

Religious Bigotry and Good Governance in Nigeria

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Abstract

Religion, ordinarily understood, provides some sense of the divine, awe, respect, justice, and peace in the society. The true meaning of religiosity is, therefore, felt in an atmosphere of decorum and equanimity. On the contrary, religion can be misused through violence, bigotry, and fanaticism. Perhaps, a negative aspect of religion and its impact on good governance is the present situation in Nigeria, manifested mainly in the upsurge of fundamentalism and reckless radicalism or fanaticism, as exhibited by the Boko Haram sect since 2009. With the current attacks on public institutions, government establishments, churches and other places of worship, even mosques, and government's seeming inability to arrest the situation and provide adequate security, one asks the relevance of religion in the governance of a pluralistic society like Nigeria. In fact, can true religion survive in a democracy like that of Nigeria? The paper applies the method of functional analysis, which in this context, lends itself to viewing religion not only from a single faith system but from the perspectives of any number of world religions. In the case of Nigeria, three religious systems remain very vital in the consideration of the importance of religion in any important discussion for the upliftment of the society, thus: African Traditional Religion, Islam and Christianity. It is hoped that a good blending of the positive values of the aforementioned religions would go a long way towards enhancing good governance and other democratic ideals for the development of Nigeria.

Keywords: Religion, Bigotry, Governance, Democracy, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Religion is a significant factor in human phenomenon. This is why many human endeavours ask for its contribution towards the development of society, either morally, politically, economically, culturally, etc. Many people always ask what religion is, was, and apparently always will be (Tremmel 1976). It is in the same context that this paper wishes to contribute to the question of the relevance of religion, especially in Nigeria towards the attainment of good governance. Man has been variously described as a *homo politicos*, *homo ethicos*, *homo sociologicos*, *homo economicos*, *homo sapiens*, etc. Can man also be described as a *homo religiosus* in the true sense of the word? If so, can man as a religious animal really blend his religiosity with the democratic demands of his time to achieve democratic advancement? What does man really do when he does or practices his religion? What are some of the central concepts which emerge and guide his religious beliefs and actions? Above all, what are some of the human benefits which are available in religious life and experience, which still make it relevant for human society? In order to answer these simple but relevant questions, one has to ask them in relation to the diverse Nigerian context and history.

For almost five decades, precisely since the political independence of Nigeria in 1960, there have been efforts to enthrone true democracy, which is the highest sign of good governance. However, several factors have militated against this struggle, among which are religious bigotry and fanaticism. In a diverse country like Nigeria, one can say that it is the greatest hindrance to realise the noble goal of good governance in the 21st century, when almost every part of the globe is striving to attain governance based on justice, equality, freedom, tolerance, mutual co-existence, and interdependence. This is why the paper tries to view the question of democracy and good governance in Nigeria in relation to the impact of religion – positively and negatively.

2. Religion in Nigeria

For Chukwuma (1985:57), "Religion as an ontological and metaphysical phenomenon belongs to the innermost consciousness of life and continues to remain a fact of time and history". In other words, religion is a part of human history and nature. In Nigeria, three religions abound – African Traditional Religion (ATR), Islam, and Christianity. Of the three, African Traditional Religion can be said to have been there with the people before the latter two mentioned religions, considered to be basically missionary in nature. Before the advent of Islam and Christianity, an African can be said to be born into a society with its own religion. ATR was seen to be the religion of the community where it was practised and the fact of birth entrusted one a right of its membership. Therefore, it played a vital role in the traditional political structure of the different tribes where it was practised. It is in this context that one can talk about African Traditional Religion in Igboland, in Yorubaland, and in Hausaland respectively. They were always interconnected with the culture of the people where they were found. Again, the social and political character of ATR demanded total commitment to the religion by the members. Religion in this sense influenced the practice of the traditional values of communitarianism, socialism, hospitality, respect for human dignity, etc. In other words, religion played a great role in the socio-political set-up of the community and its governance. The leaders ensured that basic African traditional religious and cultural values were safeguarded and

properly enforced. By promoting the virtues of religion and culture, good governance was ensured. On the contrary, the particular society or community could also be said to be badly governed.

Just as it is widely known that every contact brings about change, positive or negative, one can say that the contact between African Traditional Religion, Islam and Christianity led to a similar experience. Islam and Christianity brought new orientations that completely changed the world-view of the average African, and led to shift in religious orientations and affiliations. Though both Islam and Christianity held a monotheistic view of reality, their political orientations were completely different. Whereas Islam identified politics with religion, thus, a different view of democracy and governance in society, Christianity, with its western orientation promoted the idea of politics as distinct from religion. Islam, with its theocratic notion of governance did not readily subscribe to the secular notion of democracy introduced by western democracy into Nigeria. Obviously, with colonisation and possible political independence, Nigeria is thrown into a dilemma of conglomeration of religions, religious values and orientations with their attendant political interpretation of what constitutes good governance in the society. For some time, the problem has been how to blend the Islamic view of governance based on the Sharia with the western (Christian) understanding of governance based democratic ideals. In the last few decades, this dilemma has led to constant conflicts and crises. It has also led to the emergence of some religious fanatical groups, especially in Islam, who have vowed to orchestrate trouble until Nigeria is de-secularised and ruled entirely on religious principles of Islam. In the wake of this problem, good governance in Nigeria has experienced a lot of bottlenecks because there seems as yet no definite understanding of what constitutes it: religious fanaticism or pure democracy. The most disturbing aspect of it is the speculation that some of the political and religious leaders in Nigeria help to derail the country from attaining good governance.

3. Religion and Good Governance in Nigeria

It has become a regular and constant question with regard to the relevance of religion in the society as a whole, and in its organisation, specifically. Many opponents of the direct involvement of the role of religion in governance strongly oppose any kind of dealing between church and state. They are of the opinion that both are diametrically opposed to each other. In any way, their argument holds water if religion dictates for government, especially from a sectarian point of view. If any particular religion tries to impose its will on any society, especially a heterogeneous one like Nigeria, then its influence becomes inimical to societal and democratic progress and development. But if we consider religious values such as we mentioned above that were practised in the traditional African society, even before the advent of Islam and Christianity, which helped to promote justice, respect, and human dignity, then religious values might still require a pride of place in the proper governance of our society. This special consideration for religion in Nigeria becomes necessary because it would not just be seen from the point of view of its function (that is, not only something *for* people) but also something *to* people. It would be seen as something that contributes to the personal worth of each individual.

To accept this point of view would go a long way towards discarding the often misleading opinion that religion arises from human frustration. Rather, it will help us to see religion objectively as helping immensely to structure life with sustaining morale. This means that it culminates into commitments and aspirations, as well as moral demands of the highest order. Religious consciousness helps to discern and depict God in human society, especially in their dealings with each other. In the midst of meta-technological advancement and supersonic discoveries, religion endeavours to bring man close to the reality of his finitude. Even Albert Einstein, one of the greatest scientists in human history, summarised it vividly in his dictum: "science without religion is lame and religion without science is blind". In this regard, Tremmel (217) writes, "Even if we could solve technologically all of the problems of human finitude, there would still be those who had discovered that religion is not only something that people do but something that happens to them".

This means that religion still brings it to the experiential awareness of people that for a society to thrive, it needs love, charity or Agapé. This is a reality, which the myriad of crises rooted in racism, nationalism, ethnicity and tribalism have taught humanity, especially as the causes of the second world war. In the 21st century, it is most probable that religious antagonism would be the greatest source of worry for global unity and governance. The menace of Al-Qaeda, which started with the destruction of the twin towers in New York on September 11, 2001 and have degenerated into series of terrorist attacks on humanity has shown that religious bigotry would cause a lot of havoc in the world. In both cases, it would only require bad and non God-fearing leaders to enhance either global hatred or antagonism. Mutual antagonism is always inter-connected with hostility and social injustice. In all, none of these negative factors can operate properly in a society governed with a true sense of universal brotherhood, equality, and tolerance. A lack of sense of some of these religious and ethical values has also led to the fall of some notorious leaders in both religious and political history: Pharaoh, Saul, Ahab, Adolf Hitler, etc.

4. Religion, Democracy and Good Governance

To understand the proper role of religion in good governance in any modern society, one has to know what democracy really means. Democracy is a system of rule based on the majority opinion of the people who freely

elect their leaders by themselves. Democracy is based on the fundamental principles of justice, equality, freedom, respect for human persons and their dignity. It is free from coercion of all sorts – religious, political, social, economic, cultural, etc. Therefore, to govern properly is to organise a particular society on the basis of the aforementioned values and ideals. This is where it becomes very difficult for a religious bigot to be a good democratic governor or leader.

In other words, the idea of good governance can only be properly understood within the context of a good democratic set-up or environment. Aristotle had already spoken about true democracy so many millennia ago. He wrote that the basis of a democratic state is liberty (Politics, Bk. VI: ch. 2), which when extended to the topic of the paper, means that a true democratic state also promotes liberty, freedom of worship and association. Liberty is highly interconnected with the principle of equality and justice. Thus, democracy cannot be isolated from good governance. Since "governance simply refers to the activity of governing a country or controlling an organization or a company" (Hornby, 2006:646), then it means that good governance means the ability of controlling a country or an organization to the satisfaction of the majority of the citizens by those elected to do so within a stipulated period of time.

In a heterogeneous society like Nigeria, the task becomes more onerous than expected because it involves the proper coordination of multiple and diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious groups. It is therefore the fact of its diversity that makes the case of Nigeria unique in the consideration of governance in its polity. Moreso, when a particular religious or ethnic group constitutes a spanner in the wheel of its democratic progress (cf. Section 38/1 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria where freedom of religion is strongly emphasised). This is where the problem of religious fanaticism or bigotry has affected good governance in the country. Good governance works in tandem with peace and harmony, which religious bigotry does not promote. Good governance, rooted in love, can be epitomised in the parable of the good shepherd told by Jesus Christ in the Gospel of John (10:11-18). As a lover of the sheep, the good leader guided by good religious principles and values ensures the security of the sheep. Even, he regards the security of the sheep to be more important than his own. Can one really presume this parable in the numerous political leaders in Nigeria who profess adherence to either of the major religions mentioned above? If Nigerian politicians are good shepherds, why is Boko Haram and other evils thriving daily in Nigeria? Why are Nigerian political leaders just guiding the sheep like hired hands who run away when there is danger?

5. Religious Diversity and the Question of Unity in Diversity

According to Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (Benedict XVI), "...all history is a unity in tension: the one Covenant is realized in the plurality of covenants" (1999:57). Continuing he argued that if this is so, there could be no question of setting the Old and the New Testaments against each other as two different religions. By extension, there could also be no question of setting one religion against the other in a world full of diversity. For him, there is only one will of God for men, only one historical activity of God with and for me, though this activity employs interventions that are diverse and even in part contradictory – yet in truth they belong together.

The history of the encounter of religions has shown how religious dichotomy could ruin world peace and harmony. Judaism and Christianity experienced a terrible moment of conflict that nearly destroyed the history of Israel and Palestine. A similar story could be told of the encounter between Christianity, Judaism, and Islam when Muhammad entered the scene in the 6th century A.D. The wars of Crusade and Jihad variously rendered the Medieval Period almost uninhabitable for mankind. In spite of all these experiences that made religion almost intractable with the development of democratic ideals and good governance in society, mankind has continued to seek the relevance of both religion and democracy in human existence.

It was Cardinal Nicholas Cusanus, who in the book, *De pace fidei* (7,11,16,10,62) gave the fundamental impetus in the 15th century towards a concrete realization of the need to promote unity in diversity in the face of religious diversity. This happened immediately after the conquest of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453. With the inevitable failure in the attempt to unite the Eastern and Western Church, and the re-emergence of Islam within the horizon of Western Christendom, Cusanus saw no other option than to promote the cause of dialogue. Having also been part of the failed attempt to re-unite Eastern and Western Christendom, and having seen the inevitability of living together with Islam, Cusanus realized the necessity of advancing the idea that religious peace and secular peace were closely connected. His proposed utopia through the convocation of a heavenly council may not be the ideal for us today. However, the consciousness he has raised has become a *sine qua non* for dialogue and promotion of good governance in a pluri-diverse society like Nigeria. In other words, his kind of utopia was intended as an utterly concrete service to peace (see Ratzinger, 90).

Also, since the 19th century, one has witnessed a gradual but consistent move from Christian *Oikumene* (Ecumenism) to the dialogue of Religions. Originally, the ecumenical movement came into being as a result of the missionary experience of the Protestant churches, which found that the multiplicity of their splintered denominations was putting a substantial obstacle in their way as they sought to witness to the then so-called pagan world. Realizing that division and conflicts could not help them to realize their missionary goal of conversion and

evangelism, they saw church unity as an indispensable condition of mission. They argued that if their universal claim to the message of salvation was to be taken seriously, they who bore it, should not contradict themselves. They had to avoid presenting the picture of being representatives of splinter groups, dissenting voices exhibiting distinctive features and antagonisms that are rooted solely in the history of the Western world (Ratzinger, 91). With this concrete motive in mind, the impulse of the ecumenical movement spread more rapidly than expected to the whole of Christendom, starting with the Eastern Orthodox Church, and the eventual bold steps of the Catholic Church through the Second Vatican Council in 1962. It encouraged its members to search for the unity of all Christians (cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1964).

However, it became also very necessary for Christians to make serious efforts to recognise other religions and the actual message of their religions for the development of the world along the lines of peace and progress. The Catholic Church acknowledged such an important step in its document, *Nostra Aetate* (nn1-3) because it was no longer possible to neglect the religious convictions of other people. It became obvious that it was no longer auspicious to describe other people as 'pagans' or purely negatively as 'non-Christians'. The effort to begin to know what made people of other religions what they were, can be said to be a veritable step in open-mindedness and democratic relationship. One began to realize and implement the fact that it was no longer necessary to destroy the religious world of the other because he does not just belong to one's group or affiliation. Above all, the consciousness and awareness have been intensified to understand the other from 'within' his own religious ambience. It is in this way that Christian ecumenism has gradually expanded into the dialogue of religions and recognition of unity in diversity. Such a development is informed by the conviction that religion, if it is to be understood, must be experienced from within. From all indications, it is only within this ambience that religion can be properly understood, purified, and made relevant for world progress, and democratic development. It is also within this understanding that religion can be properly defined and described in relation to its three-fold functions of enhancing peace, justice, and preservation of creation. Captured within these essential roles, therefore, one can begin to talk about the relevance of religion in relation to good governance, which are rooted in the aforementioned values of justice, peace, and preservation of creation. In the context of Nigeria, one needs to ask why religion *per se* is still far from contributing effectively to these democratic ideals.

6. Religious Bigotry in Nigeria as bottleneck to good governance

The answer to the immediate dilemma mentioned above is not far from being found – religious bigotry, conflict, and promotion of antagonism. According to Ratzinger (93), "... at a time when mankind has acquired the ability to destroy itself and its planet, it is clear that the religions share a common responsibility to overcome this temptation". It is even most important for them to realise that there can be no world peace without peace between the religions. If this is a global truism, then locally, one can also affirm that there can be no real peace in Nigeria as a polity without a conscientious effort by the religious groups that make up its society to enhance peace among themselves, and in collaboration with the political class.

The history of Nigeria, especially since 1960, is replete with instances of religious conflicts that have hindered its genuine search for harmonious co-existence and good governance. Nigeria has been somehow divided along the lines of religious affiliations, basically between Christians and Muslims. Although no one can categorically accuse religion to be the major or fundamental cause of the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970), a deep consideration of the factors that necessitated its execution cannot hold religious considerations free of blame. For instance, Hastings (1979:198) wrote: "the involvement of religion and the Churches in the Nigerian civil war was so considerable and complex that it is hard to do justice to its many facets.... (not neglecting also) the increasingly aggressive pushing of Islam..." to become the state religion in a diverse and secular country like Nigeria. In the same vein, Kirk-Greene (1971) argued that the situation that led to the civil war was bedevilled by a set of oppositions, among which were the unending North v. South, Islam v. Christianity mindsets.

Shortly after the civil war, the process of transition to democratic rule in 1979, in order to enhance good governance, was almost disrupted and destroyed with the issue of which code was to be supreme: the Sharia or the Nigerian Constitution based on secular principles of governance. A serious debate raged on whereby some fundamentalist Muslims insisted on the enthronement of the Sharia as the national constitution before the unity of the country could be allowed to take place. When the effort failed, there was another serious dilemma created, which has until date disrupted every genuine attempt to lift Nigeria up democratically: the north v. South syndrome, also sometimes erroneously misconstrued as the Muslim North and the Christian south. In the actual fact, both adherents are widely distributed in the various geo-political zones of the country.

In the early 80's, there was the problem of the religious antagonism, especially in the north whereby some Islamist sects undertook to disrupt societal peace in the name of religion. The Maitatsine riots of 1980 and 1982 still remain good examples of malevolence in the Nigerian polity. According to Onabanjo (2011:4), "When it comes to squaring up with religious fanatics or crises with religious tinge, the Nigerian security apparatus has always been found wanting. This has been so since the 1980s when crises of religious hue berthed in Nigeria, particularly in the North. From the Maitatsine riots of the 1980s and now to Boko Haram, the nation's security

agencies have failed to impress many Nigerians". Speculations have always had it that some political leaders have consistently played the hide and seek with the mischievous religious bigots. The current case with the Boko Haram Islamist sect is a vivid example where a senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria – Senator Ndume – is accused of aiding the activities of the sect to destabilise the effort to ensure good governance in Nigeria. Also a former governor of Borno State, Modu Sheriff (Chukwu, 2011) has been accused of complacency and insincerity to his leadership position.

Boko Haram sect has been a menace to good governance since its official emergence as a religious fanatical group since 2009. It was founded in 2002 by one Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf, who was killed later in controversial circumstances by the police (Adegbamigbe 2011). The group, which holds an anti-Western education philosophy started its activities of destruction in Maiduguri and extended it to Yobe, Kaduna, Gombe, Kano, Sokoto, and even the federal capital territory, Abuja. Describing the November 4, 2011 bombing by the Boko Haram in Yobe, for instance, Ajaero (2011) called the sect 'a thorn in the flesh of the nation'. There is no doubt that the security arrangements in the places where Boko Haram struck were nothing to be written home about. In other words, the sad events of religious crisis in Nigeria cannot be isolated from bad governance. According to Kukah (2011), "the fact of the matter is that we have a country that has been mangled, fangled and totally destroyed by a bunch of unbelievably incompetent people".

The consequences have been enormous. Many lives have been lost and property worth billions of Naira have been destroyed. Economic growth has been stunted while most business entrepreneurs in the affected areas have been chased away by fear, harassment, antagonism, and constant distraction. In a country where lives and property can no longer be guaranteed due to incessant religious bigotry, the tendency is to disturb democratic development and progress. The sect, Boko Haram, has capitalised on the lack of good governance in the country to heighten fears of disruption of peace in the society by its open declaration of allegiance to the globally hated *Al-Qaeda* and *Taliban* terrorist groups in Afghanistan and its environs.

One should not shy away from the reality that Government complacency to the evil of terrorism is making the problem more complicated than any one can imagine. In fact, one might not be far from the truth to affirm with (Nwanaju, 2010:70) thus: "these questions raise the issue of the police and its ability to protect the citizenry. The Nigerian police is, as indifferent as the Nigerian government, especially when it concerns the welfare of the ordinary citizens". In such a disordered society, there is no veracity in defending the existence of any kind of good government and its corresponding governance. Perhaps, all hope is not yet lost.

7. The Way Forward

Since no society has ever reached its perfect state of governance, one can express some hope that the Nigerian polity has some chances of improvement if all the sectors concerned work together to achieve good governance. Religion must however play a central role because of its strategic function in the complex and diverse nature of Nigeria as a pluri-religious society.

There is a fundamental difference between the current pressure from Boko Haram sect and other sectarian protagonists for a government based on religious fanaticism/bigotry and good governance based on true principles of democracy. One should not lose sight of the diverse nature of Nigeria as a society. Nigeria. Thus, there is need to emphasise and apply caution in matters of governance.

Again, one must not fail to say that the post-independence Islamic character in the governance Nigeria, which had a lot to do with the goal of integrating religion into politics, to the negligence of the secular nature of Nigeria cannot be the best option of its good governance and democratic development (Nwanaju, 2005). A secular constitution still remains the best option for Nigeria's unity, growth, and development.

Furthermore, it is important to hold in view the fact that Nigerian politics is not just influenced by the reality of the preponderant ethnic consciousness among the people but also the prevalence of religious affinities and inclinations. Thus, the need for enhanced spirit of brotherhood and love, as well as avoiding mischief and corruption. Corruption has really shown the degree of irreligiosity and godlessness among the leadership in Nigeria. In a seeming sarcasm, Adegbamigbe (2012) describes Nigeria as a country that celebrates corruption. According to him, "that it takes a London court to jail James Ibori, former Delta governor, whose case was bungled in his country, puts the all-pervasiveness of corruption in Nigeria in bold relief"(14). Continuing the awful but objective description of how corruption has made a mess of good governance in Nigeria, Adegbamigbe writes, "in the early 1970s, it used to be a cliché that corruption had "become a cankerworm that had eaten deep into the fabric of our national life". But now, analysis trenchantly argue that there is no "fabric" for corruption to devour! The entire Nigerian system has become a skeleton (15). In this realistic indictment of both governed and governance in Nigeria, both Christians, Muslims, members of African Traditional Religion, etc are asked to re-assess their assumed religiosity in relation to the evils in the society.

Nigerian leaders are challenged to promote genuine religious teachings in schools, colleges, and universities. A good leader in Nigeria needs to be well informed in both the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Bible. Tony Blair (2011) has rightly enjoined on leaders to be faith-literate, especially in a globalised world,

full of heterogeneity and diversity. An intensive study of the Bible and the Qur'an would show how 'reforming' and 'inclusive' they are in their contents and demands. A particular word that has been highly misleading for Islamist sects and fanatics like Boko Haram, for instance, is 'Jihad'. Whereas it is a word that challenges interior conversion and reformation along true Islamic principles, it has often been misinterpreted to mean war against non-Muslims, erroneously regarded as 'infidels'. Under this pretext, violence has been used against innocent people. But the Qur'an (2:256) categorically states: "Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error: whoever rejects evil and believes in God hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold, that never breaks. And God heareth and knoweth all things".

Jesus Christ himself restrained Peter from using violence, even at the point of maltreatment and false accusation. The Gospel of Matthew (26:50-52) writes: "Then they came forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. And suddenly, one of the followers of Jesus grasped his sword and drew it; he struck the high priest's servant and cut off his ear. Jesus then said, 'Put your sword back, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword'. Both the Qur'an and Bible have therefore given leaders examples to follow in the society, even in the midst of disagreement.

In the Nigerian society where so many people in positions of authority claim to be religious Muslims and Christians, it is unimaginable for them to be champions of an ideology of violence and aggression in the name of religion. As already mentioned, the example of Cusanus demands a strong political leadership in Nigeria with a high sense of moral and religious values for good governance.

A good governor or leader manifesting the fear of God distances himself from corrupt practices such as stealing state money to either enrich himself or to sponsor religious fanaticism. A few African leaders who may serve as veritable models are Dr. Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Dr. Nelson Mandela of South Africa who never enriched themselves for any purposes whatsoever. . Describing these two leaders, Okaneme (2010:191) writes: "It is indeed sad and regrettable to note that Nigeria is yet to get a leader in the mode of late Dr. Julius Nyerere of Tanzania who ruled his country for more than three decades and eventually left office without having a house of his own or Dr. Nelson Mandela of South Africa who ruled his country for just a single term and stoutly refused to vie for a second term despite pressures mounted on him to do so. Unfortunately this cannot be said of most Nigerian political leaders both past and present". It is not surprising that no such leader has emerged because it demands one with a true sense of religion and moral discipline to promote good governance based on truth and honesty.

Dialogue remains a very important option today for promoting good governance. It must be a dialogue based on sincerity and openness, with representatives of the various religious affiliations in Nigeria adequately represented in collaboration with honest political, cultural, and social leaders.

8. Conclusion

Human nature demands order and proper organisation. Two major factors that make them possible are the proper application of religious values and principles, as well as good governance in a given society. But sometimes, the former has been misused by either leaders or some adherents of some religions to inflict sorrow and pain in human society. Since religion is supposed to promote respect, love, equality, and justice among people, a violent use of it to maltreat others would tantamount to destroying the fundamental principles of democracy on which good governance is based. In other words, true religious values can provide a strong basis for good governance. Religious fanaticism or bigotry can be best described as an aberration, and should not be used as objective reason for relegating true religious principles and values to the background. Global society needs God-fearing leaders to promote the principles and practice of justice, equality, freedom, truth, love, etc, which almost all true religious beliefs teach. In Nigeria, it is even needed most because of its diversity and heterogeneity. Finally, one can say that mutual dialogue remains the antidote to religious bigotry in its bid to destroy good governance in Nigeria.

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