

CHURCH RESPONSE TO RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE IN BORNO BAPTIST
ASSOCIATION OF MAIDUGURI METROPOLITAN AREA.

A THESIS

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BY

ISAAC BABARINDE AKANDE
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ABSTRACT

The research study covers church responses to religious violence with a particular reference to Borno Baptist Association of Maiduguri Metropolitan Area. This is with a view to assess the responses of the church towards the religious violence, in which Borno Baptist Association was grossly affected from 2009 to date. The interview method was used to collect data primarily from the respondents, who are the members of the churches affected by the religious violence cutting across all the strata of the church, i.e., pastors, deacons, leaders and members. The data collected through interview method was organized and presented using the discussion method, during which the research findings show that the responses of the church to the identified impacts. These include monumental loss of lives, properties and infrastructures, i.e. auditoriums, pastorium and member's houses with other assets of the church which cannot be recovered. Thus leaving the burden of rebuilding, reconstruction and repairs on the affected members again and again. This has resulted to mass exodus from the Baptist churches, relocation of Baptist members to other denominations, whose structures are repaired, reconstructed or rebuilt by their headquarters. It also weakened the faith of the church members by demoralizing their firmness in Christianity and church activities, programmes, as well as converting some members to Islam. The church in Borno Baptist Association responded to these through continuation of services and programmes, provision of alternate places of worship, donations of finance and materials, moral support and strong intercession. The research study concluded with some recommendations such as (a) the churches, pastors and members of these churches should be commended for their strong faith during persecutions, (b) the need for urgent assistance in rebuilding destroyed structures, (c) churches in Borno Baptist Association should co-operate with the government in curbing and preventing future occurrence.

5.2. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion of the study therefore, Violence on our churches is a sign that there are things that need urgent attention. We should endeavor to live at peace with one another (both Christians and Muslims). The church is mandated to preach Jesus Christ and not violence. In the course of conducting the research, it is conceived that the violence unleashed on churches in Borno Baptist Association of Maiduguri Metropolitan Area, one can authoritatively say that the churches are badly destroyed coupled with members' houses and places of business. The research findings as estimated shows that most of the churches need a huge amount of money to rebuild repaired and to reconstruct their burnt and bombed, properties destroyed as well as other valuable so that the formal can be replaced.

Similarly, the research findings indicated that churches lost most of their members either due to death or killed in the violence or relocated to other places. The effect of this is that church population in Borno Baptist Association has reduced significantly. It has also affected the spirituality of members' growth, the attitudinal relationship with other people as well as loss in their business. In conclusion therefore, it is worthy to note that all these loses, destruction and bombing left the church without compensation, assistance or any form of aids that will enable the members to recover the church, to rebuild or repaired and also business to thrive. An assessment also indicates that the socio-economic and financial losses incurred are monumental as indicated in the interview conducted.

However, government did not compensate or assisted in building these churches or pastorium burnt and destroyed. In the same vein the amount given by the Nigerian Baptist Convention and other Conferences have just assisted members and pastors to received succor in terms of feeding, clothing, and other basic necessities of life but not to reconstruct, repaired or rebuild the churches or houses.

It is important that the relief, if given or assisted to compensate the capital project or structures, it would have gone a long way to reduce the burden of the members who have saddled with the task of rebuilding their homes and their churches. Without this compensation the burden remain on the members to rebuild their houses, procure basic necessity of life and then contribute to the re-construction, re-building or repairing the church. This has become the problem of Borno Baptist Association churches of Maiduguri Metropolitan Area who have under gone the violence for more than one time.

5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The research study conducted and the research findings discovered the following recommendations as proffered to avoid similar occurrence in the future and to help solve the present situation encountered during the violence.

1. Education: if the people are well educated and knowledgeable in the religious belief of each other there would be no violence.
2. Employment: if the teaming youths, educated and uneducated, skilled and unskilled are gainfully employed, there would be no violence.
3. Eradication of Almagiris system and vagabonds: when almagiri system and vagabond roaming the streets are curtailed by sending them to modern almagiris school established by the government, no violence will erupt.

4. Eradication of religious Bigotry and fanaticism; if people are sensitized on the need for peaceful co – existence between Muslims and Christians, the issue of religious bigotry of supremacy will ceased.
5. Political reformation/ethnicity: the political system practiced should be devoid of religion, ethnicity and sectionalism. Our politicians should not use religions, ethnicity and sectionalism as a tool for settling their grievances.
6. Provision of Security: although there is a lot of security measures put in place by the government but all the churches should try as much as possible to have their own internal security to safeguard their churches and other vulnerable spots that are prone to attacks.
7. Compensation/Aids: 'the government and other organizations both within and outside should assist in compensating the victims affected by religious violence as well as to help, to rebuild, to reconstruct and to repair damaged structures. This will go a long way in relieving the victims from the pains and agony they went through.
8. The Nigerian Baptist Convention as a body should make funds available to compensate churches that were badly affected by the activities of religious violence as other denomination. This will also go a long way in reducing the burden of members to rebuild their houses and then saddled with the responsibility of rebuilding their churches again.
9. The security agencies i.e. Military and Police should form a rapid response force to combat religious violence situation promptly so as to avoid its spread to other areas.