

IGWEBUIKE ONTOLOGY AND THE ISSUE OF RELIGIO-POLITICAL CRISIS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The relationship that does exist between politics and religion is intimate. More so, the relationship is complex because of the intricacies inherent in the politicization of religion. With emphasis on Nigeria today, there are two dominant religious groups in Nigeria, Islam and Christianity. Islam and Christianity are not recognized here to the trivialization of the position of traditional religion. The integration of politics and religion in Nigerian political history is believed to be one major problem behind the current religious violence and political instability troubling the country. This research is aimed at looking into the chaos that has been caused by religion in Nigeria's socio-political system and has employed the Igwebuike Philosophy with the view of addressing the issues of conflict between the two major religions in Nigeria. Igwebuike principle of solidarity and complementarity will be adopted for this purpose. For the purpose of this thesis, the hermeneutic and phenomenological methods of inquiry will be employed. This thesis, therefore, exposes the misplacement of values by the Nigerian people as they tend to place religion and politics as a single entity, rather than practicing them independently. Nonetheless, religion and politics are complimentary and can be practiced without steps.

Introduction

The human person, from researches, is said to be a being that needs the presence of the other to foster its own existence; thus, it is not a totally independent being, despite his religion, social or political class. Virtually in all societies of the world, religion has become a key index that carpenters the socio-economic, cultural and political structures, either for good or for bad.

Nigeria, just like any other multi-cultural society, has a number of religious movements and practices, such as: Islam, Christianity and indigenous religion. Before the arrival of the colonial masters into Nigeria, our ancestors were staunch adherents of the African traditional religion (ATR). The ATR was a system of belief and worship that was totally devoid of acrimony, hate and conflicts.

For administrative convenience, Fredrick Lugard brought forth the thought merging northern and southern protectorates. In 1914, an entity called Nigeria emerged, bringing about 250 ethnic groups together into one political and administrative entity. Today, ironically, the merger became a bane of peace, progress and stability of the Nigerian nation. Although Nigeria has witnessed some pockets of religious conflicts over the years, it assumed an alarming proportion when Nigeria assumed democratic ideals in 1999.

As a multi-ethnic and religious entity, Christians and Muslims (the two major religions in Nigeria) in Nigeria have over the years tried to outwit each other in terms of belief, adherence, structure and growth vis-à-vis the Nigerian nation. Consequently, a dimension of fanaticism was introduced into the religious practice. Unfortunately, the so-called religions have become a source of strife, anarchy and bloodletting in Nigeria in recent times. Today, there is a sharp deviation from the core values of religion, occasioned by the alarming nature of religious crisis in Nigeria, leading to destruction of lives and property. Rather than entrench peace, unity and stability, religion has somewhat threatened the whole essence of Nigeria's nationhood.

Very often, the woes of Nigeria are blamed on the events of “slave trade”, “colonialism” and “missionary methods” that were not contextual. Today, it is very clear that the very enemies of Nigeria are Nigerians. The rate at which Nigerians destroy one another morally, intellectually, socially, politically and physically in the present world cannot be compared to the accusation we heap on the Western world. The various crises in Nigeria today need fellow Nigerians to be the light of the world and salt of the earth. This calls for a sense of complementarity and inter-personal dialogue, in which the human person can be a reconciled reconciler. In other words, the human person needs a renewal of heart and change of attitude. It must be remembered that as Nigerians “the sky is wide enough for everyone to fly”. This will assist us to develop our gifts and actualize our latent potentials to be the light of the world and salt of the earth.

Thus, the researcher places *Igwebuike* ontology, an Igbo-African philosophy of humanity towards the other or integrative humanism viz-a-viz the issues of religio-political crises as a possible attempt to promote complementarity and enhance a more peaceful co-existence.

Statement of the Problem

In the Nigerian society, three types of religion are prominent: Christianity, Islam and African traditional religion. The first two are imported religions; and the last is home grown. Both Christianity and Islam are universal while African traditional religion is particular to Africa. Impliedly, African traditional religion has no body of teaching which is regarded as valid forever (at all times) as it has no universal mission, so proselytization does not exist; hence, African traditional religion cannot be a divisive force. So, traditional religion does not cause havoc in our society; the problem is in the relationships of Islamic and Christian religions.

The problems are at various levels: conceptualization, worldview, beliefs and perceptions, among others. At the level of conceptualization and articulation, both religions, Islam and Christianity, differ; their philosophies are poles apart as their founders

are both in the largeness of heart cum intelligence and articulation of concepts. Christianity is not a parallel concept to Islam, nor is Christianization a parallel concept to Islamization. Each is in a world of its own. While Christianization concerns itself with conversion of willing persons, Islamization concerns itself with conversion of persons both in the spheres of religion and politics with the use of force. At this level, it is clear that Islamic religion is not concerned with human acts as such, for these are acts performed with the aid of knowledge, freedom, voluntariness and intention.

Our problems also are ranging from cosmological exclusivism, lack of leadership, ignorance to corruption, and so on. Man is both a political and religious animal; hence, a total separation of religion from politics is not advocated for, but the politicization of religion should be guarded against in order to avoid emotional outbursts, which have escalated problems by the ensued violence and destruction which claimed lives and property. Irrational latitude to either religion in politics or vice versa remains an issue of concern in the Nigerian state.

This study has its importance lying on the very fact that the contemporary Nigerian society is in no doubt faced with so much religious differences which produce hatred and intolerance. Over the years, religious crises have been a reoccurring decimal and every effort to promote unity, peace and progress in a multi-ethnic and religious society like Nigeria has defied all known solutions. This research is aimed at providing a philosophical platform for peaceful co-existence, rational fraternal cooperation and complementarity between Nigerian Muslims and Christians for a better and more standard political system with a practice of true federalism and democracy and in all to have a greater Nigeria.

The researcher has employed practical, descriptive, expository, historical, dialectic and philosophical approaches in this study. The study has also made use of more secondary sources and a bit of primary sources, as well as the hermeneutic and phenomenological methods.

The Etymology and Meaning of *Igwebuike*

Etymologically, the Igbo ontological maxim, *Igwebuike*, is a compound word which is rooted in three Igbo words: *Igwe*, *Bu* and *Ike*. These words can also be used in a sentence form, by putting them together, although as independent words, thus making up a complete sentence. *Igwe* which means “number or population” is a noun. *Bu* which means “is” is a verb. *Ike* which means “strength or power” is also a noun. Put together, *Igwebuike* comes to mean literally: “number is strength or number is power.” As an Igbo-African philosophy, it rests on two primary principles: solidarity and complementarity. It argues that ‘to be’ is to live in solidarity and complementarity, and to live outside the parameters of solidarity and complementarity is to suffer alienation. ‘To be’ is ‘to be with the other’, in a community of beings (Kanu “African Traditional Religion”, 67).

Igwebuike as an ideology has a long history. It was first employed by the Igbo traditional philosophers as “a theory based on an illustrative statement to teach that when human beings come together in solidarity and complementarity, they are powerful or can constitute an insurmountable force, and more so, to express their world of relationship, harmony, continuity and complementarity. At this level, no task is beyond collective capability” (Kanu, “*Igwebuike* and the Unity of the African Philosophical Experience” web).

As earlier stipulated, *Igwebuike* factually emanates from a unitary composition, since it emphasizes strength in togetherness or population; just as in the *Ujaama* of Julius Nyerere, it upholds communal living and fraternal cooperation. Furthermore, Kanu postulates that it rests on the philosophy of solidarity and complementarity; thus, to be is to live in solidarity and complementarity, and to live outside the parameters of solidarity and complementarity is to suffer alienation. *Igwebuike* is based on the African cosmology. Iroegbu, thus, affirms this as he opines that it is characterized by a common origin, common worldview, common language, shared culture, shared race, colour and habits, common historical experience and a common destiny (8). *Igwebuike* is the

underlining principle of African philosophy and religion. It is the unity of the African philosophical experience. It is, in fact, the fundamental category of African philosophy and religion. It is the substratum of African traditional values, philosophy and religion. Mbiti has classically *proverbialized* the community, determining the role of the individual when he write; ‘I am because we are and since we are, therefore I am’ (108).

As averred by Kanu, it is attainable that *Igwebuiké* philosophy is one that strongly invites the African people to a life of a holistic unism as it goes as far as expressing a sense of belonging to the African, and when the reverse is the case, it presents the African to be alienated from the rest of humanity. Also, when human beings come together in solidarity and complementarity, they are powerful or can constitute an insurmountable force or strength, and at this level, no task is beyond their collective capability. *Igwebuiké*, therefore, understands the human person as possessing a relational character, and also as one who is inter-subjective and must necessarily relate with the other in order to make a meaningful existence.

Kanu Ikechukwu Anthony: The Proponent of *Igwebuiké* Philosophy

Kanu Ikechukwu Anthony, the proponent of the *Igwebuiké* philosophy, is an Augustinian Friar and is currently the Rector of Villanova Polytechnic, *Imesi Ile*, Osun state, Nigeria. He was born 20th November, 1981 at *Nkwerre*. He is of Igbo extraction from Arondizuogu, Ideato North Local Government Area, Imo State Nigeria. Though having his origin from the Eastern part of Nigeria, Kanu had both his nursery/primary and secondary school education in the north in *Jimeta-Yola*, Adamawa State, from the following schools: Command Children Nursery and Primary school, Demonstration Primary School, Army Day Secondary School and St. Peter’s Minor Seminary, from 1984-1986, 1987-1992, 1993-1994 and 1995-1999 respectively. After his secondary school education, Kanu, in responding to his call to the religious life, joined the Order of St. Augustine, where his vocation was nurtured. Thus, Kanu proceeded to

St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine's Major Seminaries from 2001-2004 and 2005-2009, where he obtained Bachelor of Arts Degree in Philosophy and Bachelor of Arts Degree in Religious Studies respectively. After the completion of his formation to the priesthood and religious life, in 2009 he was ordained a Catholic priest.

Kanu, after his ordination, proceeded to further his studies. He obtained Master's degrees in Philosophy (Metaphysics); Religion and Human Relations from University of *Nsukka*, Enugu state and *Nnamdi Azikiwe* University *Awka*, Anambra state from 2010-2015 and 2010-2012 respectively. In 2012, he continued in the same *Nnamdi Azikiwe* University for his Doctorate degree programme in Religion and Human relations, which he obtained in 2015.

Kanu is a man of great responsibilities and engagements. Apart from his religious and pastoral commitments, he served as the Dean of Students at the International Bio-Research Institute, Ugwogo Nike, Enugu State and lectures in three other institutions, which include: St. Augustine's Major Seminary, Jos; Augustinian Institute of Philosophy, *Makurdi* and *Veritas* University Abuja. He is also a member of various academic societies, like: Igbo Studies Association (I.S.A) USA, Nigerian Philosophical Association (NPA), International Society for African Philosophy Studies (ISAPS), Association of African Traditional Religion and Philosophy Scholars (AATREPS), just to mention but a few. He is also a member of decision making boards like Governing Board, International Bio-Research Institute (IBI), Ugwogo Nike, Enugu State; APURIMAC ONLUS (NGO), Jos-Plateau Sstate; Board of Trustees, Association of African Traditional Religion and Philosophy Scholars (AATREPS), and a host of others (Tumba,69-71).

In his bid to contribute immensely to the pool of knowledge, Kanu has written omnivorously, making impact in various spheres of life through his works, especially in the areas of African Philosophy and African Traditional Religion (ATR) studies in which he has made an indelible impression through his ground-breaking *Igwebuike*

philosophy and other written works, prominent among which include: African Philosophy: An Ontologico-Existential Hermeneutic Approach to Classical and Contemporary Issues and A Hermeneutic Approach to African Traditional Religion, Theology and Philosophy. Kanu, so far, has written 20 books, published 116 articles in national and international peer-reviewed journals, 120 papers presented at different conferences. This is no doubt an indication that Kanu is truly a genius and his contributions in creating awareness and imparting positive knowledge cannot be overemphasized. Kanu is also the founder and Editor-in-Chief of *Igwebuiké: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*, and *Igwebuiképedia: An Internet Encyclopedia of African Philosophy* (Tyogema, 34).

Kanu, being the proponent of *Igwebuiké* philosophy, has made great impact in philosophy through its instrumentality. Through *Igwebuiké*, Kanu has proposed a new way of looking at reality, using the lens of solidarity and complementarity. His works on *Igwebuiké*, among many, include, *Igwebuiké* and African Ethics, *Igwebuiké* and the Unity of African Philosophy, *Igwebuiké* as the Consummate Foundation of African Bioethical Principle, *Igwebuiké* as an Igbo-African Philosophy of Education, *Igwebuiké* as an Igbo-African Hermeneutic of Globalization, *Igwebuikécracy: The Igbo-African Participatory Socio-Political System of Governance*, *Igwebuiké* as the Expressive Modality of Being in Igbo Ontology. Pertinent issues that cloud our contemporary world have been addressed by Kanu using *Igwebuiké*. Also, through *Igwebuiké*, Kanu has made vital contributions in the areas of metaphysics, ethics, epistemology and political philosophy; thus, elevating it to the status of an academic discipline and worthy of being employed for research in various areas of inquiry for positive impacts on the society (Tyogema, 34).

The Sources of *Igwebuiké* Philosophy

The Igbo African philosophy, *Igwebuiké*, which has its tentacles on the manner of being with the worldview of complementarity, massages the ego of individuals and posits to them a model of living

in a society with a common goal of togetherness; that is, the "I thou" relationship is the *kpim* of *Igwebuike* philosophy.

Igwebuike philosophy is based on the Igbo-African worldview of complementarity, that is, the manner of being in African ontology. It is a worldview in which individuating differences must work towards a corporate existence, where the "I" does not stand as the "I" but as a "We," where life and living makes meaning. In a scenario of this kind, difference does not divide nor does it constitute a threat, but unites and gives hope that future existence would have meaning. In a cosmogony of this kind, while the ontology of the person is founded on the particular that founds identity, it is the community that gives meaning to such an existence and grounds such an identity. What are the sources of *Igwebuike* philosophy? It focuses on the raw materials from which *Igwebuike* philosophy is gotten. A cursory glance at the African socio-cultural background reveals that the sources of *Igwebuike* philosophy include the works of professional African philosophers, African proverbs, African folktales, African symbols, African names and African songs (Kanu, Sources of *Igwebuike* Philosophy, 2).

Africans, like other people in the world, are shaped by their culture and they contribute in the shaping and transmission of this culture. The African, therefore, is a *homo culturalis*. By African culture, it is meant those things which go to the refining and developing of the African's diverse mental and psychological endowments.

Also, names among the African people are not just an identification tag for differentiating "A" from "B," but carry with them meanings that are rich and profound. There are times when such names are monumental, in the sense that they tell a history of an event that has occurred. For instance, the Igbo name *Onwudinjo*, which means "death is bad," is usually given to a child to tell the story of maybe the death of the mother at the birth of the child or the death of an important relation at the time of the birth of the child. There are times when such names that are prophetic, like *Ogadimma*, which means "it

will be good" could be given to a child to speak of the anticipation of a bright future (Kanu, 4).

African proverbs occupy a very important place in Africa's economy of communication. They have been described variously by the Igbo as vegetable for eating speech; the palm oil with which words are eaten. They are so important that the Zulu of South Africa would say that without proverbs, language would be but a skeleton without flesh, a body without a soul. They carry within them the wisdom and experience of the African people, usually of several ages gathered and summed up in one expression; example, *Aka nri kwo aka ekpe, aka ekpe akwo aka nri*: if the right hand washes the left hand, the left hand would wash the right hand, and others. A glance at the work of contemporary African philosophers reveals that the web that holds their perspective together is the philosophy of complementarity. Although perspectives continue to change and differ, they continue to be united by the idea of harmony (Kanu, 7).

The Principles of *Igwebuiké* philosophy

Principally, every school of thought has its source, role and principles that set aright and flaunt the uniqueness of that particular thought. The origin is undeniably the end of a reaction to a given circumstance that is either real or conceptual.

Thus, it responds to the often posited questions such as; "What is the origin of *Igwebuiké* philosophy?" How did it begin as a pattern of thought in African ontology? Is it a philosophy that is exclusive to the Igbo or Africa? And in responding to these questions, Kanu, in his work on the origin and principles of *Igwebuiké* philosophy, avers that:

Igwebuiké is an Igbo word *Igwe* (number), *Bu* (Is), *Ike* (strength), literally meaning that there is strength in unity-however, philosophically pointing to the complementary nature of reality. It confronts discontinuity and the compartmentalization of reality. *Igwebuiké* is not a philosophy that is limited to the Igbo world, it is a universal philosophy

that is the incarnation and confirmation of the universal relevance of solidarity and complementarity. Although, a philosophy captured in an Igbo word, it has a universal taste and obvious in universal experience. *Igwebuike* emphasis on the complementary nature of reality was at the heart of the discovery of the Ionian philosophers who observed that there was permanence in the midst of change, and also that there was unity in the midst of the plurality of reality. In their wonder, they concluded that there must be a primary element that would explain the unity in diversity and permanence in change. In this, they acknowledged the complementarity of the diverse departments of reality (Kanu, 159).

The principles of *Igwebuike* philosophy refers to the values or frameworks that shapes *Igwebuike* philosophy. These principles are the values or frameworks on which the philosophy stands. While these principles guide *Igwebuike* philosophy, they also justify *the* philosophy. These principles include: the principle of identity, the principle of contrariety, the principle of hierarchy and the principle of unity (Kanu, 165)

The principle of Identity

This principle, as posited by Kanu, is the first principle of *Igwebuike* philosophy and it holds that every being is determined in itself, one with itself and divided from others. It further expresses the uniqueness and individuality of every being, just as qualities of matter, referred to in traditional metaphysics as accidents, such as size, colour, shape, distinguish one being from the other. In other words, the particularity and peculiarity of a being puts an end to the error of generalization and chaos.

The Principle of Hierarchy

This principle expresses the levels or degrees of forces in each reality. In the hierarchy of forces, those with a greater force come first, with God at the apex as the source of all force. In Igbo-African ontology,

reality can be subsumed under the following categories, according to the hierarchy of their force: Spirit. Spirit as a force has categories of forces. It includes God, the divinities and spirits. God is at the apex of the *Muo* category as the source of all force. Tempels, quoted in the *Journal of Religion and Human Relations* states, "Above all force is God, it is he who has force, power, in himself. He gives existence, power of survival and of increase, to other forces" (177), and on this hierarchy goes to the next level occupied by the human person who plays a role so vital on this ladder as man is distinct and possesses will and intelligence as he shares in the all-encompassing nature of God the Supreme Being; thus, the human being is the center of the universe as he supersedes the next on the ladder which are things. Things are referred to as happening, an event, an occurrence. It can also be affixed to any adjective to mean specific things". For instance, *ife obuna* (anything), *ife ebube* (thing of wonder), *ife ojoo* (bad thing), *ife oma* (good thing). *Ifè* as a force cannot act for itself, and thus can only become active when a greater force like God, divinities, spirits and man act on them. They have no will of their own and thus depend on the will of a greater force. The next in the hierarchy is space (*ebe*). Space talks about place. It is the relation of distance between any two bodies or points. It responds to the question of where. The next is time. Time responds to questions such as: when did you see *Emeka*? When did you pick-up *Nnamdi*? When was the sacrifice offered? The last on the hierarchy is modality, manner or style. Modality of being does emphasize on the manner of being (Kanu, *Being and the Categories of Being...*). Thus, in relation to *Igwebuikè*, the degree of forces determines the level or degree of complementarity or connectedness between beings (Kanu, 179).

The Principle of Contrariety

Here, the principle speaks of otherness of realities. Otherness points to the state of being different, shifting emphasis from Descartes' philosophical concerns with the other which was struck in abstraction to a concrete other that is located in social and cultural institutions. The question of the otherness of reality has continued to emerge in the

various epochs of the history of philosophy, fascinating philosophy and giving rise to questions such as: What does it mean to be other than the self? How do I and must I relate to the other? (Ibid, 176-177).

The word contrariety is from the word contrary. Aristotle defines contrariety thus: “For contrariety is a kind of difference, and difference is a kind of otherness”. Aristotle writes that:

The term contrary is applied to those attributes differing in genus, which cannot belong at the same time to the same subject, to the most different of the things in the same genus, to the most different of the attributes in the same recipient subject, to the most different of things that fall under the same faculty, to the things whose difference is greatest either absolutely or in genus or in species. The other things that are called contrary are so called, some because they possess of the above kind, some because they are receptive of such, some because they are productive of or susceptible to such, or are producing or suffering them, or are losses or acquisitions, or possessions of privations of such (Ibid 763)

The Principle of Unity

That which is common to all, that is, in spite of the varieties and dynamism of realities, is what *Igwebuike* identifies as being part of the completion of the whole, and there exists amidst all things which is unity, the unifying principle.

Igwebuike strongly holds that the whole is greater than the corresponding parts. It is also a view that maintains that by the coming together of the individuals or parts, a viable and sustainable whole will emerge, and by this, the parts will get to the brim purpose of their existence. This sense of unity, harmony, community, complementarity and solidarity among the community of beings finds expression in the philosophy of Tempels. ‘Beings forces’ of the universe are not a multiple of independent forces placed in juxtaposition from being to being. All creatures are found in relationship, according to the law of

hierarchy. Nothing moves in this universe of forces without influencing other forces by its movement. The world of forces is held like a spider's web of which no single thread can be caused to vibrate without shaking the whole network (Kanu, 176).

In response to the fundamental questions that have arisen as a result of the wider reading of *Igwebuiké* philosophy, this work has been written to address the issue of the origin of *Igwebuiké* philosophy.

***Igwebuiké* and Complementarity**

Igwebuiké

Igwebuiké is an indigenous philosophy of the modality of being for the realization of being. Simply put, mode of being is relational in nature. It is from the word, *igwebuiké*, which is a combination of three words. Thus, it can be understood as a word or sentence: as a word, it is written thus, *Igwebuiké*, and a sentence, it is in this form: *igwe bu ike*, with the component words enjoying some independence in terms of space. *Igwe* is a noun which means 'number' or 'population.' *Bu* is a verb, which means 'is.' *Ike* is another verb, which means 'strength' or 'power.' Put together 'number is strength' or 'number is power'. Also, when human beings come together in solidarity and complementarity, they are powerful or can constitute an insurmountable force or strength, and at this level, no task is beyond their collective capability (Kanu, 30).

Complementarity

Complementarity is the characteristic of being or state of being. As a dimension of *Igwebuiké* philosophy, it can be seen in the light of disposition for, the positive will to, and the practice of living and working together, crowned by performed mutual assistance: spontaneous or organized, among the members of a group who are brought together either naturally or professionally (Jude et al, 300).

The African practice of solidarity is witnessed on both the economic, social and religious spheres. The traditional Nigerian was his brother's keeper, especially at the communal level. In fact, he was and still is often in solidarity to a fault. In the employment and social distribution

spheres, he first considers his clansperson or tribesman before a foreigner, irrespective of qualification or fitness for the job (Jude et al, 301).

A brother's misfortune was a common misfortune. A living example is the practice by which once there is a fire accident in which a person's house is burnt, immediately and spontaneously, the whole community gathers to work and rebuild the damaged house fully. This is not only spontaneous; it is also gratis. Could there be a better expression of African concern, care and comforting for a fellow human being? (Ibid).

A brother's success was equally a common success, celebrated as such. "We have made it in you" is echoed. The foundation of solidarity was on the natural and common ties of origin, blood, culture, language, conviviality and worldview that characterize each community (Ibid).

"Complementarism is a philosophy that seeks to consider things in the significance of their singularity and not in the exclusiveness of their otherness in view of the joy that gives completion to all missing links of reality" (Asouzu, 39). *Igwebuike* philosophy argues that existence is not only meaningful, but also possible only in a community and thus, to live outside of complementarity and solidarity is to live outside; it is to suffer alienation (Kanayo et al, 243).

Igwebuike Anthropology

As averred by Kanu in his work on "*Igwebuike as an African Integrative and Progressive Anthropology*," the concept of the human person cultivated by various indigenous African peoples is a core value in each individual socio-cultural context, and more so, a determinant of thought and relationships within the socio-cultural milieu. This is based on the fact the human person is at the centre of the African universe. Mbiti quoted by Kanu, therefore, asserts that "Man is at the very centre of existence and African people see everything else in its relation to this central position of man. It is as if God exists for the sake of man" (*Igwebuike as an Integrative and Progressive Anthropology*, 2). Corroborating Mbiti, Metuh avers that

“Everything else in African worldview seems to get its bearing and significance from the position, meaning and end of man” (qtd in Kanu, *Igwebuike as an Integrative and Progressive Anthropology*, 2). The ideas of God, divinities, ancestors, rituals, sacrifices, etc., are only useful to the extent that they serve the needs of the human person. Contrary to the mechanistic concept of the human person, the human person in the African worldview has a purpose and mission to fulfill; he comes into the world as a force amidst forces and interacting with forces. Good status, good health and prosperity are signs of the wellbeing of a person’s life-force, and man struggles to preserve it through an appropriate relationship with the spiritual forces around him. The goal of every human person is to achieve his destiny imprinted on his palm by his creator. He is not just an individual person, but one born into a community whose survival and purpose are linked with others. Thus, the human person is first a member of a clan, a kindred or a community (Kanu, 2).

Nonetheless, there have been researches carried out with respect to the African personality and these have been done tilting towards the reflections on symbols and patterned behaviours associated with one level of personality or the other, like the *Chi*, which in Igbo is the symbol of a person’s guiding spirit; the *Ofo*, the symbol of a man’s individuation; the *Ikenga* and *Odu Enyi*, symbols of a person’s personal achievement. Although the exposure of African traditional values to Western culture and influence has brought about a lot of alterations in African perspectives, this piece studies the concept of personhood in traditional African ontology with the purpose of establishing the nexus between ancient African traditional society and the present conceptual package. In studying the traditional African concept of personhood, it would be engaged from the dimensions of African personhood as a coherent pluralism and its dialectically progressive character (Ibid, 3).

***Igwebuiké* and the Ethic of Reciprocity**

The term ‘reciprocity’ can mean a situation or relationship in which two people or a group agree to do something similar for each other, to allow each other have the same right (Mariam–Webster Dictionary). Thus, the ethic of reciprocity is and can be likened to the ‘Golden Rule’, which states; do to others what you want done to you. Hence, this ethic of reciprocity is across religio-cultural ethical principle that is found in virtually every religious and cultural background (Kanu, 1). It is derived from human feelings and behaviour; it is also relatively simple to articulate and understand, and yet addresses an enormous range of human behaviour. Thus, the ethic of reciprocity stands alone as a legion in its own right and in the form of a general rule.

The point of connection between *Igwebuiké* and the ethic of reciprocity is very easily noticeable. While the ethic of reciprocity teaches that you do unto others as you would want done unto you, and the philosophy of *Igwebuiké* provides a philosophical foundation for such a perspective - in relation to a fellow human person, more fundamentally, the other is perceived as a part of the self. If the other is a part of the self, one with this understanding would treat the other as one would like to be treated. The philosophy of *Igwebuiké* is not just a philosophical foundation for the ethic of reciprocity, but it is the ethic of reciprocity. It presents the ethic of reciprocity not just as a moral principle, but as a duty that one owes to himself or herself - everyone owes himself or herself of treating the other in a way that one would like to be treated (Kanu, 15)

The ethic of reciprocity as stated by Kanu, generally, is imperfect, just as there is hardly a perfect moral law. It has been criticized because it makes the assumption that everyone has the same tastes and opinions and wants to be treated the same way in every situation, and seems to be an injunction to impose one’s own way on the other. However, the ethic of reciprocity is a general moral principle, not a hard and fast rule to be applied to every facet of life. Treating other people as we

would wish to be treated ourselves does not mean making the assumption that others feel exactly as we do about everything. The treatment we all want is the recognition that we are individuals, each with our own opinions and feelings and for these opinions and feelings to be accorded respect and consideration. This work is not concerned with the shortcomings of the ethic of reciprocity, but has argued that at the heart of *Igwebuiké*, as an ethic of reciprocity, is not the idea of treating everyone uniformly; it is rather recognition that everyone, independent of human differences, deserves to be treated with respect and love (Kanu, 7).

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Religion and Politics in Nigeria Vis-A-Vis Igwebuiké Ontology

Religion: An Overview

Religion etymologically is as old as man itself, but has variously been conceived in the variants of those who attempt a definition of the concept. Religion is a collection of cultural systems, belief systems, and worldview that establishes symbols that relate humanity to spirituality and, sometimes, the moral values. Many a time, the word religion has been interchangeably used as faith or belief system. However, the growth of religion has assumed various forms in different environments or cultures. In some climes, emphasis is placed

on belief system as it concerns the religion, while in other environments emphasis is largely placed on religious practice (Clifford, 26).

Religion, from the beginning, has played a very important role in shaping the socio-political thoughts of many nations. In fact, most nations of the world were patterned and influenced by the sacred nature of government. Religion supported and regulated the loyalty that existed between the state and the people. The idea of divine right of kings, which derived its origin from the theocratic concept of governance, vested absolute power and authority in the king or monarch who was seen as a direct representative of God. The monarch was superior and answerable only to God. Ancient history is replete with examples of this idea. For example, in Christianity, the Pope was seen for centuries as the Vicar of Christ on earth, and by virtue of his divine right had the ultimate authority over the Church, and indirectly over the state (Akpanikan, 65). Thus, religion represents a strong social force in the politics of the state, given its capacity for effective political mobilization. Thus, Fox and Sander give six major reasons why this is so. They are;

1. The restriction of religious activities is often difficult for state regimes;
2. Religious organizations often enjoy good patronage in the media;
3. Religious organizations have the capability to easily unite differential social groupings in the society;
4. Religious organizations have the 'ready-made' platform for political meetings;
5. Religious organizations are often strong in weak states;
6. Religious organizations have strong international links and enjoy global solidarity (567-568).

There are also variants of theories that explain the origin of religion. This brings to the fore the statement of Greg M. Epstein, a Humanist Chaplain at Harvard University, who believes that all the world's major religions were founded on the principle that divine beings or

forces can promise a level of justice in a supernatural realm that cannot be perceived in this natural one (Epstein, 109). Thus, many of the world's great religions appear to have begun as revitalization movements of some sort, as the vision of a charismatic prophet forces the imaginations of people seeking a more comprehensive answer to their problems than they feel is provided by everyday beliefs. Charismatic individuals have emerged at many times and places in the world. It seems that the key to long-term success and many movements come and go with little long-term effect; has relatively little to do with the prophets, who appear with surprising regularity, but more to do with the development of a group of supporters who are able to institutionalize the movement (Monaghan, 126).

Nigeria is apparently divided between Islam and Christianity, between the North and South respectively. It is glaringly evident that there is a widespread belief, albeit suppressed for political reasons, in traditional religious practices; thus, statistics from world religious survey indicates that 50.4% of Nigeria's population are Muslims; 50.8%, Christians (15% Protestants; 13.7%, Catholics; and 19.6%, other Christians), and followers of other religious faiths were 1.4%, BBC News (2007). In the core Northern Nigeria, they are largely Muslim faithful. In the middle belt, there are good number of both Muslims and Christians. In the Yoruba land (Western Nigeria), there is even distribution of the population between the Christian and Muslim faiths. However, the South-East is predominantly Christians, with great beliefs in the Christian religious practices, Anglicanism, Methodists, Catholicism, and very few have trado-beliefs. But the region of Niger Delta is mainly Christian-dominated (Nkechi, 18).

A good proportion of Muslims in Nigeria are Sunni, but a fair share of Shia and Sufi also exist, alongside a minority of *Ahmadiya*. Conversely, Christians in this clime are split evenly between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. The major churches in Nigeria are;

1. Anglican Church
2. Redeemed Christian church of God
3. Nigerian Baptist Convention
4. Assemblies of God Church
5. The Synagogues Church of all Nations
6. The Catholic Church

The Yoruba people are largely Anglicans, while the Igbos are predominantly Catholics. However, there are many adherents of Irunmole spirituality which believes that everyone has divine destiny of becoming Orisha ('Ori', spiritual head); 'sha' is chosen: to be with Olodumare ('Oni odu', the god source of all energy; 'ma re' enlightens). Aside the major Islamic and Christian faiths in Nigeria, other minority spiritual and religions groupings in Nigeria are;

1. Hinduism
2. Judaism
3. The Bahai Faith
4. Chrislam (syncretic merging of Christianity and Islam).

Also, this country has gradually become the hub for the Grail Movement and the Hare Krishnas (Nkechi, 19).

Religion and Politics in Nigeria

Religion is a set of beliefs concerning the causes, nature and purpose of the universe, especially when considered as the creation of a superhuman agency or agencies, usually involving devotional and ritual observances, and often containing a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs (Dictionary.com). On the other hand, politics is the art or science of government that is concerned with guiding or influencing policy (Mariam Webster).

As a multi-ethnic, multi-religious country, Nigeria's broad religious geography reflects the historical exposure of its northern communities to Islam through the trans-Saharan trade and the success of Christian missionary enterprise in many of its southern parts. However, while historical alliances and shared ethnicity are closely associated with the adoption of these two world religions, religious and ethno-regional identity are cross-cutting, often reinforcing each other. Thus, while Islam had been entrenched in the pre-colonial Hausa cities for centuries, many other northern groups converted to Islam in the wake of the nineteenth century Islamic jihad under *Uthman dan Fodio* (1754-1817), during which the greater part of northern and central Nigeria was incorporated into a new Caliphate, albeit with the exception of the existing, and much older, Islamic kingdom of Borno, which remains the most important rival to Sokoto's claims to represent all of northern Nigeria. Other Muslim groups with a tradition independent of the *Uthmanian* Caliphate include the Yoruba of south-western Nigeria, where people initially converted to Islam as a result of links to Malian trading communities, and Nigeria's middle belt, where large-scale conversion to Islam has continued throughout the postcolonial period (Insa et al, 10).

Nigerian Christianity dates back to the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the early nineteenth century, which was followed by the emergence of a literate African elite, consisting of liberated and returned slaves as well as local converts, in coastal cities such as Lagos. Because Christianity is much younger than Islam in the local context, it is not associated with pre-colonial relations of power. And because its growth in Nigeria was accompanied by the spread of mission education, Nigeria's professional elite was, for a long time, dominated by Christians. Like Islam, Nigerian Christianity is heterogeneous. Roman Catholicism has long been the religion of the Igbo-speaking south-east, although Nigerian-founded Pentecostal churches have made strong inroads into this area over the twenty years prior to this study. In other parts of the country's south, Protestant denominations –including Pentecostal groups – are dominant in the Christian community, but the Yoruba-speaking south-west is almost

equally divided between Christianity and Islam. Moreover, there are important Christian groups in the north, which include both Hausa converts and smaller local groups determined to assert their difference from the Hausa-speaking majority or from relations of power associated with the Caliphate. Moreover, just as there are Muslim migrants from northern Nigeria in many southern cities, there are Christian communities of migrants, or descendants of migrants, from the south in almost all northern Nigerian cities (Insa et al, 10).

Apart from Christianity and Islam, Nigerians also belong to a range of other religious groups. The largest of these comprises followers of traditional religious practice, here referred to as African Traditional Religion (ATR), with the proviso that local belief systems and practices differ widely, and that their subsumption in one term mainly reflects the fact that these practices do not (yet) hold the status of world religions. However, many African Traditional Religious groups share the conviction that the worldly and the sacred are closely interwoven, and that all human relations, including those involving the state and its representatives, reflect both secular and spiritual forces. It is believed that insight into these forces can be gained through divination and revelation, and that they can be influenced through sacrifice, prayer and incantation. Because traditional practices have influenced Christians and Muslims and vice versa, debates about their validity form an important and ongoing part of inter- and intra-religious struggles in Nigeria (Amherd and Nolte, 27). Beyond the engagement with local traditions, Christianity and Islam have expressed a high degree of political competitiveness with each other, at least since the 1970s.

Nigeria's colonial and postcolonial rulers have managed the differences associated with different religious constituencies, especially Islam and Christianity, in various ways. For most of the colonial period, almost all parts of northern Nigeria, the areas belonging to the Uthmanian Caliphate and the kingdom of Borno, were under indirect rule, that is, administered through the structures of the Caliphate, albeit under British guidance. While secular concerns guided important aspects of the local administration, it was thus

officially presided over by traditional authorities sanctioned by tradition and Islam, and Islam also constituted the basis for local government. Sharia courts, which had existed before colonial rule, were integrated into the colonial state, and most people turned to sharia law for the mediation and resolution of personal conflicts. Only in the run-up to independence in 1960 were criminal laws codified into secular law. The colonial state's reliance on the structures of the Caliphate in turn affected religious and educational politics in northern Nigeria. In many parts of the north, missionary activity was forbidden, preventing the emergence of an educated elite prepared to challenge either the Emirs or local Muslim traditions. As a result, when the colonial presence was dismantled, the established urban (trading) elite and the local aristocracy emerged as the tenants of northern Nigerian politics. While Islam was deeply entrenched in the traditional sphere of the Nigerian state, Christianity was, especially in the south, mainly associated with modernization. As most missions provided schooling, and later even college training, Christianity was closely associated with the spread of education. The rapid growth of literacy contributed to the emergence of a mostly urban intermediary class of educated men and women who worked as catechists, clerks and teachers. This group soon took up and transformed the local elite's struggles for self-assertion. Directly confronted with racial division in the colonial administration, banking practices and even the mission churches, literate southern Nigerians eventually formed the core of Nigeria's anti-colonial movement. Criticizing both the colonial state and the traditional rulers through which the state had ruled, members of this educated elite considered themselves rather than the representatives of older elite and especially the aristocracy, the natural heirs and rulers of the colonial state after independence (Insa et al, 11).

Religion, for Roseline, is a complex phenomenon; thus, the social functions it performs are quite diverse. Some religious functions are manifest - immediately observable, and some are latent - not immediately discernible. It should be recognized that if an activity helps the integrative performance of an organization, then we call it

functional. Roles like support for tolerance, peaceful cooperation and love are promoted through ministerial and lay practice (4).

Schaefer & Lamn identify some democratic utilities of religion which include the integration of human societies composed of individuals and social groups with diverse interests and aspirations. In their view, religious bond transcends these personal and divisive forces. Another important function identified by the two authors is the ability of religion to legitimize the existing social order (273-275).

With reference to the first function of restraining and containing government conduct, religious associations in Nigeria have repeatedly and stridently denounced bad governmental policies or actions that infringe on the interests of the religious community in particular, and/or the welfare of the citizenry in general. Thus, religious associations have joined independence groups in civil society in criticizing the dubious and circuitous nature of the military's democratization project and government's management of the religious disturbances that have convulsed several Northern states. On the stimulation of political participation and civic identification, Nigeria's religious organizations have played an important role in encouraging and mobilizing their members towards active participation in and identification with public affairs and politics. This is done by stimulating a sense of civic identification and participation in their members by urging such members to 'pray and fast' for peace, stability, justice and progress of the nation (Ayorinde, 17).

Thirdly, religion promotes democratic values and norms. This is done through the promotion and propagation of such democratic norms and values as tolerance, moderation, willingness to compromise, and respect for truth, justice and freedom. Religious leaders in Nigeria have at different times demonstrated this commitment to democracy by urging Nigerians not to waver in their support for democratic institutions (Tukur, 29). More so, religion provides avenues for interest representation. Religious organizations articulate, aggregate and represent distinctive societal interests. The Christian representation and mobilization against Nigeria's membership of the

country in the OIC represented only one of the many instances of interest representation by the Christian community since 1986. Religion equally generates cross-cutting interest. The existence of cross-cutting interests implies that competing affiliations could operate to secure social peace and democratic stability, and prevent destructive or protracted social conflict, by inducing individuals and groups to divide their emotions in a single explosive line of affiliation. Finally, religious organizations, like many other ordered shares of associational activity or social intercourse, provide an appropriate environment of the development of leadership skills. This is done by displaying an impressive capacity to manage people and resources in their respective organizations by speaking out courageously and consistently against the excesses solutions to nation's problems. Through this, religious leaders have gained some reputation and legitimacy as effective national leaders of thorough and potential statement. It would, however, be misleading to conclude that religious organizations have been uniformly or consistently supportive of democratic processes and values in Nigeria. On the contrary, they have periodically exhibited disturbing anti-democratic proclivities that have found expression in religious violence and intolerance, in the corruption and manipulation of religious leaders. From the foregoing, some religious activities can be described as dysfunctional because their consequences frustrate the stated goals of the groups. In general, religion is functional or dysfunctional, depending on the extent to which it contributes to the achievement of societal goals (Roseline, 5-6).

Christians and Muslim Intolerance; Causes

In religious conflicts, it is not clear which aims are to be achieved. Gofwen regards political aims as primary; in his view, religious conflicts form a specific form of conflict between groups which differ ideologically along religious lines within a pluralistic setting, with each striving for political relevance. In a similar vein, Takaya (1992) emphasizes the political import of religions:

- i. Religions are parochial and emotional socializers. They specialize in building one-faith exclusive brotherhood communities;
- ii. Religion, at some point, is politics and is the most potent and long lasting political association. Moreover, religious creeds excite and extract the deepest possible emotional and physical loyalties from their adherents when in political competition with people of other faiths (10).

One significant element driving conflicts of this type is the attitude of superiority that religious persuasions as a sociological fact often adopt in their dealings or assessment of others. This attitude tends to exclude others, classifies them as ignorant and doomed and, invariably, creates an atmosphere of hostility. This atmosphere of hostility tends to intensify where opposing religious persuasions see their numerical strengths as political advantage. In such a situation, the leaders think that new religions are threats to the hegemonies enjoyed. Further, where the political, social or economic factors are unfavorable, messianic rhetoric can exacerbate the tensions. Thus, Nwaomah observes conversion campaigns, as in Nigeria, "by opposing religion(s) and fanaticism arising from indoctrination of the adherents, mostly due to parochial education, can also reinforce religious hostilities and thus create a conflict". In other words, what makes religious conflicts special are the unique effects of religious doctrines on the perception of the adversaries, the formation of values, and the central role of feelings and emotions for group identification (101).

Fundamentally, the following factors heighten religious crises in Nigeria.

1. Ethnic antipathy: Inter-religious ill-feeling is often intensified by ethnic hostility in a situation where the adherents of Christianity and Islam are also members of two mutually hostile ethnic groups. There seems to be a general agreement that the *Kafanchan* religious riot was aggravated by the ill-feelings harbored by the original natives of *Kafanchan* against the Local Hausa-Fulani "settlers".

2. Role of the press: Mischievous and irresponsible reportage and comments from certain sections of the press on religious issues actually heighten or promote religious riots or crisis. This prompted to state that press reports on the *Kafanchan* riots were highly exaggerated. Many a time, the statements made by religious leaders on religious issues are quoted out of context. These kinds of press reports and comments inflame passions and promote religious ill-feelings and intolerance.

3. Attitude of religious leaders: Most leaders assume the position of God, and will speak on behalf of the co-religionists. The negative attitude of some religious leaders is most unfortunate, since it is only through them that tolerance and peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians can be promoted.

4. Key ideological differences: The religious crisis in Nigeria today has roots in our historical past, with regard to our ethnic heterogeneity, and is further compounded by the irresponsible role of certain sections of the press. Be that as it may, other fundamental ideological differences also promoted religious crisis in Nigeria.

(a) Not only does Christianity reject Mohammed as a prophet, it believes, very strongly, that the way of Christ is the only way to salvation. Other ways, including the way of the Islam, are “shifting sands”. This belief is firm in every Christian that everyone without Christ is a stranger from “the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12).

(b) Islam, while recognizing Jesus as one of the prophets of Allah, regards itself as the perfecting of all religions. It admits that Christianity, Judaism and Islam are revealed religions, but to a Muslim, Islam is the final and most perfect of all religions. Jesus Himself is interpreted to have said that there would be another messenger after Him. “I have many things to say unto you, but cannot bear them now. How be it when he, the spirit of truth comes he will guide you in all truth” (John 16:12). The Quran revealed that prophet Mohammed is the spirit of truth about whom Jesus had foretold

(Quran 61:6). The two positions actually conflict their faiths and beliefs, hence the grave differences between the religions.

(c) The Quran rejects the concept of trinity when it says: “O people of the Book, exceed not the limit in your religion, and say not of God anything but the truth. Verily, the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was only a messenger and his word which he sent down to Mary and say not, “they are three...” (Quran 4: 171-172).

(d) Another issue of discord between Islam and Christianity and which caused controversy even at the time of Mohammed is that of the crucifixion of Jesus as atonement for the sins of mankind. The Quran says that Jesus was neither killed nor crucified (Quran 26:45-48).

Besides the four fundamental differences between the two religions, another source of intolerance is that both religions are proselytizing – seeking new converts from the adherents of each other. The two religions are, therefore, in a continuous competition for adherents (Momoh, 9-10).

Both religions have been at loggerhead with each other for about three centuries in the medieval period in what is known as crusades. There was a bloody military contact between Islam and Christianity in the medieval period, when both met in Nigeria in the 19th century, and were unable to tolerate one another. And here, the attitude of the adherents of different faiths to the opposite faith stems from political, tribal and nationalistic rather than religious motivations. It behooves us then to look beyond the religious confines whenever there is religious conflict, be it inter or intra (Momoh, 12).

The Effects of Religious and Political Crisis in Nigeria

Nigeria, today, was the creation of the British Colonialists through the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914. Prior to this, Nigeria was a heterogeneous and pluralistic society with many autonomous states within the nation, existing independently, hence the multi-cultural and multi-religious nature of the country. The polarization of religion as an instrumentality for administrative

convenience in Nigeria began with the colonial administrations. Regrettably, the seed planted 103years (1914-2017) ago has gradually grown into a monster that is becoming impossible to subdue. The historical root of this tragic development is traceable to constitutional regionalism and the divide-and-rule policy of the colonial administration. The policy, rather than unite the heterogeneous nation like Nigeria, promoted political and religious ideologies that encouraged ethnicity and regional biases. Political parties, political participation, appointments, employments and culprits of coups d'état were viewed and handled with ethnic, religious or political biases. Nigeria, as multi-cultural and multi-religious country, has two major religions: Christianity and Islam, each competing and claiming superiority and dominance over the other in number and in might. This claim of superiority, as well as dominance, has served as the foundation for religious intolerance and several socio-political crises that have bedeviled Nigeria since independence in 1960. Religion is not supposed to be a harbinger of violence, but paradoxically, the character of religious beliefs is in most cases puzzling and fascinating to scholars in humanities. The record of human history has shown that most noble acts of love, self-sacrificing and pious services to humanity are often associated with religion; yet, it is also evident that religion has generated more violence and killed more people than any other institutional force in human history. In the words of Lefebure;

Many of the violent conflicts in the world today involve religious animosities. Indeed, the history of the encounters among the world's religions is filled with distrust and hatred, violence and vengeance. The deepest tragedy of the history of religions is that the very movements that should bring human beings closer to each other and to their ultimate source and goal have time and time again become forces of division. In one conflict after another around the world, religious convictions and interpretations of revelation have been used and abused as justifications for violence and war (7-8).

Olukunle, writing on “Social Uses and Abuses of Religion in Developing Countries” opines that just as Alfred Nobel invented dynamite to help miners in blasting hard rocks to ease their job, even though dynamites have been misused and abused, so is religion. According to him, religion was meant to create a unique link between God and humanity, and among human beings. It was to remind man of the existence of the infinite to help in regulating the relationship between men and in promoting peace. However, religion has been used and abused to promote wars, violence and hatred among humans. The argument here is that men can use good things for negative ends, if they desire. Religion is no exception. In this case, one can say that religion which is essentially good and serves a good and positive purpose has been abused by men, hence the constant conflicts, violence and war among religious groups. An inventory of the religious violence and insecurity in Nigeria for the past three or four decades leaves a lot to be desired. One wonders what the founders of these religions would say to their adherents if they were to return today and see the mayhem done in their names. Why would one use “God” to kill or maim another? Why would religion be linked with violence and terrorism? Could it be ignorance on the part of their adherents or lack of hermeneutical understanding of the Holy Books? In an attempt to answer some of these questions, some scholars have alluded to ignorance, prejudice and stereotyping as major factors behind most of the religious violence we experience today in Nigeria. It is on this note that Okon calls for sensitivity in dealing with religious issues when he said:

In analyzing religious practices, we must be sensitive to ideals that inspire profound conviction in believers, yet at the same time take a balance view of them. We must confront ideas that seek eternal, while recognizing that religious groups also promote quite mundane goals such as acquiring money or followers. We need to recognize the diversity of religious beliefs and modes of conduct, but also probe into the nature of religion as a general phenomenon (2).

Religion, from the beginning, has played a very important role in shaping the socio-political thoughts of many nations. In fact, most nations of the world were patterned and influenced by the sacred nature of government. Religion supported and regulated the loyalty that existed between the state and the people. The idea of divine right of kings, which derived its origin from the theocratic concept of governance, vested absolute power and authority in the king or monarch who was seen as a direct representative of God. The monarch was superior and answerable only to God. Ancient history is replete with examples of this idea. For example, in Christianity, the Pope was seen for centuries as the Vicar of Christ on earth, and by virtue of his divine right had the ultimate authority over the Church, and indirectly over the state. Islam, on the other hand, believed in the concept of divine right of Caliphs (direct descendants and successors of Prophet Muhammad) as the supreme leaders of the Muslim community. Under Muhammad, the Muslim state was theocratic, with Shari 'a as the religious and moral principles of Islam, and the law of the land. The Caliphs were seen as secular and religious leaders. They were not empowered to promulgate dogma, because it was believed that the revelation of the faith had been completed by Muhammad (Dallai, Encarta).

However, as representatives of Allah and direct successors of Muhammad, Caliphs were to enforce Shari 'a as the religious and moral principles of the land. Their powers were not limited to secular issues only but divine, since they were representing Allah. It was on this note that Muhammad advocated that the Muslim community should choose a successor or a Caliph by consensus to lead the theocratic process of leadership to exemplify the earthly kingdom under divine rule. It is also on this note that Islamic states seek to apply in every detail the Islamic laws in any society they find themselves in order to create an Islamic culture, as evident throughout the Middle East. Africans were not left behind in this concept of divine right. In a typical African society, the rulers were also seen as gods or agents of the gods. Traditionally, they were believed to have possessed both divine and secular powers to do and undo as the gods

please. They were traditional priests, custodians and Supreme judges in all traditional matters. In African cosmology, there is no clear distinction between the material and the spiritual things. Religion embraces the totality of human endeavours. The social, economic, political and spiritual lives of the people are all embodied in one holistic life. Man, though mortal, can only have meaning in its social order through divine legislation. It is religion that translates our socio-cultural or socio-political order into reality (IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 66).

According to Okon, religion sacralizes the socio-political values to give it a divine sanction or meaning (33). It is these religious beliefs that bind the people together, regulate their lifestyle, and give meaning to their values, whether social or political. Again, it is this mental picture of African worldview that enables Africans to understand, express, communicate and govern themselves.

Today, even though democracy has replaced the idea of divine right, religion still plays a major role in the socio-political affairs of most nations of the world. In Nigeria, for example, the introduction of democracy as a form of government did not go well with the Northern Muslims because of its attachment to Western civilization. The influence of Western education was speedily penetrating the fabric of some Islamic values and system that did not go well with some Islamic clerics. To counter this, some Islamic sects began to emerge with the aim of reforming their state along the Islamic laws, promoting Islamic education. Their objective was to prevent Western secularization through education. In the article titled "What Accounts for the Rise of Islam," Kofi Johnson states that a case Study of Nigeria and Senegal (IOSR Journal for Humanities and Social Science, 66-67), between the 70s and 80s, many Muslims became frustrated as a result of pressures coming from the secularized world. Many sought to reject the waves of Western cultural imperialism and return to their Islamic roots. The situation became exacerbated due to constant confrontations between the West and the Arab world over the issues of Palestine and Arab nationalism. These crises reached their crescendo with the Iranian revolution in 1979 (1).

The resultant effects of religious conflicts in Nigeria are enormous. They pervade all the sectors of the economy. Generally, conflicts breed insecurity, discrimination, mutual distrust and slow economic and educational development. This is the case in Nigeria where in addition to the gratuitous killings and maiming of thousands of persons, properties worth billions of naira have been destroyed. Certainly, these huge losses have deprived the nation of needed manpower and services for the growth of its wobbling economy. Religious conflicts in Nigeria have also left their effect on investment options in the crises-ridden areas. The political instability, arising from the insecurity and uncertainty that pervades the region, does not inspire the confidence of foreign investors and thereby deprives the nation of the economic gains. In some instances, the enterprising Southerners who had established thriving businesses in the troubled areas in the North have relocated to other and safer places. Further, religious conflicts in Nigeria have left in their trail a broken society: communities that hitherto co-existed peacefully now treat each other with mistrust and latent or open aggression. Consequently, settlement patterns begin to follow the boundaries of religion in these areas so that adherents can be swiftly mobilized in the event of future riots. The disrupted social harmony is sometimes felt in places far from the crisis scene and thus accounts for the reprisal riots in other parts of Nigeria (Nwaomah, 101-102).

***Igwebuiké* Ontology vis-a-vis the Issues of Religio-Political Crisis in Nigeria**

Igwebuiké philosophy as an ideology encourages solidarity, mutual complementarity, peaceful coexistence, unity, progress and the pursuit of common good. Likewise, it discourages and stands against vices and activities like war or crisis, killing, mutual distrust, unhealthy competition and rivalry. It points to the fact that there is no human being or group of humans that are self-subsistent or independent. Rather, every human necessarily needs the other's complement. *Igwebuiké* philosophy argues that when human beings come together in solidarity and complementarity, they are powerful and can

constitute an insurmountable force, and more so, to express their world of relationship, harmony, continuity and complementarity. At this level, no task is beyond collective capability (Kanu “*Igwebuike and the Unity...*” web). Thus, while Christians regard religion as a personal faith and view the Church’s involvement in or use of political activism as a serious aberration, Muslims reject any attempt to relegate religion to private sphere, viewing it as a violation of Islam principle. For Muslims, Islam is a complete way of life, and there can be no separation between private and public, spiritual and temporal, religion and politics. For this reason, they make every effort, whether through peace or violence, to lay claim of the public space from which Christians tend to retreat. Hence, the slow non-partisanship of Christians in socio-political activism compared to their Muslim counterparts.

Amid the multiplicity of religious practices in Nigeria, there is a possibility of having a nation peacefully coexisting, so long as there is a mutual understanding among religions, and also drawing the line that demarcates religion from politics; that is, certain qualities and goals ought to be the basis of the political system, and not introducing the idea of religion. The appointing or electing of a president, governor, minister or whatsoever political post as the case may be should be done with no attention to religious belief or practice of the candidate, so long as the candidate in question is to come into power and face squarely his political ambition and not lording his/her belief on the nation. And on this note the *Igwebuike* ontology can be adopted in the politics of the nation, a philosophical thought that is devoid of religious or cultural sentiment, but rather upholds complementarity and peaceful coexistence. Be a candidate from the eastern, northern, southern or western part of Nigeria, it does not matter, but that the candidate proposes a vision to be actualized for the common good of the nation.

National political development is about the ability of a nation to improve the lives of its citizens through various measures of improvement, with no emphasis on the religious background of the

citizens. From the *Igwebuiké* perspective, this ability to improve the lives of citizens must be comprehensive, all-round and balanced. It includes all aspects of the life of an individual and the nation. It is, therefore, holistic in approach, as it aims at full-growth and expansion of our industries, agriculture, education, social, religious and cultural institutions.

Furthermore, captured in the *Journal of Moral Education in Africa*, Volume 2, Kanu states, in his work on *Igwebuiké as an Igbo-African Philosophy for Christian-Muslim Relations in Northern Nigeria*, that;

Religion is a unique phenomenon in the Nigerian society. Although it is one of the few factors that has succeeded in bringing together a good number of Nigerians under one umbrella, irrespective of ethnic considerations, Christianity and Islam in Nigeria have been associated with conflicts and violence which has dealt a terrible blow on the nation's unity and brought untold hardships on the people. Religion has been politicized, manipulated and militarized by unscrupulous people to fan the embers of rivalry, antagonism and ethnic discrimination. One lesson that is evident in the incessant quarrel between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria is that both religions have come to stay. Although both religions have misunderstood themselves by dwelling more on their differences, there is the need for dialogue, which does not deny the significant differences between the two religions. So much energy has been dissipated on violence instead of using it for solving the problems of human suffering and other socio-economic and political challenges that face us in the eye. After several years of interventions, *Igwebuiké* is proposed in this work as an indigenous philosophy to help the adherents of both religions to focus on the things that unite them, that is, the importance of dialogue to our common existence. *Igwebuiké* is a model that is built on the traditional categories of the Nigerian-African. It refocuses attention on the fact that Muslims and Christians in Nigeria have so many things in common as believers and as human beings: the adherents of

both religions live in the same world, in the same Nigeria beset by the same socio-economic and political problems. To fight one another is to engage in a futile enterprise and more so, worsen their conditions. Both religions constitute parts of the intricate web of reality and relationships in the ontological order. Their differences are for complementarity and not conflict (40).

Igwebuike, undoubtedly, has its anchor firmly holding the principle of solidarity and complementarity; thus, to be in existence is to live in utmost solidarity and complementarity, as it does paint the ideal picture of man living in relation and in loving harmony with his neighbour. In other words, living outside this circumference of solidarity and mutual love and complementarity is to suffer alienation, as 'to be' is to be in communion with the other in a community of being. That one is a Christian and the other a Muslim or Traditionalist should not be the basis of existence, rather, the unity in their diversity of brotherhood is to be fostered as it ought to, with no prejudice, segregation, marginalization and sentiment.

Recommendations

Having been exposed to the issues of religio-political crisis in Nigeria and the menace the nation is facing, it is thoughtful to give away negative energies by doing away with political and religious sentiments, biases and extremism, and as such embrace the ideals of politics and religion to foster complementarity, as posited in *Igwebuike* ontology; and to this, the writer recommends that for a more peaceful Nigeria, the following should be employed:

- i. Freedom to practice any religion, so long as it does not infringe on the fundamental human right of another;
- ii. There should be a line that delineates politics and religion, that is, non-politicization of religion.
- iii. Candidates for political positions should promote peace and harmony.

- iv. Religious or ethnic background should not be a basis for politics.
- v. Every candidate should be known for competence and delivery.
- vi. A sense of self-governance, peace and unity should be inculcated in every citizen from an early stage.
- vii. Political appointments should be devoid of ethnicity or religion but on accountability and qualification.
- viii. Exercising of political franchise should be free and fair.

Summary and Conclusion

This research work has looked into the menace of religion and politics in Nigeria and the woes facing the Nigeria political system. In Nigeria, the improper placement and practice of religion have indeed infringed the ideal of politics, thereby disorganizing the nation's politics and also to a large extent has become an avenue for hate, mistrust and marginalization amongst the Nigerian people. This also has led to insecurity, loss of life and property, crashing of the national economy and ethnic and religious clashes. The issues of religio-political crisis has sent scores to their graves, displaced several people from their political and social position, subjecting many to inhuman conditions.

Several reasons are said to have been the cause of the crisis in Nigeria, amongst this causes include: political and power tussle, tribalism, religious extremism and ethnic factor, amidst other causes. Nonetheless, the idea is to lay a pedestal that would hold and promote national peace and brotherhood. Thus, *Igwebuiké* philosophy, as an ideology, promotes solidarity and mutual complementarity and is placed side by side with the issues of religio-political crisis. It beckons on the Nigerian people to embrace national unity to foster a healthy political system and religious harmony.

Igwebuiké philosophy evidently puts to all that no nation can progress in the absence of peace. It is impossible that a nation experiences growth, progress and development amid prejudice and bias; that is, in

uniting, every hand must be on deck, each contributing his quota in commitment and love, and gradually the progress would play out. Living for one another beckons on everyone to embrace the I-Thou relation, upholding that which unifies each person, rather than that which differs amongst us.

A nation that lacks religion is bound to lack conscience, compassion and progress. Thus, there is need to support unreservedly the free practice of religion in Nigeria, be it Christianity, Islam or African Traditional Religion. No religion in Nigeria should be ranked superior or subordinate to the other, and none should be state-sanctioned or enforced. Notwithstanding, we must be willing to do away with the fuss caused by religion and politics and making religion a tool of our national partisan politics because of the intricacies involved, but uphold humanity amidst complementarity and solidarity.

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