

# Deficit in Religious Practice in Nigeria: Implications for National Development

PAUL, Salisu Ojonemi<sup>1\*</sup>; Audu Enojoh<sup>2</sup>; Dr. Olatunmibi Omisore<sup>3</sup>; Wada Enejoh<sup>4</sup>

1. Training School, Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria, Ikeja-Lagos, Nigeria. \*[salisunelson@yahoo.com](mailto:salisunelson@yahoo.com)
2. Department of Public Administration, Federal Polytechnic, Idah- Kogi State, Nigeria. [enojomay@gmail.com](mailto:enojomay@gmail.com)
3. Training School, Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria, Ikeja-Lagos, Nigeria. [raheef2000@yahoo.com](mailto:raheef2000@yahoo.com)
4. Department of Public Administration, Federal Polytechnic, Idah-Kogi State, Nigeria. [wadaenes@yahoo.com](mailto:wadaenes@yahoo.com)

## Abstract

Religion is a fundamental agent, perhaps one of the most important factors that tend to create influence in the life of most Nigerians and Africans at large; yet the reconciliation between its essential principles and practice are too often unclear considering the behavioural output on the administration of public affairs vis-a-vis the level of corruption and immoral practices in its scene. Religion fanaticism has crept into all facets of life of the Nigerians and it cannot be relegated to the background. Even though the level of religiosity is high in Nigeria, poverty of leadership, corruption and immorality are more than other things, the greatest hydra-headed cogs in the wheel of personal, communal and national development. With qualitative data, this paper identified difference that exist between the principle and practice of religion which is the non-practice of the principles of religion as the reason for massive corruption, perpetual violence and the non-performance of national development agencies/programmes. Adopting the Marxian Theory of Religion, it recommended among others that, African culture and value which believes in immediate payback for wrong deeds, peaceful coexistence and communalism should be used as instrumentality for the good of the society and national development.

**KEY WORDS:** Religion, Principles, Practices, Nigerian National Development

## 1. Introduction

In Nigeria, religion and faith are critical aspects of everyday life. It influences laws, the thought and attitude; it plays a major role in the formulation and implementation of policies and major public programmes/projects because of the importance attached to it. This is not to deny the fact that some Nigerians are religious but godless. One of the challenges facing the development of Nigeria is the poor nature of accountability in all the operating systems. This is explained thus:

As Aminu M. Gurin observed in his paper on 'The Concept of Honesty in Islam', *the moral principles that prevail in our society today are those of utility, quest for material achievements and denial of God. All other ideals, whether of justice, honesty or truth are subordinated to these norms.* Ours has become a Pharisee society of self-righteousness and self-interest, in which the rich are getting richer and much more powerful while the poor become humiliatingly poorer, helpless and hopeless. The churches may surely be increasing by leaps and bounds, parading millions of "born agains", miracle workers and deliverers. The mosques may be growing geometrically in number and dutifully blaring their minarets every 5.00 a.m. calling out all faithful for prayers. Hordes of new breed/new greed politicians are mushrooming all over the nooks and crannies of the land. The stark reality on ground is that this dear fatherland is unarguably barren of genuinely selfless, patriotic, deeply committed and upright nationals. A disruptive moral crisis has regrettably overtaken our modern Nigerian Society through the importation and wholesale acceptance of alien values, alien tastes and alien lifestyles. Much more worrisome is the extent of total moral resignation by most people. Immoral practices are known and condoned; often accepted rather than resisted (Ejiogu, 2000:6, 7).

According to Pope Francis (2013) in Awake (2014:3), inconsistency on the part of Pastors and the faithful between what they say and what they do, between word and manner of life, is undermining the Church's credibility. Indeed, it is expected that religion should command the language of societal ethics and, often, an actual 'list' of rules to live by, some of which can be interpreted as being of particular importance to fighting corruption. Similarly, Adefarasin (2012) in Irekamba, Taiwo & Ajani (2012) summarizes that religion plays a very significant role in nation building. They see religion as vehicle for achieving meaningful

development. They also perceive religion as an organ that builds the moral standard of people and brings about peaceful co-existence, which results in progress of a nation.

In a contrary development, Nigeria has been ranked as one of the most corrupt nations in the world according to Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI). The organization's 2011 reports have shown her as 134th of 178 countries in the world. Simbine (2013:2) highlights further by that, this rating comes *pari passu* with a high ranking in the religiosity index using indicators such as the Pew Research Centre's Forum on Religion and Public Life which indicates that 90% or more of respondents in most of their surveyed countries identify as and are deeply committed to Christianity or Islam and yet many continue to practice elements of traditional African religions. Furthermore, the 2007 global attitudes project found that a high percentage of Nigerians (over 80%), express concern about political corruption as a very important problem. The above analysis raises a set of interesting questions:

...do public servants separate public and private morality? Are citizens' attitudes towards corruption shaped by their religious beliefs and devotion? Do public servants see religious teachings on ethics as implementable or practicable at work or as utopian, difficult to implement or non- operable in practice? Do specific religious practices differ in terms of attitudes to corrupt behaviour? Do the dispositions of religious leaders to corruption by way of denunciation, tolerance or even overt involvement in corrupt activities influence the laity's attitudes towards corrupt behaviour? (Eke 1975, in Simbine, 2013:3).

## 2. Brief Historical Background of Religion in Nigeria

World religion has existed in all human societies from early times. Although belief systems and traditions of worship differ from culture to culture, they also have many common elements. In all cultures, human beings make a practice of interacting with what are taken to be supernatural spiritual powers and divine beings. These may be in the form of gods, spirits, ancestors, or any kind of sacred reality with which humans believe themselves to be connected (Microsoft Encarta 2009, in Anyaehie, 2011).

Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia of Religion described religion in Nigeria thus: There exist several religions in Nigeria, helping to accentuate regional and ethnic distinctions. All religions represented in Nigeria were practiced in every major city in 1990. However, Islam dominated the north and had a number of supporters in the South Western Yoruba part of the country. Nigeria has the largest Muslim population in sub-Saharan Africa. Protestantism and local syncretism Christianity are also in evidence in Yoruba areas, while Catholicism dominates the Igbo and closely related areas. Both Protestantism and Catholicism dominated in the Ibibio, Annang, and the Efik kiosa lands.

According to Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia of Religion (2013), there are many types of Muslims, but the majority of Nigerian Muslims are Sunni, most of who are Maliki, Shafi'i or Salafi. But a significant Shia and Sufi minority exists. Most Sufis follow the Qadiriyya, Tijaniyyah and/or the Mouride movement. Some Muslims have incorporated radical and takfiri ideals, in particular the Vanguard for the Protection of Muslims in Black Lands. Some northern States in Nigeria have incorporated Sharia Law into their previously secular legal system, which has brought about some controversy. Kano State has sought to incorporate Sharia Law into its constitution. The majority of Quaranists follow the Kalo Kato or Quraniyyun Movement. There are also Ahmadiyya and Mahdiyya minorities.

From the 1990s to the 2000s, there has been significant growth in Protestant Churches including the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Winners Chapel, Christ Apostolic Church (the first Aladura Movement in Nigeria), Deeper Christian Life Ministry, Evangelical Church of West Africa, Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, Christ Embassy, The Synagogue Church Of All Nations, and the Aladura Church, indigenous Christian churches especially strong in the Yoruba and Igbo areas, and of Evangelical churches in general. These churches have spilled over into adjacent and southern areas of the middle belt. Denominations like the Jehovah Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventist and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have also flourished. According to (2001) report of The World Fact book by CIA in Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia of Religion (2013), about 50% of Nigeria's population is Muslims, 40% are Christians and 10% adhere to local religions.

Apart from these entire religious groups mentioned above, in the words of Uhiene (2010:3) there is prevalence of other worshippers who are neither Christians, Muslims nor traditionalists. Uhiene describes these bodies as open and secret confraternities/cults that primarily do not destroy lives and property. Examples include the Seadogs Pyrates Confraternity, and Ayegba Om'Idoko Confraternity. The other eclectic religious philosophical faiths – Eckankar, Grail Movement, and Hare Krishna find almost insignificant following among young people and the elite class in the urban centers across the country, especially in the south (Ishola, 2002:35 in Uhiene, 2010:4). Ahmadu (2007) confirmed the view of Uhiene (2010:3), that the Seadogs Pyrates Confraternity was formed basically to combat negative tendencies and that it is a non-political, non-religious, and detribalized body with the aim of upholding human dignity and the promotion of a just, humane, and progressive society where no one is a victim of colour, race, sex, tribe, religion or beliefs.

From the foregoing, it is expected that the principle and practice of religion in Nigeria should yield results in;

- Proper management of national development programmes
- Abhorring corruption of immorality and anti-societal behaviour
- Protection and promotion of lives and property, and
- Peaceful and harmonious co-existence among neighbours.

This paper is therefore directed at answering the following fundamental questions considering the number of religious groups, principles and practice in Nigeria. These are;

- What has been the level of Nigeria's development?
- How is the manifestation of the moral value in Nigeria?
- Is there security of lives and property?, and
- What is the level of trust amongst Nigerians on one another?

### 3.1 Theoretical framework

Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia (2013) stated that, 'Marx's Theory of Religion' needs to be seen in the context of his general view of society. The social philosopher Karl Marx (1818–1883) held a strictly materialist world view and saw economics, including class distinctions, as the determining factor of society. For Marx; ideology is a belief system that changes people's perception of reality in ways that serve the interests of the ruling class. He argues that the class that controls economic production also controls the production and distribution of ideas in society, though institutions such as the church, the education system and the media. In Marx's view, religion operates as an ideological weapon used by the ruling class to justify the suffering of the poor as something inevitable and God-given. Religion misleads the poor into believing that their suffering is virtuous and that they will be favoured in the afterlife. Such beliefs create a false consciousness. According to Mbah (2006:82,83), class struggle will continue for a very long time and this made Lenin (1893-1947) to described religion as 'spiritual gin' - an intoxicant doled out to the masses by the ruling class to continue them and keep them in their place. Lenin argues that the ruling class use religion cynically to manipulate the masses and keep them from attempting to overthrow the ruling class by creating a 'mystical fog' that obscures reality. The tenets of the theory are:

- Class distinctions
- Religion is a source of happiness
- Societal changes is dependent on the economy
- The human mind and human consciousness is part of matter

### 3.2 Application of the theory

Anyahie (2011) said, religion is clearly the opium of the oppressed and keeps Nigerians addictively high with illusions that things will get better as long as they fast and pray. In this consideration, Ayobolu (2012) observed that, since Usman (1987) documented these words, Nigeria has slipped into a deeper socio-economic morass and unable to find a way out of the quagmire that is largely a function of her own greed and parasitism. Factions of the ruling class, easily resort to maneuvering ethnic, religious and regional sentiments to legitimate their otherwise tenuous hold on power. Ayobolu (2012) emphatically states thus:

Is this not the best way, for example, to explain the ferocity with which some northern governors at the beginning of this political dispensation in 1999 pursued the Sharia agenda in utter contempt for the supposed secularity of the Nigerian State? Are those who willingly turn themselves into suicide bombers on behalf of Boko Haram not victims of the kind of manipulation...? Are the king-pins of Boko Haram themselves within Nigeria not most likely unwitting victims of external religious extremists who perceive the Nigerian ruling class as siding with neo-imperial forces in the war against terrorism and are thus working clandestinely for a religious-driven implosion of the country? Is it not a strong possibility that the millions of ordinary Muslim northerners who reportedly have some sympathy for Boko Haram, not victims of a psychological manipulation that convinces them that their existential material conditions will dramatically improve with the emergence of a theocratic Islamic state?

Religion acts as an opium and apparatus used to facilitate the painful exploitation of the vulnerable poor masses. But just as opium masks pain rather than treating its cause, so religion masks the underlying problem of exploitation that creates the need for it. Ananya'ta (2009:2) perceives that, religion perpetrates the highest percentage interest of the economic, political and religious leaders because, it is made up of strong divided opinion of the world and a result cannot make provision for the solution to contemporary socio-political and economic misery. Ananya'ta (2009:2) added further that instead, its perpetual promises of the paradise and an unseen beautiful home create an imagined happiness that distracts attention from the true source of the suffering, which is corruption and greed. Thus, Marx sees religion as the product of alienation. It arises out of suffering and acts as a consolation for it, but fails to deal with its cause namely class exploitation. Religion acts as an ideology that legitimates both the suffering of the poor and the power of the working class (Ayobolu, 2012).

In the opinion of Anyaehie (2011), Nigerians only believe in prayers without any physical action whatsoever, which is the result of the stagnant growth the country is facing today. The citizens spend most of the time praying for things that need efforts and actions. Anyaehie (2011:4) cited examples of these actions to include please, God touch the heart of our leaders; please God make Nigeria a better place; please God touch the heart of our corrupt police men; Fire of God burn our corrupt leaders and the list goes on. Corrupt leaders are left unchallenged and granting them freedom to run the country down because the followers are not concerned with the politics of the country rather waiting for an Act of God to turn Nigeria to a beautiful utopia thereby attending the occasions of the ill-gotten wealth in various religious centers across the country. Actions that should be taken against corrupt leaders are tabled in prayers at the churches, mosques and before shrines (Ananya'ta, 2009:3).

#### **4. Religion as an Instrument of Exploitation**

Usman (1987) defined manipulation as essentially controlling the action of a person or group without that person or group knowing the goals, purpose and method of that control and without even being aware that a form of control is being exercised on them at all. Religious manipulation is not a recent situation in Nigeria. To this end, Crampton (1975:10) declared that, at the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> Century precisely in 1902, Shehu Uthman dan Fodio, a leading Muslim religious leader among the Fulani quarreled with the pagan ruler of Gobir and this led to war and many of the Fulani hastened to fight under the banner of Uthman Dan Fodio. It can be deduced as Crampton (1975:10) notes that their motives were partly religious and, a desire for gain and revenge for previous spites and grievances. Ayobolu (2012) says that, Nigeria is a plural state with diverse and complex ethnic, economic, cultural, linguistic, religious and social realities with high conflict potentials that the colonial masters who created the Nigerian state were quite aware of and utilized as the basis for enunciating their administrative policy of divide and rule. Most of Nigerian leaders and elites unfortunately, have continued to frustrate the efforts of patriotic Nigerians to forge a close unity amongst Nigerians from every divide and bring about concrete and deep-rooted development of the Nigerian state instead of programmes which are really out of touch with the people they are supposed to serve and impoverishes them the more.

Omeleke (2004:1) reiterates that, one fact about religious sentiment is that it is intangible but is being manipulated to do evil in public administration; that at times, the public affairs managers find it difficult to strike a balance in their attempt to ensure justice, fair play and equity on the other hand, and efficiency and effectiveness on the other hand. Nigeria has always been a pluralistic state with very diverse ethno-religious, cultural linguistic, economic and social characteristics. In spite of these diversities, Nigerians have tried to live more or less in harmony tolerating each other's religious beliefs. However, the phenomenon of religious crisis is ugly developments, which obviously have been fueled by self-seeking individuals and groups to feather their

selfish interests. Thus the country is confronted with realities whereby some of the so-called religious crises are indeed not religious in origin but have ethnic and political undertones. In the words of Usman (1987);

...only two people were killed according to newspaper reports. But the great significance of this incident is that it involves for the first time, the calculated destruction and burning of Christian churches in what seems to be a violent assertion of the 'Islam Only' slogan painted all over the streets of Zaria in an aggressive demonstration by the Muslim Students Society in 1980. The attack on and destruction of Christian churches in Sabon Garin Kano, marks the highest and most dangerous, point this systematic manipulation of religion has reached in its opposition to the unity of the people of this country.

Religious fundamentalism of both the Muslim and Christian affiliations has recently become more deeply entrenched in Nigerian society. Thus, Usman (1987) connects the manipulation of religion in Nigeria to the ever deteriorating material living conditions of millions of Nigerians and the few ruling class elements who benefits from the unjust status quo. Usman (1987) views that, millions of Nigerians are increasingly realizing that the present economic and social system in this country has nothing for them except landlessness, indebtedness, unemployment, destitution, disease, illiteracy, chronic and pervasive insecurity. He thus sees the perpetrators of this exploitative and iniquitous system as the prime perpetrators of manipulation who 'cover themselves with religious and ethnic disguises in order to further entrench division among our people'.

Sani (n.d) in Sampson (2012) identifies poverty, corruption, non-implementation of previous probe panel reports, impunity of past perpetrators of the violence, proliferation of preachers and worship centers, provocative and inciting utterances, sensational journalism, political manipulation of religion, incitement in the social media and mobile telephony, among others, as key causes of religious violence in northern Nigeria. Despite the constitutional prohibition inflicted on persons for account of their religious affiliations, religious patronage has been instituted in the public realm, depending on the predominance of particular religious followers in positions of authority. Thus, at all the government levels (even down to the local government) top civil servants including political office holders openly patronize particular religions at the expense of others. In many Islamic dominated states of northern Nigeria, public funds are used for the purchase and distribution of food items and other valuables for Muslim faithful during their fasting period. However, government does not extend the same gesture to Christians during Christmas or traditional religious ceremonies. This attitude prevails in some Christian dominated states as well. Furthermore, whereas the federal government has established both Christian and Muslim Pilgrims Commissions with state funding, some states, especially in the north, have single pilgrims' commissions for particular religions at the exclusion of others (Sampson, 2012).

From the foregoing therefore, this paper summarizes in totality that several reasons are given for religious violence and corruption in all facets which are the effect of religious manipulation in Nigeria in two factors. These include;

**4.1 Political profit:** Achebe (2012:51) unequivocally stated that, the social malaise in Nigerian society was political corruption. In other words, the structure of the country was such that there was an inbuilt power struggles among the ethnic groups, and of course those who were in power wanted to stay in power. The easiest and simplest way to retain it, even in a limited area, was to appeal to tribal (and religious) sentiments, so they were egregiously exploited in the 1950s and 1960s. He exemplified this further by saying, Sir Ahmadu Bello-the Sadauna of Sokoto decided to create the Northern People's Congress (NPC) in the late 1940s, from the Islamic territories under his influence. Komolafe (2012:1) remarks that, religion and politics have been bedfellows throughout Nigeria's history. The paradox, however, is that this symbiotic relationship as posited by Komolafe, has equally been the ground for conflicting ideological currents and the central factor that is shaping alignments and antagonisms.

The most pervasive are those along the divides of Islam and Christianity, Nigeria's two popular religions. In response, political arrangements/calculations are developed in such a way that religion occupies the position of ideological preference for the nation's identity much more than any configuration along cultural or historical lines. Usman (1987) asserted that, Nigerians are convinced that the sinister and utterly reactionary forces behind this campaign of violent religious politics with the aim of destroying our country are made up of a tiny oligarchy determined to maintain its power, wealth and privileges at all costs including violent and well organized mobs in the name of religion.

**4.2 Economic prosperity:** Religious groups have gone into the business of establishing educational and moral development centers in Nigeria through the setting up of schools, hospitals, orphanages. With highly exorbitant

price to an end that, they are inaccessible to the adherents whose money was used. Presently, more churches own universities than ever before.

Therefore, it is a common denominator as highlights by Sen, (n.d) that recent study has established that critical public institutions are the main centers of corruption in Nigeria. Religious groups are not free from this. More often than not, Pastors preaches on the stealing of tithes/offering and alteration of figures of all kind by church workers. In same vein, church workers complaints of extravagance spending of the church fund by church leaders at all levels and their family members on another hand. Many young graduates are now General Overseers and Bishops to enjoy high standard of living. What is referred to as 'Honorarium' in the public service has assumed center stage amongst religious groups and the leaders in Nigeria. One wonders if those who benefited from the missionaries' sponsorship would have done so in this period where profit maximization is the topmost agenda of Nigerian religious organizations and its leaders. Except very few as tendered by (Uhiene, 2010:4), many business organizations like Airlines, educational institutions (at all levels), fast-food/water canteens, event management firms, transport companies, property and estate management/development, etc., are being owned by some Christian and Muslim sects. Examples of religious based private higher institutions in Nigeria are listed in table below:

**Table: Some religious based private higher institutions in Nigeria**

S/No.	INSTITUTIONS	SPONSOR/FOUNDERS
1	Bowen University, Iwo -Osun State	The Baptist
2	Fountain University, Osogbo - Ondo state	NASFAT Islam
3	Bishop Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo – Oyo state	Anglican Churches
4	Al -Hikama University, Ilorin – Kwara State	Islamic Foundation (AROIF) and World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY)
5	Redeemer University, Lagos State	The Redeemed Churches
6	Wesley University of Technology , Ondo State	The Methodist churches
7	Covenant University, Ota, Ogun state	Living Faith Church
*8	Landmark University, Om'Aran, Kwara State	Living Faith Church
9	Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Osun State	Christ Apostolic Church
10	VERITAS University (Catholic University of Nigeria), Abuja.	The Catholic Churches
*11	BABKOK University	Seventh-Day Adventist
*12	The Anchor University, Lagos	Deeper Life Bible Church
*13	Salem University, Lokoja	The Foundation Faith Church

**Source: Saheed, Z.S. & Alofun, G.O.O. (2011) \* with author's modification.**

In the midst of this development, it can be observed that many adherents of these religious groups who are full-time workers of various religions earn little salary thereby subjecting them to the temptation of stealing the church finance. They are always being told that there is heavenly reward in view even though there is high turnover and in amidst of the fact that the certificate of incorporation of the religious organisation is in the name of themselves, wife and one of their children. Capitalists have cornered and taken over the management religious organizations in Nigeria.

### 5. The salient characteristics of religious practice

It is worth mentioning that scholars and leaders of thought analyzed religion as a powerful force (institution) without seeing it as a purpose (instrument) for character formation/reformation, peace and harmonious co-habitation amongst humanity. This paper therefore identified the dimension that religion has taken in Nigeria. It has turned into a machinery of:

- Employment creation and consolidation for its leadership,
- Avenue where the bachelors and spinsters go to contract marriage(s),
- The jobless go for job seeking instead of filling out applications,
- Turning down the principle of success amongst students and politicians through hypocrisy and gullibility to an extent that, all-night prayers for success and pen anointing are preferred in examinations to studying, and a 'must win' prayer and prophecy for an unpopular candidate without an electioneering campaign, and
- Burial ceremony in an event of death.

Moreover, Nigerians profess God in principles (words) and not in practices (actions). The grave implications of these on the national development are not far-fetched. They include;

### 5.1 Faltering of development programmes/agencies

Many religious leaders have turned into spiritual consultants scouting and lobbying for contracts for themselves and adherents from their benefactors. On many occasions in Nigeria, public development projects/programmes are always poorly implemented if they are even done. This accounts for the reason why there is a situation of scattered uncompleted projects, poor supervision, and frequent policy crumbling and suspension which has become the characteristics of Nigeria development programmes. In the view of Soubbotina (2004:120) in Paul & Ogwu (2013:645), such degradation of social capital threatens social cohesion and renders development unsustainable. Personalities among religious drivers in Nigeria have emerged as politicians and pressure groups pioneers for the party in power so as to gain favour in the illegal sharing of the 'national cake'. It is analyzed that:

Public funds are now routinely doled out to political allies and personal friends in the guise of contracts to execute public works of one kind or another. Generally, a political contractor will have no expertise whatsoever or even the intention to perform. He will simply sell the contract to a third party and pocket the commission running into...millions for acting as a conduit of executive fiat... Alternatively he can raise cash not by selling, the contract but by collecting a 'mobilization fee' from the Treasury, putting aside the contract for the time being or forever... (Achebe 1983:53, in Paul & Ogwu, 2012:645).

The Nigerian civil service, other development agencies are not spared from poor performance. To this end, Adebayo (2000:123), in Paul, Usman & Ali (2013:20) summarizes the failing and defects of Nigerian Civil Service as follows:

...over-cautiousness in its approached to problem solving, lack of creativity, skepticism towards new ideas, insularity and lack of sensitivity towards the public and the issue of the day. To these we must add failure arising out of a narrow and restricted conception of management an 'impoverished concept of management' too narrow to cope with the full range of problem with which managers of the public sector must deal. It fails to take account as well as questions of organizational design and the use of resources

The pathetic situation is that, many of the top civil/public servants ranging from the position of Administrative Officers, Director Generals to Permanent Secretaries, are highly committed religious stakeholders and followers in Nigeria. The question then is, why is the Nigerian Civil Service faced with the characteristics of continuous corruption and embezzlement of public fund; unprogressive mindedness and resistance to reforms; arbitrarily large to the extent of having placement for political touts; excessive political intrusion, and lack of accountability among the civil servants which has led to non implementation of huge budgetary allocations in Nigeria As explained by Paul, Usman & Ali (2013:20).

The assertion that, 'Nigerians are religious and godless' is represented in the failure of the critical and largest organ of the public service delivery (Nigerian Civil Service). Accordingly, Ejiofor & Anagolu (1984), Ogunyomi (2013:2) & Paul, Usman & Ali (2013:20) identifies the following as factors responsible for the negative attitude of the civil servants in discharging their duties: Lack of work ethics, lack of values, and perpetration of ethnicity, conflict of interest, educational problem, religious fanaticism, and leaking of official secrets.

## 5.2 Fruitless war against corruption

According to El-Rufa'i (2013), in Chonoko (2013:1), corruption and stealing of public funds by public officials in Nigeria is now carried out openly to the extent that every Nigerian knows what is happening. Ironically, these are the same persons who are leaders, elders and senior citizens of various religious groups in Nigeria. Therefore, Sen (n.d) opined that, it is no longer news to suggest that Nigeria is on the verge of being completely destroyed by corruption. Usman (1999:23) consolidated this view that virtually, no government official can today initiate or execute any public project or give out contract without expecting or receiving cash or other material rewards in return. In the midst of plenty religious activities, the situation has gone worse as Usman (1999:24) remarked that it is widely believed that even state governors, ministers, commissioners, director-general and other heads of parastatal must bribe to collect their grants and subventions; including contractors for the projects they executed. In addition, El-Rufa'i (2013) in Chonoko (2013:2) supported that; the high level of corruption in the society was a reflection of what the government is doing, adding that the iniquities perpetrated by officials are "as open as the naked emperor."

Consequently, Ezekwesili (2013:19) depicts the predicament that, there is no better saying of the governance failure in our nation (Nigeria) than the relatively unchanged structure of the economy of Nigeria since the independence; and it is the rapid change of the structure of an economy that determines the level of economic growth, national development and prosperity that would happen. This constant configuration in Ezekwesili's perspectives is manifested in public corruption which is one of course the fundamental reason for Nigeria's poor economic performance despite her acknowledged economic potentials to have become not just one of the largest economies of the world, but in fact, one of the most prosperous of those countries.

Bribery and corruption, especially in high places, is almost our second nature (Usman, 1999:24). As religious as the country is, Obasanjo (1999) denotes the Government and all its agencies as being thoroughly corrupt and reckless. He stated further that, members of the public bribe their way through in ministries and parastatals to get attention and one government agency had to bribe another government agency to obtain the release of their statutory allocation of fund. It is pathetic to know a situation where prayer and fasting/thanksgiving service are held for individuals who were convicted for the stealing of public funds. Apart from these religious exercises, religious administrators go on pressurizing the agencies involved in the arrest and prosecution of such persons to soft-pedal and suspend legal actions against such persons (who are religious financier) knowing full well of their offence against the poor masses (Uhiene 2010:4).

Dedication/thanksgiving services are frequent occurrences for achievements with controversial source(s). Ejiogun (2000:6) in a similar affirmation maintains that, it is permissible to steal public fund, it is possible to build castles and buy chieftaincy titles and bogus doctorate degree awards from dubious foreign and even Nigerian institutions. Huge donations in both cash and kind are neither questioned nor investigated by religious authorities before receipt. To that end, Ananya'ta (2009:3) cried out that, malpractice situation in Nigeria is one of the worst among nations and that there is no rule and no mechanism of limitation.

The biggest damage to the society seems to come from the theft of public money which is meant for development purposes like power, education, health, public transportation, water, housing and national security, among other sectors (Sen, n.d).

## 5.3 Frequent violence that defies solution:

In the stand of Ohai (2013:16), hardly any day passes without newspapers announcing yet another deadly attack by unidentified gunmen in screaming headlines. He revealed that nowadays, a combination of robbery attacks, kidnapping, ritual murders, rising urban brigandage (especially in cities like Lagos, Port Harcourt and Kano) and insurgency has foisted an atmosphere of fear and insecurity in the country, so deep that Nigerians have begun to be frightened by even their own shadows.

Taking a retrospective step, Usman (1987) recounts that about 5,000 people lost their lives during armed clashes between the army and followers of Islamic Preacher, Mohammed Marwa (Maitatsine) in Kano, in 1980. Some of the incidents of religious violence that Usman (1987) analyzed include the Maitatsine uprising in Kano City from 18th to 29th December, 1980 leading to the loss of 4,177 lives; the Bulukuntu riots in Maiduguri from 28th to 30th October, 1982 with a death toll of over 400 persons; the acrimony that attended the Sharia debate in the run up to the Second Republic; the attempt to read religious meanings into the assassination of General Murtala



Mohammed and the riots in Kaduna from 29<sup>th</sup>-31st October, 1982 as well as the violent demonstration in Sabon Garin, Kano by the Muslim Students Society on Saturday, 30th October, 1982.

Religion is being exploited because it is the most exposed instrumentality since the adherents of various groups considered it divine to an extent that the origin and power remains unquestioned. These account for why it can be easily upturned to fight for what can be popularly referred to as 'God's cause/Jihad' dogmatically without a second thought.

In the Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia of Religion (2013), inter-ethnic conflict in Nigeria has generally had a religious element. Riots against Igbo in 1953 and in the 1960s in the north were said to be fired by religious conflict. The riots against Igbo in the north in 1966 were said to have been inspired by radio reports of mistreatment of Muslims in the south. In the 1980s, serious outbreaks between Christians and Muslims occurred in Kafanchan in southern Kaduna State in a border area between the two religions.

Perhaps, the contemporary worst threat to security as noted by Ohai (2013:16) lies in the activities of the Boko Haram and other violent Islamist groups. Often described as faceless and lacking a real purpose, the Islamic sect has claimed responsibility for thousands of deaths through suicide bombings and armed attacks across Northern Nigeria within the last four years. Recently, there has been an upsurge in attacks targeting Christians in northern Nigeria, culminating in the Christmas Day massacre at a catholic church near the Federal Capital Territory. The radical Islamist sect, Boko Haram, claimed responsibility for the bomb blast. Over the last 20 years, an estimated 15,000 people have died as a result of ethnic and sectarian violence in Nigeria. More than 4,000 died in bombings and assaults carried out by Boko Haram since 2009, while 800 people were killed during the post-election violence that swept most of the northern states in 2011 (Ohai, 2013:16).

#### **5.4 Fake neighbourhood**

Fifty years down the line, the situation was different. There was relative security in every part of the country (Ohai, 2013:16).

Communities in spite of diverse ethnic and religious extractions dwelled together in peace. The rate of crime was relatively low as most citizens were contented with their possessions and security agents had little to do with crime control except to majorly maintain law and order anywhere in the country. Nigerians were considerate and kind people in the world before now. Traditionally, houses were built without fence; children can be punished informally by an unknown individual for any wrong deed in any corner, there was a communal love and caring in the society to the extent that head of households within a given settlement eat together centrally, disputes and grievances were adjudicated out of court and amongst other features of traditional society.

It is on this premise that Obasanjo (1999), in Ejiogu (2000:6) mentioned that, if our people have not exhibited those traits in the relationship with their neighbours and state in recent times, it is perhaps because of some creeping alien influences or breaking up of communal ties. Religious growth and expansion started in the 1980s and the country has been sliding destructively into a bottomless pit of immorality. Ejiogu (2000:6) reinforced that it was (within the same) mid-1980s that every other Nigerian started losing faith in himself/herself, in his/her neighbours, and in the fatherland. Sampson (2013:106) supportively paraphrased this point that:

In view of the perennial religious tensions between the two dominant religious groups in Nigeria, there is a sustained culture of mutual suspicion and unhealthy rivalry between them. The introduction of sections 38(1) and 10 into the Nigerian Constitution, which have guaranteed freedom of religion and prohibited the declaration of state religion respectively, has done little to attenuate the frequency of religious conflicts, as state patronage and veneration of the two dominant religious groups has helped in heightening the underlying tensions and rivalry. Thus conflicts between Nigerian Christians and Muslims have often manifested in violent inter-religious violence.

The view of Oladimeji (2008) cited in Idakwoji & Paul (2013:13) indicates that, the cause of present ugly experience in Nigerian politics emerged from the impact of colonialism which made Africans to abandon their

traditional values (communalism) to embrace the western culture of individualism, and from humanism to materialism. Oladimeji in their perception further observes that it is a combination of excessive materialism and uncontrolled crave for wealth acquisition that the traditional value of being a 'brother's keeper' disappeared into oblivion, while greed, avarice, dishonesty, ruthlessness, and thuggery assumed a centre stage. All these are inherent and exhibited under religious coverage.

## 7.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

### 7.1 Conclusions

It is on this note that Simbine (2013:1) denounces that, in a society such as Nigeria where faith is an integral and inseparable part of people's lives, the ethical and moral templates that religion offers should dissuade public officers and in fact, everyone from predilections to corruption. Komolafe (2012) submits that, in primordial, homogenous Nigerian societies, for example, religion was indissolubly linked to the political system. In the general African view, this has not changed. Religion and society are connected, even if not synonymous. Africans expect both to serve the people in mutually benefiting ways without harmful side effects. In a very significant way, this is radically different in the West with its distinction between religion as private belief and as public practice. The manipulation of religion for wresting political control, entrepreneurship/economic exploitation of the vulnerable masses, and means of violence/occultist destruction of lives and property were, in a sense, an alien ugly scenario in Nigeria. What may be taken as the commencement of the exploitation of religion for political mobilization and legitimacy can be traced to the introduction and acceptance of contemporary societal vices in religion.

### 7.2 Recommendations

While there is a general consensus about the deteriorating status of our society, the same cannot be said of our willingness to remedy the situation. Subsequently, if we are serious about the often professed intent to tackle the hydra-headed problem of decay and various other ills bedeviling us, then we cannot ignore the attitude and character that have interplayed to bring about our current situation. Indeed, it has become glaring that the challenge to evolve a people united by conviction and belief in the success of the Igala (and Nigeria) project is in our hands. These seemingly minor but significant issues, I advice, must not be ignored if we appreciate the fact that, men stumble on stones... not mountains (Adoji, 2013:2).

Therefore, this paper recommends that;

- African culture and value which its beliefs are in immediate payback for wrong deeds, peaceful coexistence and communalism should be seen as instrumentality for the good of the Nigerian society and national development.
- There should be practical understanding and application of the relationship that exists between faith, ethics, violence and corruption. The 'Doctrine of Restitution' should be adopted so as to help in curbing corruption and the formation process of attitudes in amassing wealth. If the Biblical Zacchaeus became poor after restitution, all public office holders/religious leaders should be mandated by various religious groups to do same.
- Corrupt and crafty political, public and religious leaders should not in any way be celebrated. They are always eulogized in Nigeria. This situation should change henceforth.
- The National Orientation Agency should intensify its Africa core value reorientation campaign through the social media since majority of the young literate people now have access to the internet. This should be taken serious because, they are the leaders of tomorrow.

### REFERENCES:

- Achebe, C. (2012) *There was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra*. USA London: Penguim Press  
Adoji, V.A. (2013) *Igala Renaissance and Development Projects*. Anyigba: Igala Books  
Ahmadu, M. I. (2007) *Religious and Ethnic Versatility: The Nigerian Experience*. Being text of a lecture delivered by the National Association of Seadogs, Aba Chapter, at the Abia Hotels, Aba, Abia State on Saturday, March 10

- Ananya'ta, O. (2009) *Religious Activities and Academic Excellence: The Right Placement*. Being text of a lecture delivered on the Welcoming Ceremony organized by the SUG; Federal Polytechnic Idah, Kogi State. Un published.
- Anyachie, M. J. (2011) Religious Beliefs & Social Stratification. *Radio duong*, April, 4 (2)4
- Awake (2014) *How to Invest Your Time Wisely*. New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. February 2014
- Ayobolu, S. (2012) Religious Issues in Nigeria in, *Life Midweek Magazine, E-Publication*. December 19
- Crampton, E.P.T. (1979) *Christianity in Northern Nigeria*. London: Geoffrey Champman
- Ejiogu, A. (2000) *Morality and National Development: A case for National Rebirth*. Abuja: NOA the Presidency.
- Chonoko, I. (2013) Nigeria: Public Funds Theft Done Openly in Nigeria. *Abuja: Daily Trust Newspaper*, March, 11, 3
- Eruvbetine, A. E. (Ed) *Humanistic Management of Religious Pluralism in Nigeria (n.d) E-Publication*.
- Ezekwesili, O. (2013) Bad Governance behind poverty in Nigeria, in *The Punch Newspaper* 37(20), 517 October, 23, 19
- Idakwoji, S. P. & Paul, S. O. (2010) An Empirical Description of Political Thuggery and Democratization in Kogi State Nigeria, 2003 – 2010. A paper accepted for publication in the *Ife Psychologia Social Science*,
- Irekamba, C., Taiwo I. & Ajani, O. (2012) Religion Has Been Good, Bad For National Development in *Guardian*, September, 30
- Komolafe, S. J. (2012) Politicization of Religion and the Origins of Fundamentalisms in Nigeria. *Thisday Thursday, January 12* [skomolafe@gmail.com](mailto:skomolafe@gmail.com)
- Mazi-Mbah, C.C. (2006) *Political Theory and Methodology*. Okija: Rex Charles & Patric Ltd
- Obasanjo, O. (1999) *The New Dawn: Presidential Inaugural Speech*. Abuja: NOA the Presidency.
- Ohai, C. (2013) Insecurity: Clouds of fear as Nigeria turns 53, in *The Punch Newspaper*, 37 (20), 517 October, 1, 16
- Omeleke, I. I. (2004) Ethnicity and Religion: A threat to Democratic Governance in Nigeria, in the *International Journal of Studies in the Humanities (IJSH)*, 3(2), 1
- Paul, S.O. & Ogwu, S.O. (2013) Rural Development Policies and the Challenges of Realizing the Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria, in *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(2), 645
- Paul, S. O., Usman, T. O. & Ali, M. A. (2013) Labour Unions and the Transformation of the Nigerian Civil Service: A Discourse in, *International Journal of Public Administration and Management Research (IJPAMR)*, 2(1), 12-25
- Saheed, Z. S. & Alofun, G.O.O. (2011) Religion and Economic Development: the Role of Nigerian Intellectuals, in *Journal of Social Science and Public Policy Ceresin Publications* [www.cenresinpub.org](http://www.cenresinpub.org)
- Sampson, I. T. (2012) *Religious Violence in Nigeria: Causal diagnoses and strategic recommendations to the state and religious communities*
- Sen, Y. (n. d) Political Economy of Corruption in Nigeria. [yimase@yahoo.com](mailto:yimase@yahoo.com) E-Publication.
- Simbine, A.T. (2013) *Religion, Ethics and Attitudes towards Corruption in Nigeria*. Ibadan: SGPRD, NISER, [tsombe98@yahoo.com](mailto:tsombe98@yahoo.com)
- The Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (2013) Religion in Nigeria  
[file:///C:/Users/oruvian/Downloads/Religion/Wikipedia the free encyclopedia.html](file:///C:/Users/oruvian/Downloads/Religion/Wikipedia%20the%20free%20encyclopedia.html) E-Publication.
- Uhiene, E. P. (2010) *Religion in Igalaland and the morality question*. A paper delivered at a one day seminar organized by the Igala Young Progressives on the rising activities of political thugs. April, 10. Unpublished
- Usman, B.Y. (1987) *The Manipulation of Religion in Nigeria, 1977-1987*. Kaduna: Vanguard Publishers
- Usman, U. H. (1999) *Our Realities and the Way Forward*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited.