

RELIGION AS AN INDISPENSABLE TOOL FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

There are divergent views on the concept and ideologies of religion between the third world centuries and the developed nations. Many in the third World nations belief that religion plays an integral role in the development of the total man and the county, while those in the developed nations believed that it should be scrapped out of human existence and be replaced with a different ideology that is good for humanity, because to them religion is a promoter of violence and that the goal of good governance will not be achieved in the place where religion strives. In view of this, this paper takes a critical look at religion by exposing some of the arguments that have been presented on its concept and ideologies. The research methodology adopted is historical this was because the nature of the research demanded an historical. The findings of the study revealed that there was a significant relationship between religion and governance in Nigeria. The paper also x-ray good governance within the context of Nigeria, bringing some of the complexities religion posses to the country in terms of achieving the goals and good governance in a county that is developing and finally draws conclusion. Among the recommendations made includes, Nigeria citizens should not take tribe, language, religion and location as means of difference to fight fellow Nigerian.

Keywords: Religion, tool, good, governance, Nigeria

Introduction

Religion within the last three decades has attracted global attention. Some of the news in the media today captured stories of the experts of religion either for good or for evil particularly in continent of Africa and Asia. Religion is an attractive force as no institution has been able to gather crowd like religion does not for crusades and outreaches as done in Nigeria, and some religious festivals among the Hindus of India.

Religion in Nigeria is a hyper sensitive issue for the fact that everything seems to revolve around it, the interpretation is given by scholars on religion is not different with these found in other countries. Religion is "divisive" Cavanaugh (2003), Kuka (2001) made a shift from his course by maintaining that religion is a vehicle for disintegration, Best (2001), in Groma (2010). Again, it is the root cause of violence. This negative interpretation does not speak well for religion and still does not capture the heart and the core principles and values in which it stands for. If religion is a 'divisive force', a 'vehicle for disintegration', and the 'cause of violence', as alluded by scholars, than their interpretation is not intangible, but based on paper research and observation of the outcome of religious activities in human life. For instance, the ethnic cleansing violence in Serbia, India, and Syri Lanka all had religious underpinnings and of course Nigeria is not left out of the relative exploits of religion which has caused observers to wonder whether religious strands such as ethnicity, policies and colonialism are the reasons for anti-progressive role it has played over the years in Nigeria and indeed in other parts of the world. The question this paper attempts to answer is whether religion can ever be a tool for good governance or not? considering its many negative exploits across the globe.

The Concept and Ideology of Religion

There are many religions in the world today with different faith, belief and principles, each has its historical narratives on how it evolved in the particular soil it was nurtured. Religion is a subject of scholarship particularly its interaction with people and the society (vice versa) from the days of Durkheim, Freud, Marx and Weber. This institution has become the focal point of debate among the academic and the media. There are people who look at religion as a course while others see it as a blessing, each of these groups have their views on what religion is all about. Those who see it as a course may be associating it with so many violence through loss of lives and destruction of public property it has caused, while those who see it as a blessing may also pick on its good sides like the healings, decline provisions and protections.

Attempts to define religion has become herculean task; because of the complexities it poses, again the fact that there are many religions in the world puts the definer of religion into dilemma; because defining religion must not be streamlined to one particular tradition going by the so many religions that exist around the globe. Scholars have therefore continued to view religion with different academic courses, while some believed that religion cannot be defined, others believed

that it can be defined. Danjibo (2013), takes a generic view in looking at religion that "Religion has and will always be an odious task", his assertion is based on fact that "religion can be moved from different academic field of studies such as philosophy, psychology or ideology". To him, the term had always and will continue to create difficulty if an attempt is made to define it. In view of this, Laguda (2001) posits that scholars of religion had advised that an attempt to define religion should be ignored, they suggested that it should be explained. On the other hand, others believed that though difficult to define yet it is desirable that a working definition should be given. The position Laguda is taking would rather throw off balance, this is because there is thin line between explaining a concept and defining it. Attempting to explain religion would end up defining it, more also; one will lack what basic concepts to consider in an attempt to separate "explaining" and "defining" religion. Despite the difficulties the definitions of religion presents. Durkheim (2001) sees religion as a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say things set apart and surrounded by prohibition". Durkheim's construct of the unified system of beliefs captures all 'Theistic and non-Theistic' religious inclination and with those which are always religion and its ideologies take it must have an organized system of beliefs in which its adherents hold tenaciously unto whether by indoctrination or hypnotism, This is to some extent is the kind of interpretation those in the third World countries give religion and going by the fact that it has become deeply rooted in the cultural, political and economic lives of people. Lintojua (2009), argues that must be a link between the define being which inspires religious and the human beings who practice religion in the societies to him while religious drops as it wherefrom heaven, it has to be planted and fertilized in the social, cultural and political setting of the societies and people. Viewing religion generically, one observes that the culture of the people through which religion evolved can be embedded in the take off of the religion and consequently its life style on the people, for instance, Islam came from Arabia, Christianity from Europe, Hinduism and Buddhism from Asia, Judaism from Israel, a strand of the people's culture could be found in these religions and that cultural strand' could be colonizing.

The culture of people, their social and political life becomes the nursery beds for breeding and evolution of the religion. As good as Lintojua's dialectical discourse is on the subject matter he also seems to shy away from the definition of religion because there seems to be no universally accepted definition. But picking on the lintojua's politics as a base for breeding religion and politics have the same features for him:

"When it comes to defining what religion is mean, however, Marty begs off giving a definition, some scholars will never agree on the definition of 'religion' and instead gives a list of five features that marks a religion. He then proceeds to show how politics displays concerns and so does politics. Religion builds community and politics MICMICS".

The above argument presents an interplay or a synergy between religion and politics, an interplay which some religion find difficult to separate, because then religion ideally must be interwoven into the political, cultural and social lives of a people living in society. The point is that religion interwoven into politics or assumed an ideology that has become the place of recent academic dissipation of energy, that scholars have unanimously contended that it is the cause and promoter of violence. Similarly, recent events around the globe has shown that religion has been indited to be the source of some worrisome activities like terrorism, genocides, crusades, suicide bombings, inquisition and intra/inter religious and ethno-religious violence, which have led to the destruction of unaccountable lives and property. Strong proponent of this debate is Juergensmeyer (1793), who opines that even ordinary religion contains a strand of violence. Juergensmeyer with his allies have continued to bombard the academic world with their provocative titles in their many literatures such as: *Terror in the mind of God*. In the mere of God; violence and destructions in the world religions, violence in God's name, *Terror in the name of God*; and 'why religious militants kill in the name of God; any reader of these literatures would have concluded that lines or arguments are contained in their write ups. In the views of academic icons like Bala Usman (1987), Judi C. Aguta (1997), Balarabe Musa, an ex-governor of Kaduna state, in Matthew H. Kukah (2003), Wole Soyinka in Lamien Sanneh (2006), and Chemfu D. Nguyuhur (2010) all are unanimous in their submission that religion has manipulated by few individuals for selfish reasons. These few who manipulate religion are insignificant in number compared to the many that condemn their activities as inhuman and unreligious. For instance, for failure of political, religious and economic institutions some people have become radicalized into forming a guerilla or militias for the purpose of either fighting their government or the Western societies. Boko Haram, the Islamic State fighters in Iraq and Syria, Somali, Al-qaeda, and other Islamic extremists are fighting to show their resistance to the west and the system of the day and whose actions have received condemnation globally and among the Muslim communities.

Cavanaugh (2004), is still of the mad that 'we are presented with a range of ideologies, practices and institutions - Islam, Maxims, Capitalism, Christianity, Nationalism, Americanism, Judaism, the nation-state, liberalism, Shinto, Secularism, Hinduism, and so on -all of which have been known to support violence certain conditions'. Key (2005); defining ideology says it describes an ideal political system and prescribes the rules for achieving and maintaining it. Ideologies are built upon belief system and this belief system becomes the driving force behind whatever concepts that is entrenched in it. Tracing the history of how religious and political ideologies have evolved. Kerrey took a long discourse on how religions played an mportant role in the political lives of the council. Greek, Rome, China, India and Europe are proving how religion had formed the basis for political authority around the world in the pre-modern era. However, the role religion played did not end in that era but also emerged in modernity, where it has continued to play a leading role in

who gets what political power. As Cavanaugh has argued that religion is divisive we have seen religious divide in politics, ethnicity, such as experienced in Iraq, N/Ireland, Syria, India, Srilanka, Central African Republic, Nigeria, and Mali. In Nigeria, for example, the presidential election that brought former president Goodluck to power witnessed to some extent a religious divide, of the sort experienced in India where the Hindu Party takes it all on religious ground and Muslim Brotherhood Party in Egypt. People use religion as a cover in politics because they believe that solidarity and mobilization on religious ground are easy and could attract the sympathy of faithful with whom they share the same faith. Orientalists believed that, religion has played a developmental role in Nigerian political, social and economic scenes right from independence to date, but more to it are its violent prone activities.

Good Governance in Nigeria

The concept of group governance may be approached from different academic lens. Observers are of the opinion that there could be bad governance just as there is good governance, and both are not just streamlined to government authorities alone, but anywhere there are 'leadership' and 'followership'. 'Governance' according to Oxford dictionary, is 'the activity or manner of governing, the word is derived from the word 'govern' which means to rule that is to control or direct public affairs of the country. This definition implies that families, churches, mosques, schools, corporate institutions and government organizations could be governed because there are people whose affairs needed to be directed by a leader. In this case, governance entails the way people or group of individuals are governed in any civilized or uncivilized community or organization. In this paper, governance is looked at from the point of the tiers of government (local, state and federal). Demographically, the number of people in this country has risen to about 170 millions, the country has spent hundred years from inception and fifty-five years as an independent sovereign nation. One glaring thing to note is that Nigerians are still crying out bitterly because of lack of good governance. The indices of bad governance in Nigeria are seen on the nature of our deplorable road network, poor political facilities, lack of portable water, unstable educational institutions and policies that have been in coma, epileptic power supply, and poor salaries conditions, that have left observers to wonder when one shall see salvation.

Examining good governance from cultural and moral historical antecedent of a nation, Sarafa (2010), has opined that "the questions of good or bad governance is ethical or moral", and drawing upon Mathew (2007), argued that good governance has much to do with the ethical grounding of good governance and must be evaluated with reference to specific norms and objectives as may be laid down'. Good governance to him goes beyond personal interest, it should be something that any Nigeria must exhibit who has the opportunity to lead the people, leadership to some people needs to show the way and to some it is servanthood which must be uncultured into our life and manifested into our national life. The point is anyone who knows he has some selfish motive for

leading and root a national interest, such an individual should not be seen at the corridors of leadership. On this note, Sarafa (2010), still stressed that good governance depends to a large extent on the historical experience of a nation, in cultural moves, aspirations of the people, the stated political and economic objectives of the state'. If good governance is a product of the experience of a nation, its cultural aspiration, and the set political and economic objectives, then Nigeria has nothing to hold unto this regard. Nations like America, China, Japan and Britain all are built on the labour, selfless sacrifices and resilience of their founding fathers, to which subsequent generations built upon, the issues of good governance cannot be far from reach because already, the foundation for good governance has been laid.

Nzebule (2005), emphasized that good leadership produces good governance and so is bad leadership, when there is a problem with leadership in a country, it reflects directly on its national polity as things will fall apart when the centre can no longer hold'. Jega (2007), lays the foundation for the evolution of good governance, to him "the more purposeful, focused and concerted the move towards good governance under a civilian dispensation — defined in terms of transparency and accountability of public official, responsible conduct as well their responsiveness to the demands, needs and aspirations of the governed", is important in leadership. Also, meeting needs and aspirations of the governed will mean providing for them all the necessary infrastructures that will make life meaningful and bearable and nurturing of all the democratic institutions that are geared towards channeling the available resources of the country for an all-round development As-sibai (1984), explains that caliph Abubakr represented himself as a ruler whose heart was full sympathy for mankind. He did stand on his honour as the head of the Muslims to milk the goat for the girls of locality whose father has become martyrs in battles against unbelievers. Hashimi expresses the virtue of Abubakr in giving equal right to citizenry of Islamic state in appointment to public office, as he honored the command of the Prophet that Zayd bn 'Usman a freed slave should be the head of the army dispatched by the Prophet to fight the Romans before the Prophet's demise.

Similarly, Muheeb (2007), states that during the reign of 'Umar he ordered demolition of the mosque built by certain Muslims on a usurped piece of land belonging to a Jew and instructed restitution of the land to the owner. The magnanimity of Uthman bn Affan, the third caliph was accounted by Murad that he disturbed his merchandise of food freely to the poor and the needy during the incidence of drought and famine in the reign of Abubakr, despite that some rich merchants had interest to purchase it, at exorbitant price 'Abdul Karim exposes that caliph 'Umar throughout his tenure used to inquire at foremost about the welfare of non-Muslims minority (Ahl Dhimma) in the state. Zaydan states 'Umar admonition to his judge, Abu Musa al Ash'arriy that the latter should maintain sense of equality in respect to the litigants that bring cases to law court irrespective of their social status.

Conclusion

The protection of lives and property should top the agenda of every country whether developed or developing and those are encouraged by the religion. Good governance is guarantee as a result of people oriented leadership, there is accountability, transparency and job opportunities are created, then all the brigades of religious thugs are removed out of the streets. Islam encourages good governance among the Muslims, Prophet was a good examples that ruled in Madinah without any problem among the Muslims and jews. The Glorious Qur'an testify to this which read thus:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ
وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

Ye have indeed In the Messenger of Allah a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for any one whose hope is In Allah and the final Day, and who engages much In the Praise of Allah.

Q;33;21

This shows that, the Prophet and his companions played a significant roles in promoting religion and Islam during and after their periods. The has never impose any religion on any one because Islam against compulsion by making any religion on anyone, irrespected of any tribes Allah buttress this point with the verse of Glorious Qur'an which read thus; لا إكراه في الدين قد تبين الرشد
Let there be no compulsion In religion; Qur'an 2 V 256

Recommendation

The following recommendations were made viz:

1. Nigerian Muslims should abide by Islamic injunction so as to bring the problem of religious intolerance under control. Prophet Muhammad lifestyle especially in relationship with non-Muslim should be imitated for the sake of peace and progress of Nigeria.
2. There should be public enlightenment campaign to sensitize populace Nigeria is a secular state as such discrimination in terms of religion ethnicity should be avoided among the youths.

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