

## RELIGIOUS CRISIS AND MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

*Religious crisis has been a major challenge in Nigeria, every aspect of Nigeria namely; politics, economy, education, governance, ethnic groups, federal appointments and security departments has undeniably experienced the harm of religious crisis. Conflict expresses itself in various ways and diverse degrees and over every range of human contact. This religious crisis is dominant among Christianity and Islamic religions-the two major foreign religions in Nigeria. The crisis has taken different shapes virtually from the inceptions of the two religions. The damages are enormous ranging from loss of lives, severed relationships to damage of properties worth billions of Naira etc. It has showcased itself in fanaticism, intolerance, derogatory statements, political dissatisfaction and superiority complex. Nigeria has been faced with lingering religious conflicts devoid of lasting religious resolutions, especially between Christianity and Islamic religions. The findings of this paper totally disagreed with those who said that one of the causes of religious conflicts between Muslims and Christians is lack of the consciousness of the concept of African brotherhood and love, rather the major cause of conflicts between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria is Fulani-Islamization and expansionism agenda in Nigeria. That without mincing words is the undertone play of all the religious conflicts in Nigeria. The purpose of this study therefore, is to investigate the causes of religious conflicts in Nigeria as a country and to use the principle of conflict management techniques to call for a peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. Data collection method for this research is mostly secondary data collection method. The research concludes with submission that proper application of Thomas-Kilmann conflicts management techniques portrayed the following concepts; collaborating, forgiveness, accommodating, dialogue, avoiding and justice as instruments of conflict resolution; and could be applicable to Nigeria situation.*

**Keywords:** Religious Crisis, Management, Nigeria.

## **Introduction**

Religious violence in Nigeria refers to Christian-Muslim strife in modern Nigeria, which can be traced back to 1953. Today, religious violence in Nigeria is dominated by the Boko Haram insurgency, which aims to impose Sharia on the entire nation. Nigeria was amalgamated in 1914, only about a decade after the defeat of the Sokoto Caliphate and other Islamic states by the British which were to constitute much of Northern Nigeria. The aftermath of the First World War saw Germany lose its colonies, one of which was Cameroon, to French, Belgian and British mandates. Cameroon was divided in French and British parts, the latter of which was further subdivided into southern and northern parts. Following a plebiscite in 1961, the Southern Cameroons elected to rejoin French Cameroon, while the Northern Cameroons opted to join Nigeria, a move which added to Nigeria's already large Northern Muslim population. The territory comprised much of what is now north-eastern Nigeria, and a large part of the areas affected by the present and past insurgencies. Following the return of democratic government in 1999, the Muslim-dominated northern Nigerian states have introduced Sharia law, including punishments against blasphemy and apostasy. Several incidents have occurred whereby people have been killed for or in response to perceived insults to Islam. Religious conflict in Nigeria goes as far back as 1953, and in the case of the town of Tafawa Balewa, to 1948.

The religious crisis is one of the main recurring problems in Nigeria, and it is often followed or preceded a hidden agenda of the Islamic sects in Nigeria. There are two primary religions in Nigeria which are Islam and Christianity; they compete with each other for centuries, causing intolerance and social-political crises not only in Nigeria. Ngene (2019) said:

It is evident that religion is a type of means that is called to unite people worldwide. However, rather often this matter is got involved in conflicts, being the most influential weapon in the hands of some leaders. Thus, as you see, the religious crisis is a disagreement between two groups of different religions that struggle against coherent existence without themselves. (p .1).

The disagreement between Christianity and Islam in Nigeria for a long standing period of time is not as a result of miniaturised geographical territory in which both religions are sharing. In the clashes between the two major religions there is a hidden agenda that Islamic adherents are

commissioned to achieve in Nigeria. It is obvious. It is underground, Islamic agenda is trying to make the whole country a Muslim country.

If Christians have become targets at all, it is because Islam and those in power want to make sure the whole country becomes a Muslim country, and they are using Boko Haram and the Fulani herdsmen as veritable to achieve that objective. When Boko Haram first began to gain global attention in the early 2000s, they were more politically minded, and received political support from certain parties in order to advance into the founders' agenda. It was only a political strategy they wanted to use at the time, using Boko Haram for their personal, religious and political achievements, adding that it benefitted them at the time, but soon things got out of hand and they were unable to control the situation.

When former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan, who held office from 2010-2015, was still in charge, he made a genuine effort to get things under control, but the system is so corrupt that the system did not allow him to achieve much. He was too polite to be in that political position. This politeness would have been something positive for Nigeria, if the system had allowed him to use his polite nature to build the Nigeria he envisioned.

The Christian religion is, on another plane, a resistance to the Arab-Muslim expansionism and Islamization agenda in Nigeria which has menaced and ravaged the African continent for twelve centuries now. As early as the first quarter of the seventh century, the Arabs, a people from the Near-East, evolved Islam not just as a religion but as a cover for their insatiable territorial ambitions. By the tenth century they had overrun and occupied, among other places, Egypt and North Africa. If they had stopped there, Nigerians would not today be faced with the wicked and unholy collusion we are fighting against. On the contrary, they cast their hungry and envious eyes across the tribes and regions that repudiate their religion; and opted to use force to advance the course of their religion through jihad.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

Concept clarification is centrally important to theory development. While often understood as a formula-driven task, concept clarification is really a process that engages critical thinking. Clarification creates multiple meanings through: (1) formulating purposes, (2) choosing, examining, and integrating data sources, and (3) representing a final

conceptualization that can also be examined for adequacy. Within each of these processes, critical thinking is engaged as: (1) assumptions are identified and challenged, (2) the importance of context in creating meaning is revealed, (3) alternative interpretations are imagined and explored, and (4) reflective scepticism is cultivated. The central challenge in concept clarification is to understand how words create things. The kind of explanatory approach given to the keywords of the title of the paper informed the writers mind of the choice of the topic.

## **Religion**

The term religion does not mean the same things among the religions in the globe. Sani (2007) said the following about religion:

Religion, unlike other disciplines like Music, Geography, History, Mathematics, Chemistry and a host of others, has no universally acceptable and satisfactory definition. Religion is looked at from different perspectives based on the angle which one understands it. It originates from the Latin words: *relegere* (to unite or link) and *religio* (relationship, bond). (p.12).

It therefore means a link or a relationship between man and a being that exists which is greater than man. Man and religion are inseparable in all human cultures.

However, according to Webster's Dictionary of English Language, religion refers to man's expression of his acknowledgement of the divine or a system of belief and practices relating to the sacred and uniting its adherents in communities. This shows that religion focuses on what is ultimate or absolute and taught of worship. Juergensmeyer (1972) therefore opined that, relationships between the transcendent and men demands total submission and an absolute obedience. (p.23). According to Adeniyi (1993), Religion also, is the consciousness of one's dependence on transcendent being and the tendency to worship Him. It is a body of truths, laws and rites by which man is subordinated to the transcendent Being. (pp.12-18).

Similarly, religion is a system of symbols which act to establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.

### **Religious Crisis**

The terms religious crisis can be used synonymously with religious violence, religious intolerance, religious conflict etc. Having discussed religion, a crisis is a difficult or dangerous time in which a solution is needed and quickly. For example, the crisis caused by a natural disaster might inspire one and one's friends to make a donation. The noun crisis comes from the Latinized form of the Greek word *krisis*, meaning "turning point in a disease. Khaled and Tevhide (2018) defined crisis as, "the perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders and can seriously impact an organization's performance and generate negative outcomes". (p.5). According to Obodoechina (2008), Religious crisis can be defined as a great difficulty or danger which arises as a result of different beliefs in the existence of God or gods. (p.2). A religious crisis is a crisis primarily caused or justified by differences in religion or religions.

Religious crisis briefly is described as the threat or actual implementation of acts which have potential capacity to inflict physical, emotional or psychological injury on a person or a group of persons for religious ends. The perpetrators of religious crisis often represent or act in the name of a particular religious cause. Wellman & Tokuno (2004) defined Religious crisis as, "a term that covers phenomena where religion is either the subject or object of violent behaviour." (p.291.). Religious crisis is, specifically, crisis that is motivated by or in reaction to religious precepts, texts, or doctrines. This includes crisis against religious institutions, people, objects, or when the crisis is motivated to some degree by some religious aspect of the target or precept of the attacker. Religious crisis does not refer exclusively to acts committed by religious groups, but also includes acts committed by secular groups against religious groups. A crisis is any event that is going (or is expected) to lead to an unstable and dangerous situation affecting an individual, group, organization, community, or whole society. Crisis can bring huge amount of disruption and harm.

### **Further Definitions on Religious Crisis**

Religious Crisis is a term that has been variously defined by scholars. These definitions are diverse and they all convey the single meaning of disagreement between the two or more religious groups.

Hormby (2006) defines Religious Crisis as a situation in which religious adherents are involved in a serious disagreement or argument with one

another. This is a situation in which there is opposition in ideas, opinions, feelings and wishes.

Otite and Olawale (1999) sees Religious Crisis as struggle over values and claims to scarce resources, status and power in which the aims of the opponents are to naturalize, inure or eliminate their rivals. This definition very much suits, or reflects the conflict / crisis between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria. A situation where Muslims are using national resources against Christians, because a Muslim adherent is in power.

Gyuse (2006) further points out that when two or more persons, groups, communities or nations seek to take possession or dominate a particular object of value at the exclusion of others, conflict/crisis ensues.

Nnoli (2003) asserts that the concept of Religious crisis contradicts the peace process arising from perceptions, behaviours, phenomena and tendencies.

Miall (1992) also points that the emergence of Religious crisis can be a situation where a clear contradiction exist or perceived to exist between the participants who view the outcome of such crisis as extremely important. It would seem that Miall stating that suspicion fuels the Religious crisis.

Gotan (2004) cited a traditional definition of Religious crisis as the conceive interactions in which two or more religious adherents engage in mutually opposing action and use coercive behaviour to destroy, injure, thwart or otherwise control their opponents.

Aliyu (2004) sees Religious crisis as a process of social interaction involving a struggle over claim its resources, power and status, beliefs and other preference and desire.

According to Oyeshola (2006) Religious crisis is the disagreement, dispute or controversy in ideas or viewpoints held by two or more individuals, communities or religious groups. A Religious crisis becomes violent if physical or emotional force is used to hurt or kill people.

Gotan (2014) inferred that conflict is found everywhere in human interaction and it can occur in the family of the home, place of work, between different ethnic as well as religious groups as it is in the case of Muslims and Christians in Nigeria.

Ayandele (2006) also postulates that Religious crisis is a universal phenomenon and it becomes problematic, open, confrontation and violent if appropriate measures are not taken to curtail it.

Of all the definitions above, one thing is common and that is, crisis is disagreement that arises from different belief that is inevitable in organizations and groups in a society. This assertion is explicitly seen in the definition of Obodoechina (2016). This has rightly informed us that the major cause of crisis between Christianity and Islam in Nigeria is rooted in their beliefs. It means by that definition what causes religious crisis is more religious than social, more religious than political, and more religious than economical and more religious than cultural. In the furtherance of this paper under the causes of religious crisis this will receive deeper attention or extensive explanation.

### **Crisis Management**

Crisis management is the practice of being able to identify and handle conflicts sensibly, fairly, and efficiently. It is the practice of recognizing and dealing with disputes in a rational, balanced and effective way. Crisis management refers to techniques and ideas designed to reduce the negative effects of conflict and enhance the positive outcomes for all parties involved. Crisis management is the process of identifying and addressing differences that, if left unresolved, could affect objectives. Crisis Management is conceptualized as the methods and processes involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of conflict. Crisis management is the process by which an organization deals with a disruptive and unexpected event that threatens to harm the organization or its stakeholders. Crisis management is the process by which an organization deals with a disruptive and unexpected event that threatens to harm the organization or its stakeholders. The study of crisis management originated with large-scale industrial and environmental disasters. It is considered to be the most important process in public relations.

### **Nigeria**

Nigeria officially referred to as the Federal Republic of Nigeria is a federal state in West Africa. It borders Cameroon and Chad to the East, Benin to the west and Niger to the north. It also has a coast in the south that lies on the Gulf of Guinea in the Atlantic Ocean. Nigeria is made up of 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, where Abuja, the capital city is situated.

Nigeria has a lot of historic empires and cultures compared to other countries in Africa. The pre-history of Nigeria can be traced back to as early as 11,000 BC when a number of ancient African communities inhabited the area that now makes Nigeria. The greatest and the well-known empire that ruled the region before the British arrived was the Benin Empire whose ruler was known as Oba of Benin. Other tribes such as the Nri Kingdom also settled in the country, especially in the Eastern side. The Songhai Empire also settled in some of the country's territory. By the 11th century, Islam had arrived in the area called Nigeria now via the Hausa States. In 1851, the British forces seized Lagos, which was later annexed officially in 1861. In 1901, Nigeria was made a British protectorate and was colonized until 1960, when the country gained independence from British colonialism.

### **The Root Cause of Religious Crisis in Nigeria**

Many things have been said concerning what could be the causes of religious crisis in Nigeria. The causes of religious crisis in Nigeria according to Suleiman (2016) pinpointed the following to be the causes; the theological factor, religious intolerance, religious fanaticism, unbridled action of the press, aggressive or militant preaching/evangelism, poverty, wrong religious orientation, literacy level of religious adherents, selfishness on the part of religious personalities, and external influence in religion. I agree with every person that has the preceded opinions as what could be the causes of religious crisis in Nigeria, but the truth is far beyond the preceded listed points and that is what many authors and federal government of Nigeria have not given decisive attention. Discussing the cause of religious crisis devoid of extending attention to Arab (Fulani) Muslim Islamization and Expansionism agenda is a great omission (Kanu 2016 & 2017).

### **Pre-Inhabitants of Hausa Territory before Jihad**

**Hausa states**, group of neighbouring African states, occasionally interconnected from the mid-14th century by loose alliances. Their territory lay above the confluence of the Niger and Benue rivers (in present-day northern Nigeria), between the Songhai empire in the west and that of the Kanem-Bornu, or Bornu, in the northeastern Nigeria, eastern Niger. The seven true Hausa states, or Hausa Bakwai (Biram, Daura, Gobir, Kano, Katsina, Rano, and Zaria originally known as Zazzau). They pre-existed emergence of Fulanis and Islam in that geographical area. Nmah and Amanambu (2017) opined that:



Hausa Land before the Coming of Islam was largely a pagan oriented society. There were about fourteen independent kingdoms of Hausa states before the arrival of Islam. Hausa state was that of religious syncretism, worship of lifeless objects as well as misadministration and misuse of powers. Therefore, the state of Hausa land before the arrival of Islam was purely an environment governed by traditional religion and culture. (p.51).

The indigenous people of Hausa were conquered early 19th century by Fulani, in whose jihad, or "holy war," many Hausa peasants had voluntarily combined, they were organized into emirates. At the beginning of the 20th century, the British took over the administration of the former emirates, to which they attached Bornu to form the Northern provinces (subsequently the Northern Region) of the Protectorate of Nigeria. The Hausas specialized in blacksmithing, fishing, hunting, agriculture, and salt-mining. By around the 1500s, the northern city of Kano had become the most powerful, and was a major trading centre in ivory, gold, slave trade, salt, cloth, leather, and grains. Due to their lack of military expertise and a central governing body, they were regarded as loose alliances by the neighboring towns which made them prone to external domination. All the states remained independent until they were conquered by a prominent Islamic scholar, Usman dan Fodio, in a Holy Jihad (war) between 1804 and 1815, which created the Sokoto Caliphate. It was later abolished when the British defeated the caliphate in 1903 and named the area Northern Nigeria.

### **Arab (Fulani) Muslim Islamization and Expansionism Agenda**

Attention must be drawn to this concept of Arab (Fulani) Muslim Islamization and Expansionism agenda. To the Muslims this goal of Islamization and expansionism must be achieved with Jihad. In the early 19th century, Islamic scholar Usman Dan Fodio launched a jihad, which is called the Fulani War, against the Hausa Kingdoms of Northern Nigeria. He was victorious, and established the Fulani Empire with its capital at Sokoto. Brief Stint on the Life and Teachings of Usman Dan Fodio. According to Nmah and Amanambu (2017):

Usman dan Fodio, of Fulani origin was born in 1754 in Marata, Gobir, to the Toronkawa tribe. Shortly after his birth, his parents and the rest of the family relocated to Degel. It was at Degel that Usman dan Fodio grew up. He received most of his education from his parents and relatives because in Timbukutu tradition

parents and relatives were the first teachers for any child. Again, Usman dan Fodio's descent has been traced to one Mura Jakolo, who had migrated to Gobir from Futa-Toro around the 15th century. His ancestors were also believed to have settled originally in Konni before they eventually migrated to Degel. (p.51).

The Fulani War of 1804–1808, also known as the Fulani Jihad or Jihad of Usman dan Fodio, was a military conflict in present-day Nigeria and Cameroon. The war began when Usman dan Fodio, a prominent Islamic scholar and teacher, was exiled from Gobir by the King Yunfa, one of his former students. Usman dan Fodio assembled a Fulani army to lead in jihad against the Hausa kingdoms of the north of Nigeria. The forces of Usman dan Fodio slowly took over more and more of the Hausa kingdoms, capturing Gobir in 1808 and executing Yunfa. The war resulted in the creation of the Sokoto Caliphate, headed by Usman dan Fodio, which became one of the largest states in Africa in the 19th century. His success inspired similar jihads in Western Africa.

At the time of Muhammad's death, Islam was primarily a local phenomenon. It was little noticed outside Arabia but within 100 years after Muhammad's death, it was the glue that held together an empire that stretched from the Atlantic Ocean and the Pyrenees in the west, and Himalayas in east, and was one of the greatest unifying forces in the history of mankind. While Christianity was spread around the world by missionaries, Islam was mainly spread by conquering armies. This was the case not because of something particularly vicious or warlike about the Arabs or Muslims but rather because the areas the Arabs invaded were either weak or sparsely populated.

### **Method of Expansion between Christianity and Islam**

Nineteenth-century Christian missions exploded across the globe with the general expectation that the gospel would penetrate the whole world, and that the evangelism of the world would conceivably be completed within a century or so. That sense of optimism is not so prevalent today, probably in part because of the decline of Christianity in parts of the world that were at one time the fountainhead of Christian faith. A review of the past century reveals that regions in which Christianity had at one time taken root have not always remained Christian for long (think some parts of Europe). In contrast, Islam's progress has tended to be more stable, rarely giving up territory once it has been claimed. Christianity

also has the concept of winning the entire world to Christ as indicated in the great commission statement.

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." Matt 28:18-20 (RSV).

Teach all nations, the word rendered teach, here, is not the one that is usually so translated in the New Testament. This word properly means disciple, or make disciples of, all nations. This was to be done, however, by teaching them, and by administering the word of God. All nations mean the whole world. The gracious commission was the foundation of the authority to go to the Gentiles. The Jews had expected that the offers of life, under the Messiah, would be confined to their own nation. Jesus broke down the wall of partition, and commissioned his disciples to go everywhere, and bring the world to the knowledge of himself.

These two international religions –Christianity and Islam have the mission of evangelizing the world before the end of the age, but with two different approaches. Method of Christianity for evangelizing is preaching the word. -The young Timothy was advised by Paul to, *preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching.* 2 Timothy 2:4. Another passage of the scripture that informs the method with which Christians evangelize the world is Colossians 1:28 which says; *Him we proclaim, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man mature in Christ.* Christians have never been encouraged by the scripture both in part and whole to use force as a means of conversion of the world around them. When one is presented with the message of Christ and he rejects or did not see any need to accept the message he is not seen as enemy that must die, but in the case of Islam death is the next at the refusal to adhere to Islam. One of the most frequently quoted Quranic verses is chapter 9 verse 5, which is as follow, *"when the sacred months are over slay the idolaters wherever you find them. Arrest them, besiege them, and lie in ambush everywhere for them. If they repent and take to prayer and render the alms levy, allow them to go their way. God is forgiving and merciful."* This verse is known as "The Verse of the sword." Muslim terrorists cite it to justify their violent jihad. Correspondingly, critics of Islam claim that it commands Muslims to act with offensive aggression towards the non-Muslims of that period, and contributes to Islam's final theological doctrine of aggression towards all

non-Muslims of all times. In the preceding verse to Sura 9:5, that is Sura 9:4 a statement like, 'Proclaim a woeful punishment to the unbelievers' is written.

Therefore, the method of Islamic expansion genders religious crisis, this needs to be addressed to achieve peace in the environment that harbours Islamic religion and other religions. As long as, they use force to convert people there will always be crisis. People should be allowed to exercise their will power in other decide without compulsion a religion to belong.

### **Impact of Arab Expansion**

The impact of Arab expansionism is always on the negative, it puts its conquered on the reverse and attacking style of living. It has never been a healthy experience to any people or society they conquered. The following as listed below are the abridged impact of Arab expansionism.

- i. The so-called Arab invasions in the 7th century were among the least destructive in history. The Islamic conquest was not only speedy but permanent. Nearly all of the conquered territories remain Muslim today.
- ii. Wherever the Muslims went they also carried with them Arab culture. The cultures of the assimilated territories, which included places occupied by Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians, were influenced by the religion and culture of the Arab invaders.
- iii. The Arabic language and Arabic culture was spread with Islam. But even so a concept of ethnic nationalism, with a common language, never really developed, nor did the notion of territorial nations defined by formal borders. What existed were mainly Muslim-ruled cities and their hinterlands.
- iv. The conquered people were subjugated politically but over time their culture, customs, administrative practices, arts and world view transformed their conquerors.
- v. In the early years it was common for non-Arabs to convert to Islam and at the same time become an Arab by forming a relationship with an Arab tribe. Later on converting to Islam and become an Arab became a separate process.

### **A look at Jihad**

This segment is briefly looking at the violent method of the spread of Islamic religion in Nigeria. The literal meaning of Jihad is struggle or effort, and it means much more than holy war. In the early 19th century,

Islamic scholar Usman dan Fodio launched a jihad, which is called the Fulani War, against the Hausa Kingdoms of Northern Nigeria. He was victorious, and established the Fulani Empire with its capital at Sokoto.

Muslims use the word Jihad to describe three different kinds of struggle as listed below:

- i. A believer's internal struggle to live out the Muslim faith as well as possible
- ii. The struggle to build a good Muslim society
- iii. Holy war, the struggle to defend Islam with force if necessary.

Merriam's Webster's Dictionary opines that Jihad is, a holy war waged on behalf of Islam as a religious duty.

Nevertheless, Muslims today attempt to alleviate this fear of Islam by saying that non Muslims do not really understand the Islamic concept of Jihad. They will assert that Jihad is really the personal and individual struggle to overcome those things in one's life that Allah would have eliminated from their life. This assertion is true, but it is not the exclusive use of the term Jihad.

**In the Qur'an, Jihad is used to describe the personal struggle to purify one's own nature.**

Surah 29:68-69, (Al-Ankabut) introduces the idea that the Muslim will encounter many who are practitioners of error, and it is their duty to be alert to error and not succumb to it.

Surah 29:68 and who does more wrong than he who invents a lie against God or rejects the Truth when it reaches Him? Is there not a home in Hell for those who reject Faith? Surah 29:69 and those who strive (Jihad) in Our (cause), we will certainly guide them to Our Paths: for verily God is with those who do right. While the term "Jihad" or "struggle" is used in this sense, it is not so used very often.

**Jihad is also used to describe an intellectual struggle with unbelievers.**

In Surah 25:51-52 (Al-Furqan) Muslims are instructed to "struggle" against unbelievers with the Qur'an. This places the struggle in the realm of an intellectual struggle. Surah 25:51 Had it been Our Will, We could have sent a warner to every center of population, Surah 25:52 Therefore listen not to the Unbelievers, but strive (Jihad) against them with the utmost strenuousness, with the (Qur'an).

### **The Most Common use of Jihad in the Qur'an is to indicate Literal Warfare.**

But before we analyze this aspect of Jihad, it is important to understand what Muslims believe about evangelism by Christians. Evangelistic activity by Christians is considered aggression against Muslims and Islam. This is demonstrated by Ahmed Deedat in his book, *Crucifixion or Crucifiction*. This concept is what drives Muslims to attack and kill Christians at any slight misunderstanding. According to Deedat (1984) "In the battle for the hearts and minds of mankind, "crucifiction" is the only card the Christian holds. Free him from his infatuation and you will have freed the Muslim world from missionary aggression and harassment." (p.9).

Any attempt to turn a Muslim away from Islam is considered aggression against them, and thus justifies a militant and physical response. Islam wants to employ all the forces and means that can be employed for bringing about a universal, all-embracing revolution. It will spare no efforts for the achievement of this supreme objective. This far-reaching struggle that continuously exhausts all forces and this employment of all possible means are called jihad.

### **The Problem of Misinterpretation**

It is important to discuss this in short details. This is affecting both Christians and Muslims with others in other religions that are not Christianity and Islam. There are some fanatics that misinterpret the message of the holy books of their religion. There are religious fanatics in every religion that act beyond description. Whenever there is misinterpretation or exaggeration of anything especially when it has to do with the contents or the message of the religions' sacred books, it always results crisis and offensive actions. In both Christianity and Islam together with other religions, there are religious fanatics that have acted contrarily to the contextual messages of their sacred books which have resulted into crisis in the society of their host. There is need to encourage sound exegesis of both the Bible and Quran to the adherents, this if achieved will reduce the religious societal crisis attributed to adherents of both religions as a result of wrong interpretation of the message of their holy books.

### **Types of Conflict - Four Classifications**

According to Sheriff (2014), Experience in human society has shown that there are degrees of variation in conflicts. Conflicts are in types. Psychology as a discipline has espoused on intra-personal conflict. Sociology identifies inter-personal as well as intra-group or intra-unit

conflict, as well as inter-group conflict. Political Science and History have identified inter-ethnic or intra-state conflict as well as international conflict. Nicholson (1992) said, Conflict is an existing state of disagreement or hostility between two or more people. There are types of conflict which are easily identifiable in our contemporary times. Which include;

- i. Inter-personal Crisis
- ii. Intra-personal Crisis
- iii. Inter-group Crisis
- iv. Intra-group Crisis

- i. Interpersonal** crisis refers to a conflict between two individuals. This occurs typically due to how people are different from one another. We have varied personalities which usually results to incompatible choices and opinions.
- ii. Intrapersonal** crisis occurs within an individual. The experience takes place in the person's mind. Hence, it is a type of conflict that is psychological involving the individual's thoughts, values, principles and emotions.
- iii. Intragroup** crisis is a type of conflict that happens among individuals within a team. The incompatibilities and misunderstandings among these individuals lead to an intragroup conflict.
- iv. Intergroup** crisis takes place when a misunderstanding arises among different organizations. It may be religious as in the case of Nigeria, it as well may be in secular organizations.

The major of the above crisis that tear Nigeria apart is inter-religious crisis. The main forms of inter-religious conflicts in Nigeria are between Muslims and Christians. According to Canci and Odukoya (2016)

The conflicts are sometimes so intense that they have turned into wars in different parts of the country, and they range from the Kano revolt (1980), Bulunku Bizarre (1982), Kastina crises (1999), Samfara conflict, Kaduna revolt, Bauchi crises and Sokoto (1999). More recent examples are the Jos crises and the current conflict by Boko Haram against Christians and moderate Muslims. (p.7).

These are only a few examples of inter-religious conflicts in Nigeria, since not a year passes without three to four incidences of inter-religious conflicts. Since the return of civilian rule in 1999 following a protracted period of military rule, Nigeria has continued to experience recurring ethno-religious conflicts. Although some of these struggles are low-intensity contestations and rancorous wars of words, others have

degenerated into bloody sectarian fights. Thousands of Nigerians have been left dead, wounded and homeless over the years due to constant religious strife putting people of different religions against each other.

Inter-religious conflicts are brought about by a number of factors. Major among the causes religious crisis Nigeria is Arab-Muslim expansion agenda, Muslims' quest to gain control over all the territory in Nigeria and to extinguish every other antithetical religions to Islam in Nigeria. Another cause of religious conflict in Nigeria is the clashing interests of those in authority. The ruling class has applied a number of processes to express their dissatisfaction with exclusion from important decision-making processes of the country. The methods employed include religious violence and military coups d'état. Falola (1998) said: A majority of the religious conflicts in Northern Nigeria are reported to be due to the large number of rich Southerners who reside there. Many Northern elites are hurt by the business inventiveness of the Southerners and employ religious calls to incite people to destroy property belonging to non-natives. The results are wars fought under the pretence of being religious.

There are countries in Africa that have survived inter-religious crisis through strategic and honest implementation of certain crisis management methods. **Mali** Increasing violence across central and Northern Mali gained the attention of the international community in 2017. **Lake Chad Basin** Dubbed the most forgotten crisis of 2016, the Lake Chad Basin in West Africa showed very little improvement in 2017. **Sudan and South Sudan**, in Sudan the conflict has remained relatively stable; we have not seen a significant escalation in violence in those countries that are ravaged by religious conflicts. In Nigeria religious conflicts can be brought to a stop with the joint efforts of government and religious leaders.

### **How Can The Religious Crisis Be Solved In Nigeria?**

Current religious crisis in Nigeria is possible to overcome. However, it requires the unity of the government, administrative organs, religious leaders, adherents and inhabitants of a country. Above that, it also requires honest application of some notable conflict management techniques. Some of these techniques had been proven to be workable both in social and religious bodies, but it requires that there must be honesty from both religious bodies that crisis had long existed in their midst. What had made crisis to linger in Nigeria is because there has been lack of honesty among the government, religious leaders and adherents, and lack of true commitment to the solving of religious crisis. Another



reason religious crisis had lingered in Nigeria is because some of our political leaders and religious leaders had benefited from it, whereas some have seen it as a means of enriching their purse, while some have also used it as a veritable instrument of oppression and suppression of other antithetical religions.

Missionaries get into conflict with each other. Husband and wife can have crisis. Pastors and lay people get into conflict. Volunteers in ministry organizations find themselves in conflict. Human relations managers in businesses often find themselves managing situations of interpersonal or intergroup conflicts. How can we manage disagreements in ways that build personal and collegial relationships rather than harming them? Such disagreements or conflicts can occur between individuals or between groups of people.

### **Thomas-Kilmann Theory of Conflict Management**

Because no two individuals or groups, whether secular or religious groups have exactly the same beliefs, expectations and desires, conflict is a natural part of our interactions with others. The Thomas Kilmann theory of conflict management if properly applied will serve as a means of managing religious crisis in Nigeria. Considering the fact that we as individuals have different points of view, there will always be instances when misunderstandings will occur among us as well as in religious beliefs. With the arising of these intractable conflicts comes the need for conflict management. Even in seemingly ordinary situations, conflict may be rooted by other non-apparent reasons. Understanding the other sides of the issue would allow those involved to come up with an ideal resolution to the problem. In dealing with conflict, there are conflict management styles to be followed. The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, which is an assessment used globally in conflict handling, specifies five strategies used to address conflict.

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) assesses an individual's behaviour in conflict situations, that is, situations in which the concerns of two people appear to be incompatible. In conflict situations, we can describe a person's behaviour along two basic dimensions: (1) assertiveness, the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy his or her own concerns, and (2) cooperativeness, the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy the other person's concerns. These two dimensions of behaviour can be used to define five methods of

dealing with conflict. These five conflict-handling modes are shown below:

- i. **Competing:** win/lose
  - ii. **Accommodating:** lose/win
  - iii. **Avoiding:** no winners/no losers
  - iv. **Collaborating:** win/win
  - v. **Compromising:** win some/lose some
- 
- i. **Competing** is assertive and uncooperative – an individual pursues his own concerns at the other person’s expense. This is a power-oriented mode in which you use whatever power seems appropriate to win your own position, your ability to argue, your rank, or economic sanctions. Competing means “standing up for your rights,” defending a position which you believe is correct, or simply trying to win.
  - ii. **Accommodating** is unassertive and cooperative, the complete opposite of competing. When accommodating, the individual neglects his own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other person; there is an element of self-sacrifice in this mode. Accommodating might take the form of selfless generosity or charity, obeying another person’s order when you would prefer not to, or yielding to another’s point of view which will either lead to lose or win.
  - iii. **Avoiding** is unassertive and uncooperative; the person neither pursues his own concerns nor those of the other individual. Thus he does not deal with the conflict. Avoiding might take the form of diplomatically sidestepping an issue, postponing an issue until a better time or simply withdrawing from a threatening situation.
  - iv. **Collaborating** is both assertive and cooperative, the complete opposite of avoiding. Collaborating involves an attempt to work with others to find some solution that fully satisfies their concerns. It means digging into an issue to pinpoint the underlying needs and wants of the two individuals. Collaborating between two persons might take the form of exploring a disagreement to learn from each other’s insights or trying to find a creative solution to an interpersonal problem.
  - v. **Compromising** is moderate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness. The objective is to find some expedient, mutually acceptable solution that partially satisfies both parties. It falls intermediate between competing and accommodating. Compromising gives up more than competing but less than accommodating. Likewise, it addresses an issue more directly than avoiding, but does not explore it in as much depth as collaborating. In some situations, compromising might mean

splitting the difference between the two positions, exchanging concessions, or seeking a quick middle-ground solution.

Each of us is capable of using all the five conflict-handling modes. None of us can be characterized as having a single style of dealing with conflict. But certain people use some modes better than others and, therefore, tend to rely on those modes more heavily than others, whether because of temperament or practice. The Thomas Kilmann Theory is designed to measure people's use of conflict-handling modes across a wide variety of group and organizational settings.

### **Religious Dialogue**

The five techniques of conflict management proffered by Thomas Kilmann cannot work or be achieved in isolation. For them to work among conflicting religions there must be a platform for interreligious dialogue. What is Interreligious Dialogue? Interreligious dialogue is a challenging process by which adherents of differing religious traditions encounter each other in order to break down the walls of division that stand at the centre of most wars. The objective of interreligious dialogue is peace. Inter-religious dialogue, also referred to as interfaith dialogue, is about people of different faiths coming to a mutual understanding and respect that allows them to live and cooperate with each other in spite of their differences. The term refers to cooperative and positive interaction between people of different religious traditions, (i.e. "faiths") at both the individual and institutional level. Each party remains true to their own beliefs while respecting the right of the other to practise their faith freely. Nmah (2012) has made the following suggestions on how religious violence can be solved in Nigeria:

Nigerians should imbibe the culture of religious tolerance, trust and dialogue in inter-ethnic relations. Federal government/Nigerians should promote patriotism among themselves. Mutual understanding should replace strife between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria to make Nigeria a great nation in the 21st century. (pp.125, 127).

Interfaith dialogue is not just words or talk. It includes human interaction and relationships. It can take place between individuals and communities and on many levels. For example, between neighbours, in schools and in our places of work -it can take place in both formal and informal settings. In Ireland, Muslims and Christians live on the same streets; use the same shops, buses and schools. Normal life means that we come into daily

contact with each other. Dialogue therefore, is not just something that takes place on an official or academic level only –it is part of daily life during which different cultural and religious groups interact with each other directly, and where tensions between them are the most tangible.

### **Conclusion**

Religious individuals and faith-based organizations, as carriers of religious ideas, can play important roles, not only as a source of conflict but also as a tool for conflict resolution and peace-building, providing early warnings of conflict, good offices once conflict has erupted, and contributing to advocacy, mediation and reconciliation. We can't ignore the fact that Religion, next to family, is the second oldest institution. It governs the social as well as personal behaviour of man by providing guidelines, laws and principles relating to his interaction with his fellow man. I believe that this was one of the strongest forces which used to maintain peace in the society.

One of the main aims of religion is to promote 'justice'. Since justice is one of the main pillars of peace, the elements of peace and religion are same. Peace can be achieved only when there is law and order, and a state of harmony and mental tranquility prevails. From the beginning of the world, religion has existed to help individuals, groups and communities to achieve justice and peace. If we look at history, we will find many examples where religion compels individuals, groups and communities to follow the path of peace and to avoid conflict. Johnston also identifies the attributes that religious leaders and institutions can offer in promoting peace and reconciliation as follow:

- i. Credibility as a trusted institution.
- ii. A respected set of values.
- iii. Moral warrants for opposing injustice on the part of governments.
- iv. Unique leverage for promoting reconciliation among conflicting parties, including an ability to rehumanize situations that have become dehumanized over the course of protracted conflict.
- v. A capability to mobilize community, nation, and international support for a peace process.
- vi. An ability to follow through locally in the wake of a political settlement.
- vii. A sense of calling that often inspires perseverance in the face of major, otherwise debilitating, and obstacles.

In addition, both major religions which are Christianity and Islam in Nigeria should curtail the activities of religious fanatics among them

which stem from the misinterpretation of their holy books. Religious fanaticism is uncritical zeal or with an obsessive enthusiasm related to one's own, or one's group's, devotion to a religion, a form of human fanaticism which could otherwise be expressed in one's other involvements and participation, including employment, role, and partisan affinities.

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