Religiosity and Righteousness: A Critique of Islamic and Christian Practices on the University of Ibadan Campus

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ABSTRACT

As it is in the larger Nigerian society, the University of Ibadan campus is replete with religious groups and associations with affiliation to Islam and Christianity. Contrary to the fundamental dictates of these two religions however, the history of relationship between the Muslim and Christian communities on campus has been circumscribed, in the main, by suspicion, hatred and, sometimes, outright conflict. The gulf between religious texts and practices on Ibadan campus is equally manifest among Christian and Muslim students some of whom have been found guilty of examination malpractices, cultism and illicit sexual relations among other acts that both Islam and Christianity have designated as acts of unrighteousness. This paper, therefore, sets out to achieve the following: a) interrogate the concept of righteousness in both Islam and Christianity and, b) situate the latter against the general notion of religiosity on Ibadan campus. The paper relies heavily on the assumption that religious activism should be an instrument of character building and a catalyst for peaceful coexistence. The paper uses the descriptive method in eliciting data and sources its theoretical discussion from existing literature on the subject. The paper finds the following questions very important: exactly how

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does religiosity on the University of Ibadan campus translate to righteousness? How do we account for intra/inter-religious conflicts that often occur on the campus despite the outward display of religious identities by all? In other words, how far has the manifestation of religious identities by Muslims and Christians on the Ibadan campus been useful for the enhancement of godliness? This paper concludes that both Islam and Christianity, when properly understood and their tenets carefully applied, have models that can guarantee the establishment of righteous and godly society for the Nigerian nation at large.

Introduction

Until recently, Nigeria has witnessed peaceful co-existence among the citizenry despite its plural and diverse landscape. This is a country with over two hundred ethnic/language groups. It has in many ways survived along cultural and religious divides over the decades. This has in turn earned her the celebrated glories of the past that the youths of contemporary Nigeria read as history. In the early 1970 up till late 1980s, it was difficult to differentiate between a Muslim and a Christian in terms of appearance and manners. This was because there was virtually no single family without the mixture of both Muslims and Christians particularly in the Southwestern part of the country. Festivals then, whether Christmas or *Eids* (Islamic festivals) were celebrated together. Times of festivals were always joyous moments for all. Nigerians lived like one big family. Religious identities at this period were only through naming which had nothing to do with brotherly relationship that was in place then. There were very few churches and mosques yet people were more trustworthy and conscious of their duties to God and to their fellow brothers. The communities then were so devotional to the good upbringing of the younger ones regardless of whom their individual parents were. Illicit sexual relations and all forms of

indecencies such as smoking, drug abuse, were all regarded as shameful; hence those involved were usually on their guard to avoid being detected. In fact, the atmosphere then was, to a large extent, free of religious rivalries; peace and harmony were the order of the day. Those youths who were trained and nurtured those days can boldly exhibit the nostalgic traits and proudly assert exactly why their generation can be said to be better off in terms of moral and academic worthiness. Religious practices then were synonymous to the dictates of the scriptures. In short, the social order at the time was harmonious and steeped in communal lifestyle whereby people were conscious of their responsibilities towards their brothers and their communities.

In the contemporary times, however, it is worrisome that almost all the religious and moral virtues identified above are nowhere to be found in Nigeria's socio-cultural and religious spheres. For example, corruption is manifest in virtually all the public and private sectors of the country despite the fact that Nigerians now appear to be more religious than their forebears. In Nigeria today, houses of worship can be sighted in almost all the streets of every town, including the rural areas. This rough statistics is no doubt an affirmation of the extreme religious fervour among Nigerians. Perhaps it is important to ask: exactly what is responsible for the moral degeneration despite the increased level of religiosity? Exactly how will Nigeria benefit from its seeming religiosity? What has been

the bane of religious, political as well as tribal intolerance? How did Nigerians as a people get to this level of bigotry? How can the increased acts of religiosity translate to righteousness and social development? It is against this background that this paper finds its justification and the paper intends to engage the above dynamics in detail. In section one, the paper examines the concept of religiosity and how it has impacted on the human relations among Nigerians. In section two, the paper explores the interface between religiosity and righteousness. Sections three and four bring to fore the existing relationship between Christians and Muslims on the University of Ibadan campus and how peaceful co-existence among Christians and Muslims is indispensable towards the realization of a harmonious social order in Nigeria as a whole.

Interrogating the Concepts of Religiosity and Righteousness

Religiosity[2] is broadly defined as a characteristic of individuals and collectivities that displays various features of beliefs about the supernatural and how individuals and social groups engage in behaviours related to the supernatural. Further, religiosity, as simply put by Gallaghar, is a significant characteristic[3] of religion, which focuses on the strength of religious beliefs and

[2] This was culled from https://www.sciencedirect.com (Assessed on 7 April, 2020

[3] Gallagher S. Tierney W. 2013. Religiousness/Religiosity. *Encyclopaedia of Behavioural Medicine*. Springer,1653-4. (Assessed)from https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007%2F (978-1-4419-1005-9) 489, on 7 April, 2020

involvement. It has been defined as an individual's belief, spirituality, and reverence towards a divinity.

Aside from the broad definition of religiosity rendered above, an excursion into sociology gives a rather clearer understanding of what religiosity actually implies. Sociology posits that religiosity is a term used to describe the extent to which religion influences societies and intersects with other areas of public life. It defines the roles religion plays in society, including the extent of people's beliefs, commitments, and levels of engagement with their particular religion. In its broader sense, religiosity is generally related to how much a particular religious' doctrine is internalized (belief systems, identity etc) and is less related to the actual practice of religion, like going to Mosque or Church.[4]

The sociologists[5], as a class, do not treat religion as a divine phenomenon; from their viewpoint, religion is just another expression of the social behaviour of man. Ahmad argues further in line with the sociologists that if their view of the development of institution of religion is right, then all religious societies should be viewed as occupying a unique position among the human social systems. They would be perceived as symbols personifed of fraud committed both against the society and the individual. This is because the religious societies legislate themselves on

behalf of God to keep the simple unsuspecting common people chained to the so-called divine laws. Thus, in the name of God it is a fraudulent religious hierarchy which rules to its own advantage to deceive and sometimes capture the unsuspecting minds. This is in accordance with some sociologists' perception of religious society.[6] Putting the above into succinct perspectives, the exhibition of religious identity to ordinary minds is to portray a godly outward appearances and sometimes speak for God or in the name of God.

Righteousness in the language of the Bible portrays the life of love, prosperity and honour. In other words, the pursuit of righteousness can be likened to a striving towards near perfection wherein the soul detests hatred, poverty as well as indignation. A righteous person, then, becomes an emblem of noble character. The holy Bible puts this succinctly by saying: "Whoever pursues righteousness and love finds life, prosperity and honour."[7]

Just as religiosity is broadly defined, righteousness is acting[8] in accordance with divine or moral law: that is, to be free from guilt or sin, to be morally right or engage in justifiable righteous decision, can be something arising from an outraged sense of justice or morality and righteous indignation.

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[4] This was culled from https://www.study.com (assessed on 7 April, 2020

[5] Mirza Tahir Ahmad. 2009. *Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge and Truth*. India: Islam International Publications Limited. 16

[6] Mirza Tahir Ahmad.17 5

[7] The holy Bible, Proverbs. 21:2

[8] Merriam Webster. 1828. *American Dictionary of the English Language.* Culled from, https://www.webstersdictionary1828.com (accessed on 9/5/2022).

Righteousness is broadly defined as: "Purity of heart and rectitude of life; conformity of heart and life to the divine law….it is nearly equivalent to holiness, comprehending holy principles and affections of heart, and conformity of life to the divine law. It includes all we call justice, honesty and virtue, with holy affections; in short, it is true religion".

The word *al-birr* is from the root verb *barra* and is technically translated to mean to be righteous or to do good. Righteousness in the Qur'anic terminologies refers to *al-birr*, *al-ihsān*, *al-amal as-sālih*, *irfād*, *imtinān*, *ikrām*, *I'ṭāu*, *minnah*, et-cetera. The Qur'an describes righteousness as something known, praiseworthy, as well as rewarding. According to the Qur'an:

> It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces towards East or West; but it is righteousness- to believe in Allah and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and Messengers; to spend of your sustenance, out of love for Him, for kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity; to fulfil the contracts which ye made; and to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God-fearing.[9]

In explaining the above Qur'anic *ayah* (sign), Ali posits that we are given a description of the righteous and God-fearing man that he should obey salutary regulations, but he should fix his gaze on the love of Allah and the love of his fellow men. He says further: we are given four heads: 1) our faith should be true and sincere; 2) we must be prepared to show it in deeds of charity to our fellow-men; 3) we must be good citizens, supporting social organization; and 4) our own individual soul must be firm and unshaken in all circumstances.[10]

If these are the Qur'anic semantics of righteousness, then it is arguable to say that to be righteous is to be known for acts of goodness, to be identified with discipline both inwardly and outwardly. In other words, a reflection of righteousness is as well a reflection of godliness. In doing this, man is in dire need of liberty of choices – the choice to be righteous or the choice to be vicious. It is the ability to choose wisely (to follow the dictates of the religious texts in details) that constitutes righteousness. In line with Tahir Ahmad, man is the epitome of liberty which is ingrained in him, his very texture is woven with the yarn of liberty, yet…we find all man-made institutions shaped to work against the liberty of man in the final analysis[11]. He says further:

> A careful study of the history of progressive growth of traditions, customs and legislation is sufficient to prove (sic) this assertion. The evolution of the state when viewed from an unbiased, detached angle of perception will appear no more than an institutionalized journey of man towards progressive self-imposed slavery. To resolve this dilemma requires a deeper understanding of the factors which are

[9] The Holy Qur'an 2: 177.

[10] Abdullah Yusuf Ali. 1999. *The Holy Qur'an, Translation and Commentary*. Birmingham: IPCI Islamic Mission. 73

[11] Mirza Tahir Ahmad.

responsible for this step by step transition from freedom to bondage.[12]

The gift of choice or freewill is peculiar to man and the Jinns. This is naturally ingrained in their nature but this sometimes is taken for granted and often leads to arrogance on the part of man. Whereas man and the Jinns are the only beings endowed with freewill, the room for socialization is nevertheless exclusive to man and the Jinns; other animals do engage in socialization but in the best way conforming to their own nature. This is because, to every creation, there are ways they are communicated to in accordance to what is proper to their nature. On this assertion, Tahir says as follows:

> …to socialise is not a prerogative of man alone, as the animal kingdom moves from lower to higher orders, there appears to be a gradual transition from a chaotic to a more disciplined, organized and centralized animal society. Sometimes we notice it as a trend, where necessity must have taught the animals to live together in their common interest of survival….to our utter amazement, we find social order and meticulous discipline ingrained even in such animal species as are not very highly placed in the ladder of evolution. No gradual evolutionary influences can be traced in their highly disciplined order which seem to have erupted as such in their final perfected form. All that we can infer from the study of their institutionalized existence is that it is naturally ingrained in them.[13]

It is a common knowledge that some of the problems facing the survival of Nigeria today

include tribalism, nepotism, ethnicity, political and religious intolerance. Nigeria's survival should not be negotiable regardless of tribal, ethnic, religious, political[14] as well as other affiliations (my emphasis). Nigerians have coexisted together as one family for several decades and one would ordinarily think that the over two hundred and fifty tribes and tongues must have gotten the correct formula for a peaceful and successful coexistence.[15] Although, sometimes, when Nigerians wants to play the identity politics, they refer to Nigeria as a secular state but, in the real sense, religion is like a national flag. Whereas the indices of religiosity are manifest in the ways and manners Nigerians comport themselves, the questions surrounding their level of righteousness are yearning for answers. In other words, religiosity among Nigerians may not be synonymous to righteousness.

On Religious Tolerance

Tolerance is regarded as a virtue because we, as rational beings, cannot all address issues or situations the same way. Therefore, the ability to accommodate and live with other peoples' opinions/dissipations earns an individual/society a relative/desired peace. The UNESCO contends that there is a symbiotic relationship between tolerance and peace, such that the former is the virtue that

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Mirza Tahir Ahmad[12].
Mirza Tahir Ahmad. 11-12[13].

Akinyemi S. 2019. "Voter Apathy: A Threat to[14] Democracy in Nigeria". *Democracy in Africa (DIA)*, Available at: http://democracyinafrica.org/voter-apathy-threat-democracy-nigeria/ assessed on 19/02/2023.
Akinyemi S. 2[15].

enhances the possibility of the latter. More copiously, the UNESCO states:

> Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. It is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication, and freedom of thought, conscience and belief. Tolerance is harmony in difference…the virtue that makes peace possible, [it] contributes to the replacement of the culture of peace…[16]

The UNESCO Declaration adds that:

> The practice of tolerance…means that one is free to adhere to one's own convictions and accepts that others adhere to theirs. It means accepting the fact that human beings, naturally diverse in their appearance, situation, speech, behaviour and values, have the right to live in peace and to be as they are…[17]

For Dupré, tolerance is:

> A disposition to put up with things (or people) of which one disapproves, in situations where one has the capacity to intervene but chooses not to. The disapproval involved can lie anywhere on a spectrum from mild distaste to strong aversion, and the level of tolerance is proportionate to the degree of disapproval. In other words, you need to display a high degree of toleration to restrain yourself from intervening in something that you find highly distasteful.[18]

Tolerance is to accept a situation as it is presented even if it conflicts with what the other person stands for. In other words, the other person is tolerated not because what he is presenting is intrinsically the best but because that is his own way of presentation. To capture this succinctly, Voltaire says: "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it"[19]. This assertion is further corroborated in Dupré thesis in the following lines:

> A person's own mode of laying out his existence is the best, not because it is the best in itself, but because it is his own mode. Human beings are not like sheep; and even sheep are not indistinguishably alike. A man cannot get a coat or a pair of boots to fit him, unless they are either made to his measure, or he has a whole ware-houseful to choose from: and is it easier to fit him with a life than with a coat….?"[20]

Given the above, it is arguable to say that tolerance embraces human rights, diversities, pluralism, democratic tenets, as well as the rule of law. It can also be said to involve the rejection of dogmatism and absolutism.[21] In other words, inasmuch as there is tolerance, human society is assumed to be in harmony because human diversity, according to René, makes tolerance much weightier than a virtue; it makes it a requirement for survival. We ought to be tolerant of one another, because we are all weak, inconsistent and liable to fickleness and error.[22]

[16] The UNESCO Declaration of Principles on Tolerance. 1995.
[17] The UNESCO Declaration of Principles on Tolerance. 1995.
[18] Ben Dupré. 2009. *50 Big Ideas You Need to Know*. UK: Quercus. 2

[19] Cf. Ben Dupré. 24.
[20] Cf. Ben Dupré. 25.
[21] Cf. Ben Dupré. 25.
[22] Cf. Ben Dupré. 25.

Religion is a very volatile phenomenon that is capable of being used to build or destroy. Religion has been largely used in Nigeria by the political elites to cause division and disunity among Nigerians for purely selfish ends.[23] Not only that, the religious activists themselves have also come to the verge of 'monopolizing' God, believing that they have the divine and exclusive right to give salvation to others. This is why dogmatism and absolutism (the claim to absolute truth) reign supreme among the religious adherents in our society.

The use of the pulpit to perpetrate hatred and bigotry pervades the Nigerian public sphere. Perhaps it is also important to state that at the political realm, religion has thrived as a divisive tool in the hands of the politicians. Whereas religion is used by the political class to cause division among Nigerians, it is nevertheless insignificant when it comes to the distribution of the "national cake". The political space in Nigeria seems to radiate the assumption that the fortune of the Nigerian state belongs only to the political 'elites' who are either Muslims or Christians. In other words, at the political scene in Nigeria, corruption knows no religion, it is boundary-less as well border-less. This scenario is not different from what we witness on a daily basis on our campuses despite the proliferation of religious denominations. On our various campuses, religious garbs can be seen everywhere, and places of worship (mosques and churches) are always filled up with worshipers anytime of the day. As it is on our various campuses, so it is the same in the larger Nigerian society. Therefore, it is instructive to agree with Usman Yusuf when he says:

> Mosques and Churches are filled up with worshipers with less *taqwa* (piety), prayers are louder with resultant effects of less security and loss of humanity…religiosity has taken over the people's righteousness and humanity.[24]

Thus, the dearth of righteousness in a supposedly religious state as Nigeria, according to Utamu et-al, has assumed such an appalling magnitude that people often wonder whether religion is a blessing or a curse to Nigeria.[25] Observers of events in Nigeria, particularly those who are seemingly religious, are of the opinion that the problem facing the country emanated, on the one hand, from insincerity, intolerance and ignorance on the part of some adherents of religions, while, on the other, selfishness, self-centeredness and lack of patriotism on the part of the political juggernauts.[26]

Is'haq Modibbo Kawu. "Nigerian Politics and [23] the Cynical of Manipulation of Religion", *The Vanguard*, 01/30/2014, available at: https://www.vanguardngr.com assessed on, 19/02/2023.

Usman Yusuf. 2022. Building and Sustaining [24] the Culture of Peaceful Elections in Nigeria: The role of Faith and Traditional Leaders. A paper presented at the 4th General Assembly of Inter-faith Dialogue for Peace (IDFP), 28th March-1st February, 2022.

[25] Utamu et-al. 2013. Religion: A Curse or a Blessing for National Integration and Development in Nigeria: Boko Haram in Perspective. *Journal of Sociological Research*, 4(1), 364.

Kukah, M.H. & Falola, T. 1996. *Religious* [26] *Militancy and Self-Assertion*. Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Limited. 99-128.

University of Ibadan: Muslim-Christian Relations

University of Ibadan was established in 1948 and has since remained the first and the best in Nigeria. Its vision and mission is to expand the frontiers of knowledge through provision of excellent conditions for learning and research. To produce graduates who are worthy in character and sound judgement, as well as to contribute to the transformation of society through creativity and innovation.

Nigeria is presumed to be one of the most religious nations in the world with Christianity and Islam as the major religions. However, Nigeria is adjudged to have been engulfed by the highest number of violent religious clashes in the world due to their frequent occurrences.[27] While it is obvious that religious and doctrinal differences are not the major causes of the clashes between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria, but rather are often rooted in socio-political and economic issues, the ethno-religious differences are often used by the political elites to win emotional supports for these factors and motives.[28]

Apart from the issue of ethnicity, religious affiliations, in line with Ayantayo et-al[29], are becoming endemic and intruding into the political sphere of the country. If this is clearly manifest at the political scene, it is also very important to note that the academy that is expected to be a connecting force between the town and the gown is also characterized by ethnic and religious tensions and unrest. At the University of Ibadan, the religious dimension to the peaceful co-existence between the Christians and the Muslims is very loud and alive. There have been recorded series of intra/inter religious conflicts on University of Ibadan campus. In 1986, there was a crisis that emanated from the positioning of the cross by the Christians in front of the Chapel of the Resurrection which still shares a very close boundary with the University's Central Mosque. At the time, the Muslims protested the positioning of the cross, arguing that the cross was directly placed in front of the mosque and was causing some distractions to the Muslim worshipers. The altercations that followed led to series of attacks and destruction on the University campus.[30]

Were it not for the quick and wise intervention of the Imam of the University of Ibadan in the year 2010, another incidence that would have drifted the academy into

[27] Gwamna, J.D. 2010. *Religion and Politics in Nigeria*. Bukuru: Africa Christian Textbooks (ACTS), cf. *Religion, Peace Building and National Integration*. In honor of Muibi Omolayo Opeloye. 2020. Edited by Y.O. Imam et-al. 106

[28] Shittu M.H. 2020. Common Themes in the Bible and the Qur'an for Religious Peace and National Unity. *Religion, Peace Building and National Integration*, in Honour of Muibi Omolayo Opeloye. Edited by Y.O. Imam et-al. Ibadan: EXTENTION PUBLICATIONS LIMITED, 106

[29] Ayantayo J.K. et-al. 2012. *Religion and Governance in Nigeria*. Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press. ii

[30] Danoye Oguntola-Laguda. 2020. Religion, Peace and National Integration: The Case of African Traditional Religion. In Y.O. Imam et-al. 68

another religious crisis was when a 400 hundred level female Law student dressed like a Muslim, entered the Mosque, sat and listened to the Friday sermon. On that fateful day, the congregation, led by the Imam, started prayer and soon reached the point when all observers were expected to be in a solemn state and follow the Imam. As if she was calculating, this female student suddenly released a sharp voice that pierced through the solemnity and ritual of the prayer, shouting, in her words, "accept Jesus as your Lord and saviour, all these you're doing cannot save you except…"[31] This incident was immediately nipped in the bud by the leadership of the Mosque to avert a religious crisis on the University campus. Occasions of provocation such as this are very common within the University community among the adherents of the two prominent religions on the campus. It should be emphasized that there are Muslims who glorify and project Islam in its all-inclusive/all-embracing nature, while there are those who mortify and misrepresent its worldview just as these two examples can be found among the Christians. The most surprising scenario, therefore, is to see those who are neither Muslims nor Christians (such as; free thinkers, African traditionalists), who are usually categorized as unbelievers, exemplifying godliness in their dealings with fellow human beings. There is no doubting the fact that Islam and Christianity have areas of commonalities in matters such as theological teachings, despite the presence of irreconcilable differences.[32] But should the differences be an avenue for crises?

According to Bidmos, the level of engagements between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria can be easily categorized into two, viz: the private and the official levels.[33] At the private level of engagement, which can also be regarded as interpersonal relationship outside the precincts of the Church and the Mosque, Nigerians interact freely and amicably. At this level, both Christians and Muslims interact as members of the same family, as political associates, as business partners, as co-workers in the public and private sectors of the economy including the market places. It is observed that the relationships at this level are usually cordial and pleasant. There have been instances of how Christians and Muslims have come together to establish political parties and even run together as flag bearers in the country. There is usually the sense of mutual trust and respect among the party members in spite of their religious differences. There are also business ventures that have been successfully run by Muslim and Christian associates and there is hardly any instance of breach of contract on the basis of religious differences among the associates. In other

[31] Simon Babs Mala. 2016. Christian Muslim Relations among University of Ibadan Students. Available at: https://www.academia.edu assessed on 06/30/22.

[32] Shittu M.H. op-cit. 116.

[33] Bidmos M.A. 1993. *Inter-Religious Dialogue: The Nigerian Experience*. Lagos: Islamic Publications Bureau. 12.

words, the private level of engagement is characterized by maturity, tolerance, and mutual understanding which are the prerequisite for religiosity and the ideal for national cohesion and development.[34] However, whenever the same set of people relate with one another at the formal level, the situation changes considerably.

Relationship at the formal level is steeped in identity and ideology, whereby the attitude of Christians and Muslims to one another is no longer personal but representative of the attitude of the corporate body. Their actions and reactions to a given situation are dictated and influenced externally (all forms of relationship at this level are based on external influences such as Church, Mosque or cultural dictates). At this level also, Muslim-Christian relationship is characterized by suspicion, hatred, envy, blackmail, bigotry, unhealthy rivalry and incitements. These and other acts of unrighteousness can be said to be responsible for various unrest and disturbances with resulting effects of destruction of lives and properties in various places in the country.[35]

It must be emphasized that differences is a natural phenomenon within the creation of God. Differences according to Islamic understanding is a form of blessing-it is almost impossible for human beings to view issues the same way, hence, the recognition of this is adequately needed to foster understanding of events around one another.

In line with Makinde, man is of diverse cultures and traditions; the cultural and traditional variations make it impossible for (them) to think the same way…there is therefore, the likelihood of having different conceptions and opinions leading to misunderstanding and rivalry.[36] He says further as follows:

> One fact also remains that diversity in man covers a lot of aspects of human existence. It may be social, political,…or religious depending on a situation or a natural phenomenon that occurs to man…this diversity in many occasions, when not properly handled, has brought about conflict and disharmony in a human community or nation. Owing to the significant roles which religion plays in the life of man, it becomes impossible to separate it from man. Every man seems to be attached to one religion or the other. This therefore, brings about diversity in religion of men and based on this fact, it becomes impossible for all men…to belong to the same religion. However, this does not preclude the fact that human beings are from the same progenitor, Adam. Coming from the same progenitor makes it mandatory on them to underplay their religious differences so as not to degenerate to conflict or disharmony.[37]

In other words, religious tolerance is a prerequisite for national integration/cohesion and harmonious society. Until Nigerians learn how to tolerate one another–in religious, cultural/ethnic spheres – the incidences of violence may not be easily

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[34] Bidmos M.A. op-cit.
[35] Bidmos M.A. op-cit.

[36] Makinde A.K. 2020. Shariʿah, Peace-Building, Religious Harmony and National Integration. *Religion, Peace Building and National Integration*. In honour of Muibi Omolayo Opeloye. Edited by Y.O. Imam et-al. Ibadan: Extension Publications Limited. 76
[37] Makinde A.K. op-cit.

contained. Adherents of the various religious (especially Muslims and Christians) can work together to promote national integration and development only if the atmosphere is free of religious violence and there is peace, which is a necessary platform for development to be entrenched.[38]

Causes of Religious Crises in Nigeria

What can we say are the factors responsible for the existing rivalries, hatred and/or bigotry among Christians and their Muslim counterparts? Answers to this question are not far-fetched. They have to do firstly, in the words of Bidmos, with the missionary nature of both Islam and Christianity.[39] In Islam, for example, Muslim *Ummah* is charged with the missionary zeal of inviting people to the cause of Allah (God) and this charge is taken as a compulsory duty that must be carried out with moderation and caution. The Qur'an alludes to this as follows:

> Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong: they are the one to attain felicity.[40]

In its practical characteristics, Islam will not give a legislation without prescribing the way and manner of its execution. Simply put, there is no rule without exception in Islam. The same thing applies to the injunction on calling people (*Da'awah*) to the way of God as shown in the above *Ayah* of the Qur'an. *Da'awah* in Islam is a communal responsibility that is not

necessarily placed on the entire community. That is, if a segment of the community undertakes it, the whole community is absolved of its negligence, while other members of the community are expected to focus on other expedient needs of the society. In other words, *Da'awah* is not expected to be undertaken by everyone in the community. This division of duties is further explained in the Qur'ān as follows:

> Nor should the believers all go forth together: if a contingent from every expedition remained behind, they could devote themselves to studies in religion, and admonish the people when they return to them-that thus they (may learn) to guard themselves (against evil).[41]

The Qur'an does not only classify duties to be performed but also sends a note of caution to the Muslim *Ummah* on how to undertake those duties. This is clearly corroborated in the numerous *āyāt* (signs) of the Qur'an.[42] It should be noted from the latter that all the instructions were expressly directed to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) but their applications are directed to all Muslims who are involved in *Da'awah* as they are enjoined to follow his footsteps and exemplary character.

Similarly, the question of mission is fundamental within the Christendom. The Christians are instructed as part of their duty to engage in constant evangelism or the preaching and dissemination of the Christian

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38 Danoye Oguntola-Laguda. Op-cit. 67.
39 Bidmos M.A. op-cit.
40 Qur'ān 3: 104.

41 Qur'ān 9:122.
42 Qur'ān 28: 56, 88:21-22, 3:159, 16:125.

gospel. This duty is as fundamental as the love of Christ in itself. The following passages of the Bible corroborate the foregoing:

> But as for you, go and proclaim the Kingdom of God.[43]

> Preaching to the people is not a thing I boast about, since it is a duty which has been laid on me.[44]

> He gave me commandment what I should say and what I should speak.[45]

One thing that is common to both Christianity and Islam is the instruction in both religious scriptures about love. This is a central teaching in the two religions. Here, therefore, the important question is: to what extent have the faithful in Nigeria complied with these golden and divine injunctions as enshrined in *Da'awah* and Mission? The answer to this question is embedded in the manners in which both Muslims and Christians relate with one another. The relationship between the two adherents of the major religions in Nigeria can be interpreted, following Bidmos, as awful as some of those who claim to be calling people to the way of God have often conducted themselves in unscrupulous ways as far as the tenets of their religions are concerned.[46] There have been instances of clashes between the faithful due to unconventional ways of preaching and/or the deliberate use of bitter sarcasm which the other group may find offensive and, therefore, decide to react to as a reprisal. Often times,

such a reprisal is irrepressibly grievous and destructive.

The reading of the scriptural excerpts above suggests that the incidences of violence, hatred, bigotry and intolerance would not arise at all if the teachings of those excerpts were strictly adhered to. *Da'awah* or preaching is expected to be undertaken by those who are trained to do so, and it must be accompanied with patience, wisdom, kindness, love/compassion as well as sympathy. In this sense, the preaching is expected to be geared towards the interest and the salvation of the populace or the invitees rather than getting unnecessarily irritated at the slightest provocation or sarcasm. A preacher is expected to show pity and mercy just like the Prophets who were sent with the initial messages.

Sadly, the relationship between Christians and Muslims within the University of Ibadan is a product of the society characterized by hatred, intolerance, and lack of deep understanding of the religious scriptures. The academy is deeply rooted in suspicion and lack of trust. This is in turn impacting on the moral evolution of the students who are expected to be vanguards of righteousness. Instead, what is often witnessed is arguably in contrast to the tenets of the religions some of our students exhibit through appearances. It is also the reason the concept of righteousness has suffered greatly among Christians and Muslims within the University of Ibadan campus despite the wanton

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[43] Holy Bible, Luke 9:60.
[44] Holy Bible, Corinthians 9:16.
[45] Holy Bible, John 12:49.
[46] Bidmos M.A. op-cit. 20.

exhibition of religiosity through outward appearances among the adherents of the two religions.

Perhaps, it is arguable to say that other factors responsible for the deep-rooted suspicion and hatred among the religious adherents is as a result of external influences. For example, the role of the press/media is evident in many ways. Some of the times, the way incidences or issues are reported in the media all over the world is alarming. Sensational headlines and news abounds in Nigeria, sometimes fake news are reported as real as possible especially when those who are involved in the incidence are Christians and Muslims. It is common to witness incidences of misrepresentation/misunderstanding of the real cause of events. Many clashes in Nigeria are rather ethnic than religious but are often times given religious coloration by the media. Both the print and the electronic media usually give prominence to such events that are negative and capable of causing hatred and rivalry between Christians and Muslims.[47]

But a quick retrospection is important here. It is true that those who are involved in the media coverage/reportage are either Christians or Muslims; then, can the damages done on a daily basis by the media, therefore, be regarded as external influence? As such, if the Nigerian press is interested in religious harmony and wishes to exhibit some levels of righteousness, it will report[48] numerous

events that take place on a daily basis in Nigeria which can forge unity and cooperation between Christians and Muslims rather than those which promote tension and discords between the two religious groups. Here, a proper reorientation/re-education of the values of the two religions is needed.

Creating a Nexus between Religiosity and Righteousness

From the foregoing, it has become imperative to forge a serious blending between religiosity and righteousness such that what we profess as "being religious" will be demonstrable within the matrix of "being righteous". After all, the Bible says: "If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless."[49] The main point here is that adherents of the two major religions are expected to act consistently according to the dictates of their scriptures; otherwise, hypocrisy and undue bigotry will continue to pervade our society. In short, the adherents should endeavour to embrace the golden rule which guarantees moral consistency. According to Dupré:

> The essence of the golden rule is moral consistency, and it is the flouting of this- not practicing what you preach- that makes hypocrisy so obnoxious. The basic objection to the adulterous vicar who eulogizes the sanctity of marriage or the politician who takes a backhander while fulminating against financial impropriety is inconsistency: between their stated opinions and the beliefs that are evinced by their behaviour; between the

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47 .Bidmos M.A. op-cit. 22
48 .Bidmos M.A. op-cit. 23

49 .Holy Bible, James 1:26

importance they claim to attach to certain propositions and the indifference that one can infer from their actions.[50]

The above suggests two positions, namely, the destructive nature of hypocrisy and the virtues that can be derived from the moral consistency of the religious practitioners. Muslims and Christians should practice what their respective religions dictate and create space for cross-religious understanding in order to appreciate what the others hold as values. This will not only engender the spirit to tolerate opposing religious views but also the freedom to operate within the shared spaces. This is because, the meaning of freedom as far as the other person is concerned, according to Dupré, is to be allowed to sing in my bath as loud as will not interfere with my neighbour's freedom to sing a different tune in his[51].

Conclusion

This paper posits that Nigeria as a nation must be ready to detribalize and purge itself out of all forms of intolerance including religious to be able to achieve the desired growth and development. The academy (institutions of higher learning) such as University of Ibadan should as a matter of urgency, purge itself of the wanton display of religiosity laced with hypocrisy in its entirety. University of Ibadan is expected to be the vanguard of learning and character moulding going by its mission and vision statements-leaving by example becomes the

only garb by the religious practitioners. The garb of piety that is characterized by love, tolerance/accommodation, faithfulness, sincerity as well as patriotism is non-negotiable. Doing this will not only project University of Ibadan as a leading institution in terms of moral evolution but rather as a free space for peace and harmonious relationship. Hence, we have no need for any further empty messianic rhetoric laced with deceitful and grandiose religiosity"[52]. This is important because, Nigeria as it were, remain the only entity we all can call ours.

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[50] Ben Dupré. Op-cit.16.
[51] Cf. Ben Dupré. Op-cit. 21.

[52] Owei Lakemfa. 2022.Jesus Lost Elections, So Can Kukah Lose to Buhari. *The Vanguard*, 24/04/2022.

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