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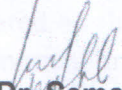
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An Examination of the Impacts of Religion in Nation Building

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Abstract

For decades, the desire to build a just, orderly, peaceful and progressive society has been uppermost in the minds of Nigerian leaders. But due to external influences on them, their mission and vision continue to remain a mirage. These influences coupled with high level of corruption, poverty and selfishness, lack of contentment increased their problems. This made the Nigerian leaders derail from their avowed vision and mission with the result that at the end of a leader's tenure little or no progress would have been made. Corruption, poverty, selfishness and other social vices would be on the increase. Hence, the goal of nation building is not achieved. This is causing grave concern to well-meaning members of the society. Religion's stern qualities of sincerity, honesty, selfless service to humanity, contentment among other qualities appear to be a better alternative for building a progressive and a sustainable society. The paper adopted analytical and descriptive methods in order to achieve the purpose of the paper. The findings of the study validate the fact that a progressive society anchored on the afore-mentioned qualities which are essential for building a progressive Nigerian Society. These qualities are the core teachings of every religion. The study further discovered some vital innate qualities in religion that make for sincerity of purpose, contentment and selfless services irrespective of internal and external factors. This paper asserts that it is wise and realistic for the multi religious society of Nigeria to look into the common values inherent in the various religions towards a viable and peaceful coexistence capable of enhancing holistic development of the nation.

KEYWORDS: Religion, Corruption, Democracy, Nation Building and Nigeria

Introduction

Nation building is a dialectal phenomenon in which the individual and society interact with their physical, biological and inter-human environments, transforming them for their own good and that of humanity at large and being transformed in the process (Kanu, 2004). From pre independence years the urge and the desire to build a just, egalitarian and progressive society has been the heartbeat of Nigerian leaders. But due to some external forces from developed countries and internal factors, such as, poverty, corruption, lack of contentment, selfishness among others have made the mission and vision of Nigeria political leaders to continually remain a dream. Indeed, this has become a source of great worry to most Nigerians, hence, the suggestion of religion as an alternative measure for building a progressive society. The concept of religion is anchored on the idea of belief in and fear of God. Since religion makes for sincerity of purpose, contentment and selfless service, and since every source has failed Nigerian leaders in achieving their avowed purpose and promises to the people, the paper therefore, recommends religion as a possible alternative for nation building. In this study the three main religions in Nigeria namely: African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam will be used as yardstick to determine how religion has contributed to the changes that have occurred in Nigeria. Although, the paper is not

neglecting the fact that religion in Nigeria has done more harm than good in terms of the various religious crises and also the various intra religious crises is not left behind.

Conceptual Clarification:

The concept of religion is elusive in nature and this makes it difficult to have one universally accepted definition. The elusive nature explains why tens and hundreds of definitions of religion litter our textbooks today. It is important to state at this point of deliberation that the various definitions are not without their faults or flaws. Corroborating this view, Metuh (1987), commented thus: "This is partly because the object of religion is invisible and spiritual beings that are not subject to observation and are conceived in different ways by different peoples. Besides, the study of religion interest people with a widely differing interests as theologians, anthropologists, psychologists and sociologists, each of who see it from different perspectives. It is necessary to have the perception of the basic concept of the word religion before exploring the extensive area of religion and nation building. The word "religion" was derived from the Latin words *Ligare* (meaning to bind), *Relegere* (meaning to unite, or to link), and *Religio* (meaning relationship). Thus, the etymology of the word 'religion' shows that it is essentially a relationship, a link established between two persons, namely, the human person and the divine person believed to exist. It is something that links or unites man with transcendent being, a deity, believed to exist and worshipped by man. Religion is essentially a bipolar phenomenon. On the one end is man (the religious man); while at the other end is the transcendent being, the deity he believes to exist and which he worships (Omeregbe 1993). Bouquet (1941) construes religion to be a fixed relationship between the human self and some non-human entity, the sacred, the supernatural, the self-existent, the absolute or simply, God." Vennon (1962) described religion thus: as that part of culture composed of shared beliefs and practices which not only identify or define the supernatural, the sacred and man's relationship thereto, but which also relate them to the unknown world in such away that the group is provided with moral definitions as what is good (harmony or not in harmony) with the supernatural. Furthermore, Yinger (1970) defined religion, "as a system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggle with the ultimate problems of human life. It expresses their refusal to capitulate to death, to give up in the face of frustration and to allow hostility to tear apart their human association. Similarly, Durkheim (1948) defined it as... a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them. Religion is better described as man's awareness of the existence of a Supernatural Being whom he believes to be his creator and controller of the universe and his willingness to worship Him through intermediary, in solitariness and in group.

Review of the Three Main Religions in Nigeria

Man's search for God has led to many pathways. The result has been the enormous diversity of religious expressions found world-wide today. The three main religions in Nigeria are as follows:

African Traditional Religion

African traditional religion is the belief system that has been handed down from one generation to another. It originated from the soil of Africa. The people were born, nurtured and they grew in it. It is a tolerant, accommodative and peaceful religion that fights those that attack it. (there is contradiction in that statement). The above views were expatiated by Onyeidu (1999) when he observed that Traditional African Religion (there is a need for consistency) is a tolerant and non-

missionary religion. Its adherents were not converted (proselytes) but members of the society were born into the religion of their ancestors. The traditional religion has no room for religious propaganda, or bigotry. It is a moderate religion which only attacks its opponents who provoke it to anger.” Contradiction Anyika (1998) said that it is a religion that is indigenous to African soil, but their origins are lost in antiquity. Ajayi, (1981) describes it as those beliefs and practices that are indigenous to Africans which according to Mbiti (1969), has permeated every facet of the peoples life”. It is a religion that has no known founder and scripture unlike Christianity and Islam. The tenets of the religion are written in songs, myths, dances of the people among others. In the same frame of mind Awolalu and Dopamu (1979) said that this is a religion that has no written literature yet it is written everywhere for those who care to see and read. It is largely written in the peoples’ myths and folklores, in songs and dances, in their liturgies and in proverbs and pithy saying. A more elaborate definition was given by Ekwunife (1990) as:

Those institutionalized beliefs and practices of indigenous religion of African which are rooted in the past African religious culture, transmitted to the present votaries by successive African forebears mainly through oral traditions (myths and folktales, songs and dances, liturgies, rituals, proverbs, pithy sayings and names), sacred specialists and persons, sacred space and objects and religious work of art, a religion which is slowly but constantly updated by each generation in the light of new experiences through the dialectal process of continuities and discontinuities.

Before the advent of the foreign religions of Islam and Christianity into the continent of Africa traditional religion has sustained Africans for generations. More so, the religion shares many characteristic features with other living religions of the world. Such common features include: belief in God or gods (theism), a system of worship (cult) prayer, sacrifices and the clear-cut distinction between the holy (sacred) and unholy (profane). These were some of the good elements in the primal society which prepared the mind of Africans for the acceptance of Islam and Christianity. Furthermore, in the traditional African society, instruments of social control include: taboos, swearing of oath, making of blood pact, trial by ordeal, oracles, vows, secret societies and the meticulous observation of customs and traditions.

.Thus, as in other parts of the world, God did not leave himself without revelation and witness in Africa, (Onyeidu 1999). Parrinder in Onyeidu (1999), in his attempt to quantify the strength and membership of this ancient faith said, “that probable over 50,000,000 people in Africa keep to this indigenous religion, and that many more mingle it with the new scriptural religions”. With special reference to Igboland, Jordan in Onyeidu (1999) observes that “A whole system of taboos and ritual ordinances controlled native life”

b. Islam

Islam was introduced first into the kingdom of Kanem-Borno about the 10th century AD and to Hausa land about 14th century. Gradually, it began to spread to western Nigeria, especially after the Fulani Jihad of the early 19th century. Islam is both a religion and a culture. It claims total control over all aspects of life of its adherents, both as individuals and as a group (Iremeka, 2005). The word ‘Islam’ means submission to the will of God. Followers of Islam are called Muslims. Prophet Mohammed was the founder of the religion. The five pillars of Islam include professing of faith, ritual prayer, alms -giving, Ramadan fast, and pilgrimage. The tenets of Islam are written in a holy book called Quran,.

a. Christianity

Christianity was planted in Nigeria not long after the ex-slaves repatriated from Europe and America were resettled in Sierra Leone, Christian missionaries were drafted to the Lagos colony to evangelize them (Anyika, 2000). The word Christianity was first used in the New Testament at Antioch in Syria where the disciples of Jesus were first called Christians, meaning, the followers of Christ (Acts 11:26). Christianity is based on the life, teachings and the death of Jesus Christ, the founder of Christian religion. In line with this, Ituma (2003) argues that Jesus is the foundation of the New Testament and that New Testament itself is the foundation of Christianity. The first contact of Christianity in Nigeria was through the activities of a set of missionaries from Portugal in the fifteenth century (Ryder, 1969). Their initial contact and success were in the coastal areas. They recorded initial success in the kingdom of Benin and Warri but this did not endure for long time because the Portuguese missionaries to Nigeria were not in a position to propagate the religion. In fact, enduring and successful missionary enterprise began in the nineteenth century and this initiative was taken by the protestant churches of Europe and America with the Catholics following about 1840s (Onwubiko, 1975). The year 1841 was particularly remarkable in the history of missionary enterprise in what is today called Nigeria. It was the year of the first Niger Expedition which marked the beginning of the missionary movement to be re-established in Nigeria (Ajayi, 1975).

With all the unprintable difficulties encountered by the missionaries, by the beginning of the twentieth century, Christianity had been planted in most parts of Southern Nigeria, (Okwueze, 1995). The arrival of Christian religion like the Islamic religion in Africa has a far-reaching effect on the society. The tenets of Christianity are recorded in the Holy Bible. It has different sects, such as the Roman Catholic Church, Anglican Church, Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church, Baptist Church, Cherubim and Seraphim, Church of the Lord (Aladura), Living Faith Church (Winners), Zoe Ministry, Christ Embassy, Deeper Life, Church of God Mission, Grace of God, Lord Chosen Charismatic Revival Movement and many others.

Overview of Nation Building

To understand the concept of 'nation building' the underling word "nation" must very properly be put in perspective. In other words, it is very important to know what a 'nation' implies before constructing the idea of 'nation building'. The word, "nation" derives its root from French "nation" which also goes back to the Latin term "nation". The term was used in the medieval universities to describe "the colleagues in a college of student who were born within a "pays", spoke the same language and expected to be ruled by their own family law. However, the term as used contemporarily emerged about the end of the 18th century and was defined by Franco Americans as "political nation" in terms of geographical consideration. Thus, the Webster's New College Dictionary, defines nation as "a stable historically developed community of people with a territory, economic life, distinctive culture and a language in common". Furthermore, the Thesaurus Dictionary defines nation as "people in a land under a single government; a community or people living in a defined territory with organized authorities. In the modern period, nations have replaced empires as the basic unit of human political organization. From the above, we can say that "Nation building" is always a work-in progress; a dynamic process in constant need of nurturing and re-invention. Thus, it can be defined as the development of behaviors, values, language, institutions, and physical structures that elucidate history and culture, concretize and protect the present, and ensure the future identity and independence of the nation (Gambari Ibrahim at the anniversary of Mustapha Akanbi Foundation). Krieger (1993:615) in his analogy would understand nation building as: "dealing with the societal and political aftermath of conflicts and establishment of new government and

social compacts. And in Echekwube (1999:3), “is a notion that is very much associated with the goal of civilization. It has to do with the production of basic needs of the people, feeding, clothing, housing and happy life. Furthermore, nation building in Ilegu (1986:1) has been described as the attempt towards intelligent and well ordered society that is good to the point of perfection. Nation building refers to the process of constructing or structuring a national identity using the power of the state. This process aims at the unification of the people within the state so that it remains politically stable and viable in the long run. Nation-building can involve the use of propaganda or major infrastructural development to foster social harmony and economic growth. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nation-building>). Nation-building includes the creation of national paraphernalia such as flags, anthems, national days, national stadiums, national airlines, national languages and national myths. From the definition of Echekwube above on nation building leads us to discuss the bane of the achievement of nation building which is corruption.

Corruption

As characteristics of most sociological concepts that do not permit of a single for all definition, corruption as a phenomenon has been defined and described in many ways depending on the context in which it is employed. The definition provided by Act No.5 of section 2 of 2000 (‘the Act’) passed by the National Assembly and signed into law on the 13th of June 2000 thereof defines corruption as “bribery, fraud and other related offences”. In general terms, Corruption has been defined as a dishonest or immoral behaviour which is not in line with the general accepted standards. The meaning of corruption depends on who is defining it from what perspective and for what purpose. Corruption is a word which has different interpretations in various communities of the world and its meaning in a particular place and time will depend on the level of development. Attempts at defining corruption have resulted in a variety of definitions. A legal luminary advised that the word *corruption* is susceptible to varying definitions. (Adegbitelateef, 1991) He stated that depending on the sense in which it is used, it could denote moral depravity, and perversion of integrity through bribery or favour. To some, “corruption” is the conscious and well-planned act by a person or group of persons to appropriate by unlawful means the wealth of another person or group of persons’. To others, it is the act of turning power and authority into ready cash. Another authority defines it as ‘the diversion of resources from the betterment of the community to the gain of individual at the expense of the community. (Adegbitelateef) In the social science of literature there are three basic definition of corruption: the public office centered, the market centered and the public interest-centered definitions. Each of these, on its own, has limited analytical usefulness. A much more useful definition which encompasses all these three notions of corruption is provided in Khan (1996) where corruption is defined as ‘an act which deviates from the formal rules of someone in a position of public authority because of private regarding motives’. This definition avoids the problem of value judgment arising from an ethical definition. It permits the extension of the notion of corruption to its public office, market and public interest-centre manifestations. This is important for any understanding of the concept because the genesis of corruption is located in the political and economic arrangement which govern the organization of society. (Oloponie Abdul-Razaq A.1998)

The United Nation Organization also has the following to say about corruption.

Through experience, observation, information, discussion, reports, newspapers, finding of commission of inquiry and of

limited social-scientific studies, one can make an endless descriptive list of instances of corrupt conduct or practices. One can also give these various instances assorted labels: bribery, abuse and or misuse of office, illegal payment, kickbacks, tax, credit and customs fraud, misappropriation and embezzlement, currency violations, forgery, false accounting, real estate swindles and land speculation, abuse of public grants; environmental damage; smuggling, violation of labour regulations, over-invoicing, over-pricing and transfer-pricing; illegal/illegitimate monopolization and restraint of trade, hoarding; illegal flight of capital, exploitation of labour, fraudulent sales, adulterated food or hazardous drugs, acts of constant or distortion of development plans and among others. (UNO 1980:8)

For the purpose of this paper, the writer defines corruption as “the act of diverting illegal resources (particularly financial resources) meant for the good of the citizens in a defined geographical area by a privileged individual or a group, into personal use, presumably to satisfy self aggrandizement.” With this definition of corruption, there is the need for this paper to bring to the fore the various democratic experience to see whether its been actually palatable or not.

Democracy in Nigeria

It was Abraham Lincoln a onetime American President who was credited as having described democracy as “government of the people by the people and for the people.” True, democracy is very much this but it is also about respect for the rule of law, due process, protection of human rights and basic freedom and the advancement of the general welfare of the people. So democracy is about good governance and better welfare package of the people secured through due process of the land in which the people are the prime consideration in the formulation of policies. The struggle for democracy in Nigeria has been a very long one, dating back to colonial history. Students, workers, market men and women, as well as, leading political figures including the media were all involved in the process. They contributed a lot to the attainment of independence on 1st October 1960. Disputes among contending forces with an over ambition and politicized military hanging around did not allow it to last until 1999 till date. The ethnic nature of the Nigerian society also contributed to its fall on 15th January 1966 when the military killed prominent political and military leaders with more victims from the Northern part of the country. Painfully, the democrats of the time welcomed the military with hearty congratulations unaware and unappreciative of what was in store for its growth in the years ahead.

This was hardly surprising prior to the events of January 1960 that democrats were known to have attempted to overthrow the Balewa Government so early in its life. Late Sam Ikoku, who participated very actively in the attempt, once confirmed when its mastermind, Chief Awolowo, was still around that the attempt was actually true. Thus democrats were the first set of people in Nigeria to go all out for the capture of power through the front door of unconstitutionality by way of an attempted civilian coup. This callous attitude towards democracy by prominent politicians has been at the roots of the unsuccessful democratic story since independence right to this day. General Olusegun Obasanjo, a former military Head of state

and later a civilian President should be credited for restoring democracy in 1979. He faithfully implemented the democratic agenda of his predecessor in office, General Murtala Mohammed, who was killed in a military coup in 1975. Olusegun Obasanjo and Murtala Muhammed could be described as true patriots of democracy. The former's achievement in the restoration of democracy possibly contributed to the reasons why Nigerians recalled him from retirement to head a new democratic government in 1999. (No, it was to please and appease the Yoruba who were aggrieved with the untimely death of M.K.O.Abiola)

Like the ugly experience of the first republic when some democrats destabilize democracy, another attempt was made in 1983. The politicians collaborated with the media and military junta. Everything possible was done to frustrate the Shagari administration. (It may not be correct. The government was corrupt and lacked any good direction). The late Governor Bola Ige of the then Oyo State for example used bull dozers to pull down the federal housing units in the state. He came out with a "secret police" of sort in the name of road Marshals to counter federal force. (At each public fora, Shagari was an object of ridicule by southern governors in all public pronouncements some refused to receive him at airports when he was on official visits to the state. Such opposition was extended to the National Assembly, some of whose members refused to see any wisdom in what the executive was doing. According to Aluko, because the legislature was dominated by the combination of opposition parties, about 14 bills were left untouched until the military struck in the early hours of 1st January 1984. It was completely ignored that a destroyed federal executive was a destroyed road for democratic survival. Aided by the media and their collaborators, matters were made worse. After the conclusion of the 1983 presidential election, some media came out openly to pad with the military to murder democracy and when this was eventually done, some wrote editorials commending the role of the media in the fall of the Shagari administration. They never saw it as the downfall of democracy. Nemesis was caught up with than in later years. They had only themselves to blame, for collaborating with the military, when they became the victims of decree No 2 put in place by the Buhari's regime.

When General Babangida came to power in 1985, he initiated what may be called quasi democracy, or diarchy as late Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe described it before the end of 1992. State and local government structures were put in place along the line of democracy. He went further to constitute a democratically elected National Assembly. By the time he stepped aside in 1994, he had achieved about 90% of his democratic agenda. The presidential election caused a very serious problem, which is still lingering on. The role of the political players and the media were important in the episode. The 1993 presidential primary election were twice conducted and twice rejected by the same class of people who have been rigging in all the elections they won even as rigging in their own domain has caused unprecedented violence in our body politic. At the end of the second primaries they warned that they will free Nigeria. This was not however to be as his supporters kept on calling on the military to overthrow Shonekan interim administration. Human rights fighter, such as Gani Fawehenmi, Prof.O.Aluiyeina, among several others openly called on General Sani Abacha to take over in 1993. When this was done, Abiola, whose "victory was annulled", provided Abacha with the list of his supporters for appointment as ministers. If he was naïve to think that the military would seize power and hand over to him, there was the point at which he further annulled his victory. Indeed, he mortgaged it by this action the rest as we said is history. What may be recalled here was the clamors by some Nigerians for General Abacha to contest the election under the platform of all the five political parties. The late Head of state of course never told anybody of his intention up to the time of his death in 1998. Most Nigerians do

not know that those who advised that General Abacha should not stand as a single candidate of the first parties earned the serious displeasure of their colleagues though not that of Abacha. The coming of General Abdulsalami Abubakar after the death of Abacha opened yet another chapter in democratic history of Nigeria, when like Obasanjo he restored democracy to its rightful place and therefore earned rightful place in democracy.

The election of General Obasanjo brought a relief to the nation with his democratic role in national affairs and the considerable traits of non tribal person shown by him. Nigerians hoped that he was the man for the job who would heal the wounds of the nation by carrying every one along. Late Chief MKO Abiola, who later joined the second team of the presidential contest was among a few Nigerians who saw wisdom in the annulment of the primaries and the ban placed on the 23 candidates who participated. Little did he know that the welcome of his own would create a serious problem for the nation and the polity.? A Kaduna based journalist predicted that “had what happened to Yar’Adua, Ciroma and Shinkafi happened to theirs, Nigeria and such others Nigerian would have known no peace.” He made this prediction immediately after the annulment of the presidential primaries right before Abiola thought of joining the race. His correct prediction has since come to pass, when Nigeria never knew peace since the June 12 1993 election was annulled. Suddenly every one forgot that there were other election equally annulled and every one kept calm but not in the case of June 12. Why/ People like Yar’Adua whose own victory was annulled were accused of refusing to work for the realisation of June 12. No one had reasoned that if he could not actualize his own annulled victory, then he had no power to have actualized June 12. Anyway, the coming to power of Shonekan was to pave the way for a fresh presidential election. There were some strong indicatives, though not confirmatory, that some political move to de annul June 12 and crown its winner.

What has been the situation since May 29, 2001 in terms of democracy score card? In answering this question, we need to reflect on democracy, in terms of what it is supposed to provide as already listed. Let us take the issue of the practice of democracy itself.

“Obasanjo’s Road To Dictatorship” in the Hallmark Weekly Newspaper opined that “AD Afenifere acquiesce; Hausa Fulani caged; Church CAN placated; Human Rights cave in; National Assembly cowed; South West press silent”. Chief Okoye, a Lagos Lawyer, summoned the courage to warn the nation that president Obasanjo was cunningly and craftily moving towards absolute dictatorship with such military dexterity.. Another Lagos lawyer, Chief Ozekhome expressed similar view in an interview with the Vanguard newspaper of June 25 2001. He has made good his threats of contesting some of the presidential actions in court. According to the New Nigerian of Sunday, June 27, 2002, he has already done that. Some National Assembly Chiefs called “Forum 99” have been vocal denouncing alleged unconstitutional actions of the president. A Kaduna based columnist describes him as the “Sole administrator of Nigeria”. What gave rise to these impressions? his appointments; or better still the mode he acted. Ozekhome, for instance, in the said interview, notes that those whose names were submitted to the senate for ministerial appointments but were not approved by their political parties were not qualified for consideration because, in his view, the constitution says, among others, that to qualify for ministerial appointment, a citizen must be sponsored by a political party. This was not followed, they were allegedly either handpicked by governors or the president himself without going through the party system. Although, the sacking bonanza he enabled upon early in the life of the administration appeared to many as good for democracy, the

body of opinion, nonetheless, is that it contravened the provision of the constitution by not adhering to some sections of the law. A caucus and political forum named. Forum 99, was, of the opinion that the president had no constitutional power to retire military personnel, permanent secretaries, custom officers without passing through due process..Therefore the necessary organs of Government must be consulted. Reporting on this crucial issue, the Nigerian Tribune of June 24, 2000 says that, "The Federal Government has abrogated Decree 17 of 1984 which empowered the Head of State to sack, retire or dismiss civil servants arbitrarily without recourse to Civil Service Rules. It goes on, "With this development President Olusegun Obasanjo has no power either under the constitution or any other enactment to retire or dismiss civil servants at will".

This development apart, sections 29 to 30 of the 1999 Constitution spell out the duties of the Police Service Commission. Section 30 says, "The Commission shall have power to (a) appoint persons to offices (other than the office of IGP) in the Nigeria Police Force and (b) dismiss and exercise disciplinary control over persons holding any office referred to in sub paragraph (a) of this paragraph. Going by this provision, it may be ruled that there was a sidetrack of the constitution in the sacking of Police Officers immediately President Obasanjo came to power, same could be said in respect of the others sacked on the sole authority of the president. There is also the issue of Special Advisers. The Constitution requires the President to seek senate approval before he submitted his requirements to the senate. And when he got twelve out of fifteen requested, he, in the opinion of experts, bye-passed the law, apparently or seemingly, and created the office of Senior Special Assistant, which to many is another name for Special Advisers created to twist the constitution. These perceived legal violations apart, there are other grievances on issue of the constitution of his party. Has he, by these appointments, satisfied the zoning policy of the party, which itself has legal stature? The opinion of legal experts is that any violation of any policy of his party, in his official conduct, so long as such a policy doesn't conflict with the constitution, which in any case provides for federal character, would to the extent of such a violation be perceived as disregard for the law since the constitution of the party, is recognised as legally binding by the electoral law. The PDP Constitution is therefore part of our Laws whose provisions are binding on its operators. Beside, it is assumed that the acceptance of the provisions by the people was what gave the party its needed electoral votes during the presidential election and so to disregard them is to betray the people.

President Obasanjo set up a standard that all military and police officers who have served in any political capacity are good candidates for tacking, and accordingly, he has sacked about 93 excluding 34 ADCs and as published in the Nigerian Tribune of June 22. How was it possible that President Obasanjo has been acting more or less as the Sole Administrator of Nigeria at least since May 29 to 2007 when he left power? With his high military sense, he is quite aware of areas of sustained resistance and so he went after them to soften the ground and dominated the environment. First, he decisively moved against the North, pierced through its defensive wall and consequently broke its rank. As he expected the far North and the Middle Belt broke rank ready for one another. It was a well calculated strategy to pitch the so called minorities against their Hausa Fulani brothers and on the other hand Northern Muslims vs their Christian kiths. This strategy of divide and rule, has been on the cards for long, right from 1999 Thus, in less than thirty days of his administration the general achieved what some peers have been trying to do since the first republic. Having equally protected the other zones he opened a front against the PDP leadership. The dominant press, with him doing their biddings, went snoring shielding

themselves from seeing or hearing evil. It is not surprising that except for a few, none has seen anything wrong with these violations. They are in the same boat with the NGOs having demonstrated that he was out to meet them half in their several demands. All in all, through strategic moves, President Obasanjo has successfully conquered all possible opposition forces that matter and this makes it possible for him to institute without any qualms what might be called dictamocracy, a system of democracy dominated by traits of dictatorial practices.

Democracy is not just about doing good without doing it constitutionally. Once democracy loses its constitutional heritage, it also loses the right to its name. As we support President Obasanjo with all our hearts, in improving our lot, we must constantly remind him, in the true tradition of democracy, that we never elected him to lead us from mount militocracy to the cave of dictamocracy, but to the haven of constitutional democracy. This needs be stressed because the worst form of dictatorship is that built on the foundation of democracy. Such was the opening salvo of the Obasanjo administration. The situation remains the same to this day despite the fact that He has left office. Indeed, it has been growing worse if account is taken of how several attempts were made, including alleged bribery of members of House of Representatives to remove Na Abba after the removal of Okadigbo as senate president. Police were drafted to the former senate president's residence to cow him to submission. All tricks were made to get Na Abba removed became the presidency realized that with the House under his determined leadership, the agenda for a quasi democracy cannot be achieved. The short of it here is that the goal of democracy under this dispensation was to impose what someone calls agabada dictatorship, such that today, through the transparently untransparent eagle square election of party officials, the ruling PDP has been reduced to a parastatal within the presidency where no consultation is done with it before important policy actions are taken. Along the line, other political parties have been reduced to mere lame structures. The National Assembly has been covered into submission except for the House of Representatives. Worse still agencies of the state are being used against some citizens perceived to be enemies of the administration. The cases of Na Abba and Okadigbo readily come to mind here.

The point here is that the various democratic structures put in place to guide the nation rightly have been reduced to mere rubber stamps of the presidency. Worse is the uncontrollable position of the administration with right to force to association ultimately key officers have been telling Nigerians that the government would not allow the formation of new political parties, which is contrary to the provision of the constitution. Of course Nigerians are aware what would become of the ruling PDP should new political parties be registered. He knows what happened to former Vice President Aikhomu who has been severally harassed because of his membership of a new political association. He was even disallowed from traveling abroad apparently for no good reason. So was also General Hassaini and members of the Abacha family. A Babangida self appointed campaigning for IBB was curtailed while those who have been campaigning for Obasanjo/Atiku have been having the field day. In the area of the respect for the rule of law the senate, in spite of itself, once told the nation that Obasanjo as at September last year committed 21 impeachment offences. In fact, most Nigerians, who have been following events have been making the point that Obasanjo has been administering Nigeria in civilian toga over military fatigue. In fact, this is the general opinion which was why I once said that the problem with our democracy is that general Obasanjo dictates too much to Chief Obasanjo. Blackmailing NASS has been the corner stone of his democratic policies sometimes he starves them of funds using all unconstitutional cans. Militaries and dictatorial traits are so visible in the conduct of public

affairs such that we are having a serious guise democracy if not dictatorship with althorn thread of democracy as a subhead.

The National Assembly

The assault on the National Assembly, the symbol of democracy, has been quite disturbing. Apart from the Na Abba and Okadigbo episodes which we have mentioned, starving it of funds in order to enable members carry out their constitutional obligation has been the major practice. Even allowances of members are paid at the whims of the presidency. Blackmailing them has been the strategic approach to undermine the integrity of the legislature which is seen as an irritant. Worse still budget provisions were never respected. In all the budget appropriations passed so far, implementation has been deliberately put aside except for what pleases the administration. Extra budgetary expenditure has been the rule through anticipatory approval. Currently the senate is so augured that it has ordered its committees to look into the implementation of the budget. Presently almost 50% of House members have no offices and little do they have the tools to write with. Respect for the due process has never been rosy since their administration came to power.

The Judiciary

By the recent admission of the Chief Justice of the federation, the judiciary is down. It is not for me to make reference to the cases of General Bamaiyi and others and Faseun a Gani Adams. While the latter two, were accused of mass murder were granted bail, Bamaiyi and co, some of whom were accused of attempted murder, have been refused bail. We also saw the attempt by the administration to subject Mohammed Abacha to foreign laws administered by a foreign judge and for that matter inside prison not in a court of law. Then we have the glaring discrimination in the fight against corruption where only the Abachas are the most. I don't need to talk of other discriminatory cases except to draw extension to the fact that five of the zonal commanders of our police in the rank of AIG are all from one ethnic group who also dominate the central command of the force. One wonders what the federal Character Commission is doing here

Freedom of Speech

It is true that there is more freedom of speech than before. But it is also true that some of us have been incited because of our views on certain issues. All the same interns of freedom of speech the situation now is better though it falls short of the requirement of democracy which are various fundamental human rights. Of democracy dividends, at the federal level, recent Prof. Gana's tour with 70 journalists has not shown the achievements of central Government. The journalists on the tour have only been reporting the achievements in the state and little about the achievements of the federal government. This is why the tour is a waste of public funds.

External Matters

No Nigerian would dispute the fact that this administration cares more about foreign opinion than the opinion of Nigerians. The greater worry however is that it sight agreement with foreign governments and organisation without consultation with NASS members. There is dangerous for our democracy and sovereignty.

Religion and Nation Building: An Overview

There are three major religions in Nigeria. This section tries to look at the contributions of African traditional religion, and the two foreign, religions: Christianity and Islam. These two

foreign religions as earlier stated have impacted so much on the socio- cultural, economic and political life of Africans..

Religious Conflict

Conflict has been severally defined by different scholars at various times under different historical, cultural and ideological influences. Generally, conflict is defined as disagreement between two individuals, groups or countries especially when they have differing views or interests. A more elaborate definition of this was given by Phil Eze (2009), “as the expression of disagreement over something important to two individuals, groups, states or nations when they have different views, different goals, different needs and different values and they fight over limited resources to address them!” Scharf (1970) argues that, “religion impedes progress, encourages fanaticism and intolerance” Scharf opinion can only be possible when religion is wrongly applied for self interest is in place. It is on record that after Nigeria achieved independence in 1960, some politicians attempted to manipulate religious sentiments in order to gain regional support. Ethnic rivalry and the fear of political domination contributed to the national crises that resulted in the 1967-70 civil war. During the war, religion was used for propagandistic purposes and to create and solidify regional and ethnic identity. The secessionist government of Biafra saw themselves as a Christian country fighting against domination and oppression by an Islamic dominated government of Nigeria. Religion also featured prominently in the press between 1977 and 1979, during a great debate about the inclusion of Sharia (Islamic law) in the country’s new constitution. In 1986, it was reported that Nigeria had been secretly admitted into full membership of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), a Saudi Arabia-based organization that promoted cooperation in cultural, economic and social areas among Islamic nations. The Christians did not take it kindly. There was a series of debate and dialogue on the issue, (Iremaka 2005). From this O.I.C. acid test of President Babangida administration we moved into the Maitatsine of December, 1980 that claimed a lot of lives and property. Writing on the Kano riot of 1980, Okwueze (1995), states that Maitatsine attack on Kano was grave and savage. 4, 177 people were killed in the carnage and the State Government paid more than N8 million as compensation to victims of the disturbance and to the most disturbing one now, the Boko-Haram Islamist sect that is taking lives and property in hundreds almost on daily basis. In fact, towards the end of 2013 and early this year 2014 these casualties were recorded against them as follows: On Monday 2nd December 2013 at 3am men numbering about 300 suspected to be Boko-Haram terrorist group attack military formation in Maiduguri Borno State with 25 Hilux Pick-Up vans loaded with rocket propelled grenade launchers, AK-47 assault rifles and improvised explosives devices (IEDS) (Omonobi, 2013) AFP (2013) reported on the same attack that some aircrafts were destroyed, building, ships and petrol stations were razed, with 24 militant killed.

Another source reported also that 300 people were confirmed internally displaced and that emergency life materials like beds, blankets and mosquito nets have been given to them, (English. news.cn 2013). On Monday the 13 January, the Daily Sun Newspaper reported that no fewer than eight people were killed in a fresh attack on a village in the southern part of Borno State by suspected Boko –Haram insurgent. The attackers were also said to have burnt about a hundred churches in the area, (Olanrewaju, 2014). This is coupled with other social vices such as armed robbery attack, kidnapping, corruption, drug trafficking, prostitution, election malpractice of all forms, to mention but a few.

The introduction of Christianity and Islam in Africa marked the beginning of religious pluralism on the continent, thus putting to an end the monolatric religious system that operated in

the traditional African societies. Corroborating this view Chuta, (1992) said that the introduction of western education in Africa brought in western idea of rationalism and individualism into Africa. Many Africans began to doubt their religious traditions, and subsequently decided to live without it, and that was the inception of secularism in Africa. This created conditions for the rise of new elite with western educational outlook in African societies, who had their own elite. Among these were chiefs, priests and war leaders, many of whom normally owed their elite status to birth, (Afigbo, 1976). There in school, the children acquired a whole body of new teachings, touching on all aspects of human existence (Ezeaku, 1999). In the light of all these odds one may be tempted to ask where do we go from here? Can Nigeria make any reasonable progress under this condition? Of course, yes. Religion has the answer. In spite of all the problems associated with religion as mentioned above the positive contributions and practical utilities to national building in Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized. Prior to the advent of Christianity, some parts of Africa engaged themselves in such ugly practices as killing of twins and albinos. Later, when Christianity was preached and such injunction given in (Gen. 17:24) that "I will make my covenant between me and you and I will multiply you exceedingly" that the practice was put to an end. This quotation certifies God's acknowledgement of giving birth to any number of babies at a time. The act of human sacrifice, caste system (Osu) in Igbo land and the practice of burying chiefs along with slaves who could serve them in the world beyond have been stopped and now waning and sinking gradually into the limbo of the past, (Ugwu, 1999).

Furthermore, Christianity helped in character moulding of children and made young ones imbibe such virtues like love for one another, truth, obedience and respect for elders, parents and people in authority. Lending credence to this assertion, Kanu (2004) expressed thus: Numerous Nigerian heads of state at one time or the other ordered that there should be ethical re-orientation. The church has also through the Sunday School cared for the youths, adults and elders and not just the erring children. With government takeover of schools, the only way the church influences the young ones ethically is through Sunday School and moral instruction in schools. Through this way, the young ones who are leaders of tomorrow are reoriented on the issue of spirituality of man, it must be said that religion helped greatly in building up man spiritually. Attesting to this fact, Aristotle (1964) asserted that, "...the end of the state is not mere life. It is rather a good quality of life, similarly, it is not the end of the state to provide an alliance of mutual defense against all injury." In line with Aristotle's view Nnadi (2004) wrote that, the development of a nation such as we envisage cannot be achieved by the mere accumulation of material things or the procurement of a life of comfort and ease often to a limited few. This alone will not make man really happy for the simple reason that man is not mere matter. He has a spiritual part which matter is too base to satisfy." For the widowhood, Okoli (2008) said that Christians recognize the low status of widows and their suffering and make provision for them and warn against their maltreatment as evident in (Deut 14: 29b) "...the stranger, the fatherless and the widow who are within the gates shall come and shall eat and be satisfied that the Lord thy God may bless you in all the works of your hand which thou doest" Oreh (2014) making a case for the church said that, "in her interviews in the course of her research with many Presbyterian ministers in Igbo land appreciably reveal their inspiring efforts at ministering to the needs of widows in their respective congregations. Many pastors spoke of welfare programmes that involve presentation of gifts in cash and in kind during annual thanks giving services, Christmas and new year seasons, scholarship schemes for their children; visitation, counseling and prayers; advocacy; establishment of widows forum and their congregations, among others." More so God said in Isaiah 54:5 that he is the husband of the widow. In traditional religious

communities the paramount rulers play the dual role of socio-political heads as well as priests of their traditional religious communities. For instance, among the Yoruba, the traditional heads appear to be the custodians of their religious value system. The Oba wielded enormous power within his kingdom, and ensured an enabling environment for stability by checks and balances through which the tendency towards excesses could be adequately curbed (Zaayem, 1999). Jordan (1948) wrote that a whole system of taboos and ritual of ordination has controlled natural life of Africans particularly the Igbos of Eastern Nigeria. On this truth Onyeidu (1999) commented that before the advent of the imported religion of Islam and Christianity into the continent the tradition religious has sustained Africans for generations and that in the traditional African society, instruments of social control include: taboos, swearing of oath, making of blood pact, trial by ordeal, oracles, vows, secret societies and the meticulous observation of customs and traditions. In line with these moral virtues and values (Ugwu & Ugwueye, 2004) observed that religion of the Africans spells out moral rules and values. It has provided the African mind with an umbrella of creative intelligence by asserting that man is the creature of God and that no man exists by himself. All virtuous action of man in the traditional society is derived from religion.

Man subdues his lower nature and sets for his noble ideal of righteousness, justice, peace and service for humanity under traditional religious guide. Traditional religion also tries to remove social disorder in our nation. It is through the traditional leaders who are the experienced custodians of our religion and culture that this feat is achieved. African traditional religion encourages peace which is necessary for a healthy nation building through covenants and oath taking. When conflicts, distrusts or suspicions ravage families, a reconciliation process is put into action through traditional religious rituals known as 'Igbandu'. Covenants take the form of swearing to truth and oath that no party among the rivals or conflict groups or individuals would think evil against the other or others (Ezeaku, 1999). In fact, education is one of the major achievements of religion in Nigeria. The early missionaries both of Christianity and Islam established educational institutions. Examples abound in the Christian church, particularly in the former Eastern region. Those early missionaries understood the importance of education in the life of those converts. According to F. Anyika, all the missions demonstrated great concern for the provision of western education for their converts by erecting schools in towns. Some missions placed greater emphasis on education than others. In East of the Niger for instance, the Late Rev. Fr. Joseph Shanahan clung tenaciously to the provision of western education as the surest means of opening the interior to western civilization.

The CMS Grammar school in Lagos, Ibadan, Abeokuta among others were established by CMS. Some of them were established in the late 19th Century. Similarly, the Methodist Church in 1905 established its first teacher training institute at Oron called Oron Boys Institute, followed by the Methodist Boys Institute, Uzuakoli and Lagos in the 19th century. The Presbyterian Church established Hope Waddell Training Institute Calabar. Dennis Memorial Grammar School Onitsha, St. Pauls College Awka, St. Monica's College Ogbunike were established by the Anglican Church. Some were established over 100 years ago. In the same way the Catholics established Christ the King College Onitsha, Queen of the Rosary secondary School Onitsha, St. Charles Teachers Training College Onitsha, College of Immaculate Conception Enugu, Queen of the Holy Ghost College, Owerri, Stella Maris, Port Harcourt, among others. The schools and colleges established by different churches and even Muslim sects were and still are training ground for the manpower needs of the country. The products of the schools and colleges were recruited as teachers and clerks and staff of industries and government departments. The

missions also provided scholarships for some of the products to train in the local or overseas universities. There is hardly any area of walk of life in this country where the products of mission institutions or beneficiaries of the missions have not featured prominently. In this way, directly or indirectly religion has contributed immensely to the training of the manpower needs of the country. The contribution of religion to the economic life of the country cannot be overemphasized; we have already referred to the training of manpower needs of the nation. These men and women were and still are involved in generating wealth for the country using the experience and education in this regard. In fact, early enough, some missions established farms, Cottage industries and crafts which helped, particularly the underprivileged to earn a living (Iremaka 2005). In Northern Nigeria, by 1929, the government had 106 schools with a total of 4,578 pupils on roll; the missions ran 152 schools with a total enrolment of 4,446 pupils.

HealthCare: the efforts and contributions of the missionaries towards healthcare in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. The church in time past built hospitals, health centers and maternities to take care of the people's health and to reduce mortality rate among the people. The church missionary society (CMS) built Iyi-Enu Hospital Ogidi, Anambra State, The Roman Catholic Mission (RCM) built Bishop Shannahan Hospital, Nsukka, Enugu State, Borrowmew Hospital, Onitsha, Anambra State. Methodist Church built the Amachara Hospital, Umuahia, Abia State. The Anglican Communion Enugu Diocese under Bishop Agbo, built the Faith Foundation Hospital Nsukka. Furthermore, by 1910, according to Grooves (1958), "there were sixteen (16) leper settlements under the auspices of the various missions in Nigeria". On the issue of leper,

Njoku (2008) added that, "the efforts of the Church revealed the creation of leper colonies, provision of accommodation, employment, treatments, , acquisition of skill, education, feeding, re-establishing of lepers back into their towns." As a matter of fact, the missionaries established health centers, dispensaries and maternity homes that later grew to become a full fleshed hospitals. And this, afforded the poor, the needy, and the less privileged ones amongst us the access to medical treatment. Ahamba (2006) asserted that "the maternities established by the church in the districts helped to reduce high mortality rate associated with child bearing which was caused by crude method of child delivery among the people." Islam brought with it, Arabic language and culture, Islamic learning, for instance. The numerals we are now using (1, 2, 3, 4,5) and commerce, Arab banks in the North etc are a legacy of Islamic studies and rich international connections. These were over and above the revelations of Allah and the teachings of Muhammed, (Ozigbo 1988). Christianity in collaboration with Europe brought European language and culture, western science and technology as supportive gifts to the redemption and salvation mediated by Christ, (Ozigbo, 1988). "There is no doubt that the church has succeeded in putting smiles on faces of the poor who were homeless, financial bankrupt and hopeless. It was the church that rescued the Biafrans from Kwashiorkor, disease and death, through the Caritas International and World Council of Churches (WCC). The Nigerian Government neglected the Biafrans and abandoned them to their fate (Ogbueshi, 2014)

Another area that the Church assisted also is in the area of agriculture. The Church introduced the policy of Bible and Plough which revolutionized agriculture in Nigeria. Ogbuehi (2014) said that, "the introduction of agriculture was informed by the missionary zeal to replace slave trade with legitimate trade" Nwanaju (2005) expressed the view that it was through the efforts of the church that maize and cassava were introduced, and this helped in boosting the economy of Nigeria and brought in luxury goods in their household". Other spheres of the people's life that were positively impacted upon by religion are as shown here under.

Politics: In terms of politics, African traditional political leaders no longer follow religiously the laid down rules and ritual practices that guide their offices because of their contact with the west and this is causing serious problems among the so called His Royal Majesties (HRM), the Igwes and their subjects. According to Ugwu (2002), “the king is brainwashed and indoctrinated into accepting that rulership has no meaning here on earth and that nobody rules except God.” **Pattern of Dress and Dressing Style:** Undoubtedly, pattern of dressing has changed immensely. Children now wear western dresses some of which are better than our local dresses.

The Architectural Design: The architectural design of residential houses is not left out in nation building. By the missionaries. It is only in the most remote parts of Nigeria today that you will see people building houses with sticks and with earth and no longer roofing their houses or hut with elephant grass and palm fronds.

Pattern of Greeting: The greeting patterns of Africans have been influenced also. People no longer bow or prostrate as such while greeting their elders, majority of Africans nowadays prefer to wave hands to say “hi”.

Occupation: The occupation of Africans is no longer the usual farming work of cultivation of crops and rearing of animals. People now prefer white-collar jobs in the urban areas this is due to the fact that getting capital to set up a business is a big challenge.

Recommendations

Due to the endemic socio-economic and political problems associated with leadership in Nigeria, such as poverty, corruption, winner takes it all attitude, selfishness and lack of contentment that make it very difficult for most Nigerian political leaders to achieve their goals of good governance, one is hereby moved to make the following recommendations. The political leaders of the country should put the interest of the country first in whatsoever they are doing rather than self and should also cultivate the spirit of servant hood rather than that of masterhood. Government should provide more job opportunities as a means of ameliorating abject poverty that is ravaging the teeming population, and contentment should be encouraged. More so, the government should learn to depend less on foreign rulers and their mentors. In spite of the vital qualities and positive roles that religion plays in the society, it is still used as an instrument of violence, both among various Christian denominations, between Christians and adherents of traditional religion and between Christians and Muslim. The presence of Islam and Christianity in Africa allows Nigerians to participate in these global world faith traditions, and their values have penetrated into our worldviews and social practices. But I think it is also fair to say that in the years of my childhood, Nigeria did a better job with the dynamic intermixing of traditions, *because* of the enduring role of indigenous moral systems and practices among those professing Islam and Christianity. For example, according to J.K. Olupona he illustrates that “in the early 1960s in my father's church, the entire local community rejoiced and celebrated when the first imam made the *hajj*, because it was considered an honor to have the first *alhaji* in their community. The imam's extended family, mainly Christians, wanted to have a thanksgiving service in the Anglican church in celebration of this community honor. While this may seem incongruous to modern Nigerian sensibilities, this culturally pluralistic community—and indeed this was the case in many other locales in Yorubaland—saw the various religious systems as alternative traditions, to the extent that a devotee of one felt free to consult another. The traditions engaged each other in meaningful, intellectual conversation and practical exchange, underscoring the cultural capital they represent for us. Today, however, there is an endemic religious crisis, especially in northern Nigeria, where there is regular intra- and interreligious

violence. In my view, these conflicts are a manifestation of the profound structural imbalances in the Nigerian state and society. If we are honest with ourselves, a critical, civic public, which is essential for good governance, viable democratic transitions, and meaningful ideas of citizenship, remains grossly underdeveloped in much of Nigeria, especially as the crisis of the nation-state deepens in the context of corporatism, neo-patrimonialism, and neoliberalism. Thus, rather than focus solely on religion, we need to begin a serious conversation on how we build legitimate structures and agencies of civil society (through a well-conceived national educational and civics scheme, for example) and a responsible democratic project that will begin to put in place strong institutions of governance and accountability. Any long-term solution must respond to these deep structural problems.” African religious values are still very much viable if they are made use of in this nation building the paper is discussing because hospitality, accommodation, Justice, love and peace can still to some extent be found among some of the adherents of the African traditional religion and also among the adherents of the imported religions we do see them consult these worshippers and at the end of the day be looking down on what these people hold supreme like saying they worship “small gods” which other adherents cannot bear.

Although, it is a known fact that religion has been used by some political class as opiating the lives of the masses but religion should as a matter of urgency be given its pride of place in the scheme of things in this country since it is believed that religion permeates every sphere of human existence.

Conclusion

In fact, what emerges from this systematic review of religion and human society are several. Significant among them is that the traditional African society is now an interface of two worlds: The original traditional society which is located in the rural areas and the modern African society consisting of the new elites with western outlook which dominates in urban areas. Granted that there was a violent shake-up of our cultural vestiges by the imported religions of Christianity and Islam and their accompanying baggage (sweet pills) that is western science and technology, school education, commerce and politics, there was a high degree of interaction between the two cultures which has resulted in free flow of ideas (to some extent), a dual carriage way of acculturation and enculturation in the two sides. On the whole, religion is a veritable tool for building a just and peaceful society. We have seen the dynamism in religion as replicated in the history of Nigeria over time. While we submit that religion has created a lot of ill feelings among Nigerians especially when it has been manipulated, it has also been asserted that there are alot religion has to offer to the nationhood of Nigeria. In other words, the continuous uneasy relationship among Nigerians based on religious inclinations has created a lot of setback for the nationhood of Nigeria as can be seen presently in the activities of the Islamic sect, the Boko Haram. Nevertheless, there are sterling qualities and capacities in religion which should be harnessed towards a purposeful nation building of Nigeria. This paper asserts that it is wise and realistic for the multi religious society of Nigeria to look into the common values inherent in the various religions towards a viable and peaceful coexistence capable of enhancing holistic development of the nation. The capacity and force of religion, if properly reckoned with can facilitate unprecedented nation building that can eliminate the vices and tendencies that affect development and can sponsor disintegration.

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