, among others. Though some of them perceived leadership not as a responsibility, but as revenue to amass wealth for them, but majority of them did creditably and improved the lot of the people tremendously.

#### **ix. The Church and National Growth**

The church has fostered national growth and development which enhances co-existence. The church has achieved some measures of incarnation in Nigeria by borrowing some cultural elements, by adopting local drums, singing in local languages, hand clapping and dancing with African rhyme and the likes. There

were obviously signs for the recovery of Nigerian cultural values which further aided more development of Nigerian indigenous languages and the peaceful co-existence. Another area of the churches contribution towards peaceful co-existence in Nigeria is in the ordinations of women clerics in the Presbyterian ordained Bishops in 1900s and 2000s. The ordination of Mrs. Marguret Idahosa of the church of God Mission, Benin, is a case in point (McCain, 1999).

The Roman Catholic Church resists ordination of women as Priests. Equally, more and more Pentecostals are being elected into the leadership positions of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) at the Local, State and National levels which had not been the case before. From all these indications, Nigeria is a very fertile soil for religion the church has done a lot to bring about peaceful co-existence of the various tribes and religious groups.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5.0 EVALUATION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Evaluation

Relevant studies have shown that Nigeria has been tagged “a security risk nation”, because of the incessant crises, social vices, and lack of cordial relationship among its ethnic and religious groups. This project also showed the implication of conflicts as it affects peaceful co-existence in Nigeria and the roles of Christianity in solving the violence or conflicts in the nation. However, so much good has been done in the name of religion. Tasi (2002) reiterates that religion per se does not create problems, particularly the three main religions of Nigeria- African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam.

To this thinking, each of these religions teaches love in its own way and may not discourage peaceful co-existence, mutual respect and tolerance. It is obvious that religious organizations have played mediatory and humanitarian roles towards peaceful co-existence in Nigeria. These roles include religious tolerance, honesty and impartiality among others. The findings also reveal that there is an inter-relationship between Christianity and peace. Indeed, in the traditional African setting, religion did influence the chiefs who were the leaders to protect the people and promote peace and harmony. Seeking solutions to these problems through

government means alone will not address the question holistically, it simply begins with us. Values, including forgiveness and reconciliation in religious texts and teachings can inspire communities to change attitudes and actions and transform their world views so as to understand others. Christian leaders and institutions have attributes that are considered trustworthy and credible by the local population to their established roles in their respective communities and as such should be used in conflict situations. Nigerians should be reoriented to see themselves as brethren no matter their religious differences. In order to do this in a satisfactory manner, one needs to be concerned with the relationship between peace and Christianity, that is, the spiritual dimensions of human life. Also, our political, social Christian leaders must make concrete efforts to see that peace reigns supreme throughout the country.

However, religious bigotry should be curbed out and proper tenets of Christian teachings are taught and practiced. What needs to be undertaken is the integration of Christianity into peace. “It is only through this integration that Nigerians would be motivated to be selfless rather than protecting their self-interest and sacrificing the interest of others” (Cristni, 2007). Thus, when Christianity is rightly handled, it could be the solution to the incessant violence, confrontation and conflicts in Nigeria. Christianity is therefore an indispensable tool in peace building in Nigeria.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

## **5.3 Recommendations**

1. The church leaders should together with schools encourage students to engage in meaningful activities such as dramatization, miming, poetry, singing, projects. According to Adejobi (2009), “the more children are exposed to reading materials that promote images of other people’s culture, religion, uniqueness, social identity, among others, the less likely they are to find faults with one another and the more they are able to live among and work together for the benefit of mankind and for the good of the society”. The church leaders should re-orientate the members of the society towards peace and tolerance rather than towards violence. Adams (2000) affirms that “church leaders should liaise with curriculum planners, to ensure that the tenets of promoting peaceful co-existence such as kindness, loyalty, honesty, love, optimism, compassion, etc. are included in reading comprehension passages of the English language curriculum.
2. The non-governmental organizations (NGO’s) should redouble their efforts as facilitator of dialogues and mediators of conflicts between conflicting parties. In addition, they should “setup their advocacy by sensitizing the people about their

rights and the rights of others especially on peaceful co-existence, civic and religious rights”, among others (Enukora, 2005).

3. Church leaders should approach politicians and teach them the importance of good governance and encourage them to avoid discrimination and marginalization of the people when dealing with developmental projects and religious matters in the country (Salawu, 2010). Politicians should not mingle religion with politics.
4. Church leaders should preach and promote ethno-religious tolerance and accommodation of opposing views as part of deepening peaceful co-existence and harmony in the country. In Nigeria, “intolerance of opposing views by adherents of the major religions has heated the polity and caused tension”. (Salamu, 2010).
5. Church leaders should monitor Christian politicians to sponsor bills of peaceful co-existence.
6. Inter-faith training of the youths should be encouraged by the church leaders so as to enlighten them about the faith of others.
7. Church leaders should ensure the protection of religious freedom of the citizens. This is necessary as one observes that the constitutional provisions for freedom of worship, religious expression and obligation as entrenched in section 38(1) and (2) of the 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria are weak.

There is need to promote a human rights based approach to the protection of religious freedom in Nigeria (US Department of States Report, 2014). Most of the tensions and conflicts between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria are because of the flagrant abuse of the fundamental individual and group rights in the country.

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