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Inter-Religious Dialogue in Muslim-Christian Conflict:
Case Study of Zamfara State

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ABSTRACT

This research work examined the impact of Inter-religious dialogue in resolving Muslim-Christian Conflicts in Zamfara State. The issue of religious conflict is serious concern to many Nigerians today. And infact, it has caused many great lost to this country. The causes of Muslim-Christian Conflict are many and they are: extremism, bigotry, suspicion, poverty, ignorance, selfishness of political leaders and host of others.

The researcher used various examples of Inter-religious dialogue cases in Zamfara to show how Inter-religious dialogue can be used to provide solution to Muslim-Christian Conflicts. The research identified various problems that people who engaged in Inter-religious dialogue may face especially in the northern Nigeria. Some of the problems are religious extremism, political manipulation, suspicion, misconception about true aim of Inter-religious dialogue and perception about dialogue.

The research was carried out through library source and oral interview. The outcome of the research showed that Inter-religious dialogue has potential to help in providing solution to religious conflict in Nigeria. The researcher found out that various religion adherents can live together peacefully if they are ready to talk out their differences.

The researcher also found out that if religions will encourage virtues such as tolerance, patience, love, humility and peace, issue of Muslim-Christian Conflict will brought to minimum in this country. This research work is an eye opener to government, religious and traditional leaders on the use of the tool of Inter-religious dialogue for the promotion of peaceful co-existence. Since we have no other Country that we can call ours than Nigeria, it is therefore the duty of every citizen to see how religious harmony can be sustained.

Ayuba who said many of those who are engaged in inter-religious conflicts are children of the less privileged (49).

Religious leaders should use love to reach out to people of different faiths. The words of Konral Raiser, the general secretary of World Council of churches is relevant here when he said, "today Africa's political and religious leaders should begin to acknowledge that the time has come to rebuild the foundations of Africa Community life. The younger generation has grown in religious conflict situations and has lost confidence in traditional Africa values". One of the ways of achieving this noble end is through inter- religious dialogue (2009) Muslims and Christians preach peace, it is now the duty of the adherents of these two main faiths to work for peace, security and harmonious living in the nation.

5.2 Conclusion

Nigeria is a blessed nation, and is blessed in different areas. As the nation celebrates her fifty years of independence there is need for her to rethink on some issues that are crucial. One of the areas of concern is inter-religions wars and conflicts. Religious rivalry has created problems in different parts of the country and led to depth and destruction of properties. Religion has to be a reputable institution. There are fanatics who use inter-religion conflicts to achieve selfish ambition. All stakeholders should rise up to their responsibilities and bail the nation out of this cancer, which is inter-religious conflict.

This study have used examples of various inter religions dialogue in Zamfara State and their impact to show case the potency of inter-religious dialogue in resolving religions conflict. If inter-religious dialogue is embraced by all and sundry in the country, the case of Christian-Muslim conflict will be minimized and removed.

Inter-religious dialogue is a sure step to peace which the nation must give serious attention if she wants to be a peace promoter in the world.

5.3 Recommendations

The following are recommendation for peaceful living in our Nigeria are made Religions must be ready to discuss, to negotiate, to speak and to listen to each other. Father Sigo noted that violence is alternative to many because it looks like short cut. It is a translating of feelings of anger and resentment into immediate action, of taking matter into one's own hands (10). Akangbe added that religious violence is encouraged in Nigeria because some people benefit from it (11) Our religious leaders should teach that violence is short sighted and, in the end, ineffective. It only shows insanity and immaturity.

In another view, the need for rapid infrastructural development in nation is urgent, peace will never be achieved so long as majority of the people are living in poverty while other have more than what they needed. Michael Akangbe word is weighty here, he noted that, "Over 70 percent of the population lives below poverty level. This has occurred amidst huge corruption and waste by the ruling elite he added that the shared feeling of powerlessness had led to explosion of religious conflicts in the nation. The need to for government to focus on effective programme for sustainable development such as jobs, education, housing, health- that give hope is urgently needed.

The country will never achieve peace without justice. Lack of Justice has been listed as one of the causes of religious riots in Nigeria. It is noted that government is not sincere about the issue of bringing justice to victims of religious riots. Akangbe also said, the government have set up several panels to unravel the mysteries behind all religious riots, but the reports have ended up somewhere in the shelves of

governments libraries. In addition also, several occasions many arrests have been made after religion violence, but no single prosecution in the court of law have been recorded. The need to bring to book the perpetrator of religions violence is important, for these will serve as lesson for others.

Justice is not enough to bring peace, but forgiveness should also be promoted. All religions teach us to forgive, although there is probably no human act more difficult to perform. The followers of religions should regard forgiveness, as way to move beyond the past and constructively build a future. In the alternative, refusing to forgive, makes people prisoners of previous history condemned to forever relive and dwell upon our grievances.

Another useful ingredient highly needed in Nigeria for peaceful co-existence is Mutual love. Altruistic love is the primary ingredient that makes the world goes round. Love is a perceivable phenomenon despite the differences in language and culture. A Hausa, Ibo or Yoruba man knows when you love him even if he does not understand your Language (Sigo 262). Apostle Paul reminds us that love is patient, it is kind, it does not envy, it does not boast, it is not easily angered. It keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but always hopes, always perseveres (Corinthians 13:4-7 NIV). Love is a major ingredient for peaceful co-existence in this nation.

Humility is also important. In the Nigeria context, it means that one considers the person from the other tribe better than oneself. Paul's words is also important here he said, "Do noting of selfish ambition or vain conceit but in humility consider other better then yourself (Gal. 4:9 NIV). Muslims and Christians should not regard one another as enemies, they should associate with one another, it is expedient for

religions adherents to recognize that the human race is basically of a common origin, each created in the image and likeness of God

Furthermore to put an end to religious fanaticism and extremism it is recommended there is the need for national, state and local government seminars to teach the tenets of both religions (sigo 264). This will help people to understand and appreciate the religions of one another. Inter-religious conferences should be organized to explain the tenets of these religions. In another way, Thomas Micheal suggests that the country ought to include the study of peace in the curriculum of the universities. He added that, this will aid and promote research on peaceful co-existence Religions can contribute to promotion of peace by drawing up curriculum in peace in schools and can establish centers for the study of peace.