

## **BOOK REVIEW: IGNATIUS AYAU KAIGAMA, *Peace, not War* Hamtul Press Ltd, Jos, 2012**

Clement Selbong

Department of History and International Studies, University of Jos PMB 2084, Jos, Nigeria

Archbishop Ignatius Ayau Kaigama, in his book *Peace, not War*, gives a vivid analysis of the various crises that have enveloped Plateau State for over a decade.

The conditions that triggered the eruption of these crises as well as efforts and resources invested so far to ameliorate the situation and strengthen the peace process on the Plateau.

Section one reminds us of the pre-2001 era of peaceful co-existence in Plateau State when adherents of Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion lived peacefully with each other, ate from the same plate and slept on the same bed.

The second section traces the structural imbalance created by the regions as administered by the British Colonial Officials. It was regional imbalance that warranted creation of states by Nigerian leaders a few years after independence, but still could not solve the problem of ethnicity and fear of being dominated by the other ethnic groups in the regions or states. This made the first governor of the state, the Late Joseph Deshi Gomwalk to develop the state to the best of his ability to avoid being dominated by others. He established a newspaper house, a television station, schools, hospitals and mass transit transport service among other developmental strides. (p.11). He further gave a synopsis of the violent conflicts from the pre-2001 era to 2007, leading to the setting up of the Plateau State Inter-Religious Council on Peace and Harmony [IRCPH] with the author and Emir of Wase as co-chairmen.

The author disagrees with the view that religion is the sole cause of crises in the state. He said the causes of the crises are multidimensional (p.39)

In section three, the author narrates the causes of the various crises on the Plateau starting from that of Friday September 7, 2001 which started as a result of the appointment of non-Plateau Muslim as head of the Poverty Eradication Programme in the state (p.46). A dispute which started as an indigene versus settler issue, over political and economic control in Jos North was given a religious regalia due to the fact that religion stirs up emotions and support from within and outside the state. The slow and uncoordinated response of security personnel paved way for the escalation of the crises to other parts of Jos. Causes of the Yelwa crisis were given, ranging from land control to cattle theft which led to the Hausa-Fulani inviting mercenaries from neighbouring countries to assist them to attack the non-Hausa-Fulani or non-Muslims in Yelwa which led to the destruction of lives and properties in February, 2004, while in May that same year, the indigenes who are mostly Christians and African Traditional Worshippers, organised a reprisal attack. He opined that the crisis is not only between Christians and Muslims or indigenes and settlers but can be between Christians and Christians or indigenes and indigenes, a case in point was Namu crisis of April, 2006 between the *Goemai* and *Pan* People over land dispute. Next was the November 2008 Jos crisis over results of Local Government Elections in Jos North, which occurred even before the announcement of the results. Bias reportage by local and foreign media aggravated the crisis. The Dogon Nahawa massacre of March 7, 2010 as a result a result of cattle rustling and the Christmas Eve bomb explosions at Kabong and Angwan Rukuba were also captured in this chapter. Besides, when a group of Izala Muslim youths went to pray at their burnt Mosque at Rukuba road, another crisis broke out in August, 2011. According to the author, the introduction of "political sharia" in Zamfara State increased the tension and mutual suspicion in Northern Nigeria, apart from the policy in some Muslim dominated states in Northern Nigeria not to allow Christians own land to build churches and not to have any Christian programme on radio or television, lack of proper intelligence gathering by security personnel, bad governance, unemployment, land ownership and cattle rustling are the major causes of the crises in Plateau State. He advocated for good governance, job creation, distributive justice and development as the panacea to the recurring crises in Plateau State.

Section four discusses efforts at reconciling the various groups involved in the crises in Plateau State by government, religious leaders and non-governmental organizations, which climaxed with the setting up of the Inter-Religious Council on Peace and Harmony (IRCPH), with the author and his bosom friend, the Late Emir of

Wase, Haruna Adullahi, as co-chairmen. They preached and practised peaceful co-existence and religious tolerance for their members to emulate.

In the fifth section, the author looks at the peace building efforts by the Plateau State Inter-Religious Council on Peace and Harmony, saying true peace can only be achieved if sincere dialogue is practised by everyone on the Plateau. He sees the six-month long state of emergency declared on Plateau State by former President Olusegun Obasanjo as a mere pronouncement intended to score a political point to prove to the world that the president was not a religious fanatic and not intended to solve the real issues on ground.

The shortest section in the book, section six, talks about returning to God almighty in sincere prayers of repentance for our active or passive roles in the crises in Plateau State. He created a special prayer for total peace in Plateau State for all Catholics to recite during Masses and in various homes. If all Christian and Muslim families will sincerely repent and pray for peace, God will surely grant us peace in Plateau State.

The seventh section displays the letters the author has received from the Vatican City, from within Nigeria and within Plateau State from concerned people after each crisis in the state to express their condolences to the Archbishop and all victims of the crisis. These correspondences also contain prayers for God to heal the state, grant her peace and prevent future occurrences in the state.

Section eight is the last section and concludes with a call for continuous dialogue between Christians and Muslims in Plateau State. The author abhors all forms of religious fundamentalism and sermons encouraging hatred for people of other faith. He wants the media to be objective in their reportage of any crisis, the state government has been asked to address social and economic issues in the state and continue the peace process, empower the youths as the Catholic Archdiocese of Jos has assisted by setting up an Inter-faith Vocational Youth Training Centre in Bokkos Local Government Area. Christians were admonished to stay calm and prayerful despite the recent innovation of setting-off bombs in some churches in Jos, the state capital.

### **Concluding Remarks**

This book is certainly not only a masterwork, but also very apt in view of the global security challenges of which Plateau State has had its fair share and is in dire need of a permanent solution. The strength of the book lies in its analysis of the various crises in the state. He gives accounts by eye witnesses from both sides involved in the crisis, as co-chairman of the state Inter-Religious Council, the leader of all Catholics on the Plateau as well as the Chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) he was privileged to get first-hand information from both parties at the scene of each crisis. Besides giving the causes of the crises in Plateau State, the author also proffered solutions to the various crises, such as government implementing reports of the various panels of inquiry, providing religious and traditional leaders with modern communication gadgets, provision of skills acquisition centres to empower the youths and religious leaders preaching religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence. The author's view that most times the crises are caused by economic and political factors but get labelled as religious crises has been corroborated by many writes. A case in point is:

Colonialism altered the patterns of trade and politics in the area by opening up the area to immigrant traders. This new commercial class dominated trade and politics in the area throughout the colonial period, while the indigenes remained basically farmers and marginalized by the colonial political economy. Consequently, this created serious conflict between the indigenes and the Hausa-Fulani settlers. It is this hostile ethnic religious relation that have given rise to bloody ethnic and religious conflicts, which engulfed Plateau State from September 9<sup>th</sup> 2001 to 2004.<sup>1</sup>

This however, is a departure from the work of early writers on conflict in Nigeria who opined that the conflicts in most parts of Nigeria were caused by religion. An example is the Kafanchan disturbances of March 1987, which started as a result of a disagreement between Christian and Muslim students at College of Education Kafanchan and spread to other parts of Kaduna state.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, the book has shown that religion has been used to bring healing to crises victims and enhance peaceful co-existence and promote development as agreed by other scholars:

From our experience of ethno-religious conflicts in the middle belt, religion can be a destructive and a negative force towards inter-religious and ethnic relation... it can be a strong means of social change. Religion can also be a vehicle for development. For

example, the Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) had to intervene in the Ron-Mwaghavul (Bokkos-Mangu) conflict in an area where 95% members of its church came from the two ethnic groups...<sup>3</sup>

The book has tremendously improved the peace process in Plateau state as reprisal attacks have gradually simmered down since the public presentation of this book in Jos, a thing that was impossible prior to this time. Despite the strengths of the book, it has limitations which will be pointed out for correction before reproducing more copies in future. It suffers typographical errors on page **22**, third paragraph, line eight the word easily has been written as two words 'ea sily'. On page **74**, the last line reads 'the destruction of some our churches' instead of the destruction of some of our churches. The word 'of' was omitted. On page **83**, the second line of the sub-heading the word Fidelis in St. Fidelis Catholic Church is wrongly typed as 'Fedelis'. On page **181**, last paragraph line seventeen; the year 2004 is typed as '2404'. Apart from these typographical errors, the book is a wonderful contribution to the peace process in Plateau State, It has shown that with sincere efforts, dialogue and provision of employment, peace is achievable but government needs to be pro-active to sustain the peace or it will relapse into crisis.

## NOTES

1. Z.D. Goshit, "Economic, Politics and Ethno – Religious Relations in Jos Plateau Area During the Colonial Period (1900-1960)" in: O. Akinwumi, O. Okpeh and J. Gwamna (eds) *Inter – Group Relations in Nigeria During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*. Makurdi, Aboki Publishers, 2006. p.487
2. J.O. Ayodele and F.O. Onu, "Democracy and Ethnic Conflicts in Contemporary Nigeria" in: O. Akinwumi, O. Okpeh and J. Gwamna (Eds) *Inter –Group Relations in Nigeria During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>...* p 648.
3. J. Gwamna, "Religion and Ethnic Relations in the Middle-Belt Area of Nigeria" in O. Akinwunmi ,O. Okpeh and J. Gwamna (eds) *Inter-Group Relations in Nigeria During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> ...* p.602

## References

1. Shedrack G. B. (2008) (Ed) *Causes and Effects of Conflicts in Southern Zone of Plateau State Nigeria*. Ibadan, John Archers Ltd.
2. Akunwunmi O., Okpeh O. And Gwamna J (2006) (Eds) *Inter-Group Relations in Nigeria During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*. Makurdi, Aboki Publishers.
3. Kukah M.H. (2011) *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria*. Ibadan, Spectrum Books Limited

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