

**A THEOLOGICAL RESPONSE TO RELIGIOUS
VIOLENCE IN NORTHERN NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

Christians live in a world of turmoil and turbulence. They are constantly faced with challenges to their faith. These often include both spiritual and physical challenges. Whereas, spiritual challenges are easily addressed in non-physical terms, the same cannot be said for physical challenges.

One prominent physical challenge, which requires a response, is oppression through the use of violence. Christians, over time, have been harassed for their profession by unbelievers with physical assaults. In recent years, the situation in Northern Nigeria has begun to reach an alarming point as Muslims have turned on Christians, destroying their churches, injuring them and killing them. Thus a fresh cry (since it is not a new one) within Christendom for a right response to this situation.

This need has led to the building of an appropriate theological model for dealing with religious violence. Historical assessment of the context, which has generated this need, coupled with a survey of biblical and church tradition formed the foundation for the evolution of the model proposed. REACH, an acronym, stands for the five key elements of this theological model. These are radical evangelism; effervescent prayer, astute watchfulness, collective participation and Holy Spirit led human response.

The goal of this theological framework is that Christians in Northern Nigeria, in particular, and elsewhere in general, will find it a veritable tool for responding to physical attack. That Christians would no longer be in a quandary over what to do in such a crisis situation. That for religious violence to be brought to its barest minimum, this model should be put to use.