The Roles of the Church in Peace Building in Nigeria

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Abstract

The Nigerian nation since her independence has been plagued with myriads of ethnoreligious conflicts, crises, interreligious disharmony, tribal and cultural discrimination, insurgency and many other ills. The increase in these vices in the Nigerian society has not only resulted to senseless killings of innocent citizens and destruction of Nigerians hard earned properties and investments it has also caused an upsurge in poverty, insecurity, armed robbery, ruthless crimes, and displacement of people from their mother lands. Also, it has resonated several agitations calling for restructuring and separation of the Nigerian nation. The Nigerian government in a bid to stem these vices to ensure peace and tranquillity in the Nigerian nation has consistently employed the services

of the military and paramilitary agencies to enforce peace. However, their efforts seem to be to no avail as peace is almost elusive in the Nigerian six geo-political zones. Against this backdrop, this paper examines the roles of the Church in peace building in Nigeria. The paper seeks to answer the following questions: What is peace building? What are the best peace building approaches that could be used to restore peace in the Nigerian society? How can the Church contribute to peace building in the Nigerian society? The paper employs the descriptive, theological and phenomenological methods and argues that the Church could enhance peace building by promoting social justice, fairness and equity in the Nigerian clime and that Church leaders must eschew provocative utterances but should rather teach their devotees the basic ethos of their religious doctrines and belief and ensure they live by them.

Keywords: Church, Ethnoreligious conflicts, Ecology, Nigeria, Peace building,

Introduction

The Nigerian nation is made up of people from different socio-ethnic, religious and political backgrounds. The diverse nature of the Nigerian society qualifies it as a heterogeneous society. In the past five decades, several ethnoreligious conflicts have ensured in the Nigerian nation. Historically, some of the ethnoreligious conflicts and crisis in the Nigerian clime include "The Maitatsine riot of 1980, Maiduguru, Kaduna, Yola, Sabon-gari Kano, Gombe riot of 1984 and Kafanchan, Zango Kataf, Zaria, Futua interreligious conflict of 1987" (Adega and Ipilakwagh, 2014 p.262). Others are the interreligious conflict which occurred between Muslims and Christians over the Christians symbol of the risen Christ in the chapel of resurrection at the University of Ibadan in May 1986, the Katsina crisis of 1999, Shariah crisis of 1999-2000 in Zamfara with its spread to the eastern part of Nigeria, the Plateau crisis of September 2001, May 2004, the Jos crisis of 2008-2009, Miss world pageant crisis of 2002, the emergence of Boko Haram insurgency since 2009 and the middle belt massacre. Similarly, the Odi crisis of 1999, Ogoni crisis of 1993, Nkpor massacre in 2016, Obigbo massacre in 2020, Afara Ibeku massacre in 2017, Ngwa high school massacre in 2016 and many more are all forms of ethnoreligious conflicts and crisis that are confirmed in the Nigerian space between adherents of the major religions (Islam and Christianity) practiced in the Nigerian society. The conflicts stated above have not only retarded the

growth of the Nigerian nation but have also disrupted peace, destabilized mutual harmony, resonated hunger, poverty, lack of security and stability. Moreover, these have led to sudden death of many innocent citizens of the public, destruction of schools, hospitals, displacement of family members, civil unrest, extinction of plants and animal species, destruction of the ecological habitats among others (Amadi-Nche and Nwashili, 2022).

Interestingly, the Nigerian government in a bid to maintain peace in conflict ridden areas within the Nigerian federation as practised in the international community have frequently employed the services of joint military and paramilitary agencies, however historical discoveries have it that rather than ensure peace and order in crisis ridden areas, more lives than estimated tend to have been lost in the Nigerian clime all to the detriment of the people and their land. Consequently, this paper centres on the roles of the Church in peace building in Nigeria. This is to forestall further ethno religious crisis with its myriads of effects. The questions addressed in this paper are: what is peace building? What are the causes of ethnoreligious conflicts and crisis in the Nigerian society? What is the best peace building approach that could be used to restore peace in the Nigerian society? Moreover, how can the Christian religion through the Church contribute to peace building in the Nigerian society? This is the thrust of this paper.

Conceptualising Peace Building

Inyom (2013) remarks that peace building is a process or means in which programmes are devised to address the causes of conflict and the grievances of the past and to promote long term stability, justice, liberty development and to ensure lasting peace. As reflected by Francis (2009), "it is about the attempts to overcome the structural, relational and cultural contradictions which lie at the root of conflict in order to underpin the processes of peace making and peace keeping" (p. 29). Nwobueze (2022) notes that peace building is also a viable process of inhibiting internal menaces to human security from causing lingering violent conflict by addressing the root cause of conflict in the society. Elizabeth Porter (as cited by Benjamin, 2019) asserts that peacebuilding involves all processes that builds positive relationship, heal wounds, reconciles hostile differences, restores esteem, respect rights, meets basic needs, enhances equality, instils feelings of security,

empowers moral agency and democratic participation, inclusiveness and promotion of justice. Peace building on the other hand refers to a range of activities, processes, and strategies aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation, or recurrence of conflicts and promoting sustainable peace in societies affected by violence or political unrest. It involves addressing the root causes of conflicts, facilitating reconciliation, and fostering social, economic, and political transformations to create conditions for lasting peace. Interestingly, peacebuilding goes beyond simply ending violent conflicts or establishing ceasefires. It focuses on addressing the underlying factors that contribute to conflicts, such as social inequalities, political grievances, economic disparities, cultural divisions, and historical injustices. The goal is to build a society where individuals and communities can coexist peacefully, enjoy their rights and freedoms, and resolve disputes through nonviolent methods (United Nations Peace Building Fund).

Relatedly, peace building centres on restoring peace in a conflicting situation by concentrating on the cause of the conflict with a view to restoring lasting peace. The Nigerian society has experienced and is still experiencing chequered history in relation to peace in almost the whole federation as previously stated and the government of the time seems not to be proactive or active in maintaining and sustaining peace and peacebuilding. Thus, how the Christian religion through the Church can assist the government to foster peace building in the Nigerian clime is the burden in which this paper seeks to unravel. However, the causes and effects of ethno religious conflicts in the Nigerian society is the concern of the next section.

Causes of Ethno Religious Conflicts in Nigeria

Poor Secular Leadership

Leadership is very important for the survival of any existing society or organization. It occupies a very unique position in every society, organization or community. A society or an organization without leadership is like sheep without a shepherd and in a society or organization where there is poor leadership, there is bound to be confusion, disorderliness and lawlessness. Thus, the responsibility of every responsible government is to provide proper leadership and make provision for basic amenities such as electricity, good roads, hospitals, schools, potable drinking water, employment opportunities and security of lives and

properties of its citizens and also creating enabling environment which will attracts and sustains socio-economic, religious, political, tourist activities among others. However, the myriads of malevolent activities prevailing in the Nigerian society such as political crisis, ethno-religious conflicts, incessant agitations for independence, economic sabotage and other societal vices such as kidnaping, ritual killings, drug trafficking, sexual abuse, armed robbery, oil bunkering and many others suggest the government inability to meet its task (Amadi-Nche, 2020).

Similarly, in addition to providing proper leadership, the duty of government is to protect the fundamental human rights and liberties of its citizens. These include freedom of thought, religion, and freedom of movement, association and expression. However, when secular leaders fail to exercise their statutory duty of providing adequate leadership, protecting life and property and guaranteeing religious freedom and liberty, they inadvertently enable fanatically vulnerable religious groups and individuals to capitalize on the situation and perpetuate mayhem. This is more so when the government show interest and prejudiced support for a particular religious belief system, without balanced neutrality in the religious tradition of its citizens (Iheanacho, 2015).

Therefore, the poor secular leadership system experienced in the Nigerian pluralistic society has necessitated a crescendo in the previously enumerated mayhems and other terrorist attacks such as the Boko Haram in the Northern part of Nigeria, Militancy in the South-South and Fulani-Herdsmen in the middle belt. The vacuum created by the poor secular leadership has enabled some religious bigot to exploit their followers by encouraging them to take laws into their hands, killing innocent citizens and worshippers and destroying hard earned investments and resources without regrets or remorse. Jegede (2020) notes that the cause of conflicts in the Nigerian clime is that most minority groups have remained perpetually minorities, while the majority groups are permanently majority, a trend which has a grave consequence for inter-ethnic and religious relations among the different ethnic and religious identities in the Nigerian nation. Thus, the incentive for cooperation, consensus, and compromise have been undermined thereby posing an immense challenge for the mission of peace building as different ethnic groups are forced to co-exist in an atmosphere of mutual distrust, apathy and suspicion. Yahaya (2022) adds that the failure of the Nigerian politicians to

enact good governments, promote national integration and foster good economic progress through thoughtful and pronounced policies has resulted in massive unemployment. This has in turn led to the rise of communal, ethnic and religious conflicts that are characteristics of the Nigerian politics.

The inability of government to provide the needed basic amenities to the citizens, especially when the natural resources in such area are daily explored, exploited, processed and used to develop other parts of the country, is another factor responsible for ethno religious crisis in the Nigerian society. In other words, inadequate control and distribution of the nation's resources is a major cause of ethno religious conflict in the Nigerian clime. A case at hand to buttress this point is the Odi and Ogoni crisis of 1993 and 1999 in the Niger Delta regions respectively. The poor/ bad secular leadership of the then military and now democratic governments, perversion of truth, equity, justice and fairness towards the Odi and Ogoni people, their resources and lands resonated parallel government in the southern part of Nigeria. More so, groups like the Niger Delta Volunteer Forum, Ijaw Youth Congress, and Movement for the survival of the Ogoni people (MOSSOP) and others sprang up, all geared towards emancipation of the people from poverty, marginalization, modern slavery and a call for proper administration of the rule of law and justice among others.

Biased Spiritual Leadership

This is one of the strongest causes of ethno religious conflict in Nigeria, thus leading to religious fanaticism. Iwe (2000) remarked that a deficient and inadequate, ignorant, prejudiced and unenlightened religious leadership is invariably the most prolific facilitator of religious fanaticism. He added that such poor religious leadership is often too conservative and too theologically and socially impotent to be able to reconcile and adapt its creed and practice with the legitimate imperatives and values of modern times. Religious leaders can inspire their adherents to practice their faith beyond limits, thus enabling ethnoreligious conflicts. This could be as a result of poor theological formation and interpretation of the scriptures or unguarded and sentimental religious utterances. The inter-religious conflict which occurred in May 1986, when the Muslims clashed against the Christians over the Christians symbol of the Risen Christ in the Chapel of Resurrection at the University of Ibadan and the Maitasine religious killings of the

1980s (though an intra-religious conflict) in Kano which ensured serious religious outbreaks between the Muslims and Christians in Kafanchan in Southern Kaduna State in a border area between the two religions is a clear case of biased spiritual leadership (Imaekhai, 2010). In addition to this, the romance of some church leaders (even Muslim cleric) with the government of the time and their inability to speak against injustice, marginalization, nepotism, tribal sentiment, corruption and other vices perpetuated by the government officials in modern times is a contributory factor to ethno religious conflict in Nigeria.

Effects of Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria

The effects of ethno-religious conflict in the Nigerian nation are colossal and it affects almost every facet of the nation's life. Ethno religious conflicts produce insecurity, discrimination, mutual distrust and slow down socio-economic, religious, political, tourist and educational development and activities. Ethno religious conflicts breed unjustifiable killings of people and destruction of hard-earned investments and properties. It leads to destruction of governmental projects and halt every meaningful activity which would have added value to the lives of people and their land. Yahaya (2022) remarks that religious conflicts in Nigeria have left its effect on investment options in crisis ridden areas. He notes that political instability, arising from the insecurity and uncertainty that pervades the crisis ridden area does not inspire the trust of foreign investors and thereby deprives the Nigerian nation of the economic gains. He further avers that due to conflicts in the Nigerian clime, the enterprising Southerners who had established thriving businesses in the troubled areas in the North have relocated to other safer places in other to make a living. Apart from these, conflicts severe relationship as communities which once co-existed peacefully result to treating each other with disdain, mistrust and latent or open aggression.

Adega and Ipilakwagh (2014) add that ethno religious conflicts bring about varying degrees of havoc to political, psychological and economic activities in the Nigerian spheres. Citing the work of Okpara, he remarked that ethno religious conflicts are used to destroy, injure, thwart, and blind fold the opponent mind. He maintains that as a result of ethno religious conflicts, communities are dispersed, families displaced, properties destroyed and positive plans are truncated. He adds that ethno religious conflicts breeds insecurity of lives and properties, discourages

local and foreign investors to come and do business in the Nigerian space thus leading to waste of economic and natural endowment. Ethno religious conflicts in Nigeria taints the image of Nigeria and Nigerians in the international community as the country and its citizens are viewed with a terrorist lens and often times citizens desiring to travel to certain countries are denied entry to such countries of their choice because their nation has been placed on the international watch list of terrorism. Jegede (2020) affirming the negative function of ethno-religious conflicts adds that conflicts create tension, and insecurity as lives and hard-earned properties are lost during ethno-religious conflicts. He maintains that conflicts on religious grounds have smeared the relationship between Christians and Muslims due to intolerance, bigotry, fundamentalism, poverty, unemployment among others. He further states that while death casualties are often remembered with pains and sorrow, so many homes losses their bread winners; institutions loss their specialists, factories, companies, hospitals, schools and other amenities are burnt or closed down as a result of ethno-religious conflicts. Likewise, institutions of learning are closed down, school facilities destroyed, abduction of school pupils and children with its psychological effects are often times ensured. This is in addition to improved armed robbery within vicinity.

Biblical Principles for Peace and Peace Building

The bible emphasizes the need for peace and processes which bring about peace are highly commended in the scriptures. Peace as emphasized in the Holy Scriptures connotes wholeness, soundness and completeness. It also means cessation from war and anything working towards safety, welfare and happiness is included in the concept of peace. In addition, peace has reference to health, prosperity, wellbeing as well as quiet from war (Kuden, 2014). The concept of peace and peace building are dominant in the Old Testament scriptures and in the teachings of Jesus and the early apostles. Cosmos consenting to this view remarks that a quick search through the Bible would reveal that the whole business of peace building runs through the Old and New Testament teachings coded in concepts such as love, justice, tolerance, integrity, forgiveness compassion, peace treaties, humility or weakness and benevolence (Amadi-Nche and Nwoko, 2023).

Consequently, from the Old Testament perspective, the account of the discourse between Abigail, David and Nabal in 1 Samuel 25; David and Shimei in 2 Samuel

16:5-14; 19:16-23 and the four Good Samaritans in the reign of King Pelah of Israel in 2 Chronicle 28:8-15 are instances of peace building, non-violence and engagement in peace making (Wule, 2020). Likewise, the account of Genesis 13:7-12 is a concrete expression of peace building by Abraham through selfless dialogue, negotiation, servant leadership, love and relegation of his rights. The scripture reveals that with the increase in the livestock of Abraham and that of Lot his nephew during their journey in the land of Canaan and the need for more harvest fields and water resources to feed and water their flock, in addition to the flock of the local resident herdsmen, conflict arose between Abram herdsmen and Lots herdsmen. Amazingly, the same scripture gives insight of how Abraham used resource control and restructuring to resolve the strife between his herdsmen and that of Lot his nephew. The resolution through resource control led to separation of both parties and the separation between Abraham and Lot laid to rest the strife between Abram herdsmen and those of Lot (Nwazonobi, 2022).

As may be expected in a gerontocratic organization, the conflict situation made Abraham to do something without delay to remedy the conflict. Abraham being the eldest as well as the head of the team, proposed the solution to the problem between his herdsmen and Lots herdsmen. His proposal could be seen in his unwillingness to quarrel with his nephew, his willingness to negotiate with his brother and his openness and willingness of his brother to choose suitable place for himself and his herdsmen from the land apportion (Adedeye, 2019). Abraham's approach was not only constructive that the conflict could be resolved in a friendly atmosphere, but also his attitude showed his responsibility in times of trouble and difficulties. Most interpreters of the Bible assert here of Abraham's nobility and readiness for a peaceful settlement. The quarrel between the herdsmen's threatened the existence of the two groups. It is a question of living space and sustenance. Abraham does not make his proposal as an individual; rather he is responsible for his family and the people. He comes to a decision in view of the life and well-being of his group. In order to avoid at all cost a violent outcome of the quarrel, because this would not accord with Abraham's responsibility for his kinsmen, he made the proposal, showing his fatherly role. When something goes amiss or against the prescribed plan, the elder from the group or family proffers solution (Adedeye, 2019). This was succinctly exemplified in the action or proposal of Abraham. The account of genesis recounts:

> So Abram said to Lot, please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren. Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or if you go to the right, then I will go to the left (13:8-9).

Jesus in his sermon on the mount remarks "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:9). The Greek word *eirene* is the most preferred word for peace in the New Testament and it has the equivalent of the Hebrew word Shalom. Peace in the Hebrew translation conveys the idea of everything which makes for a man's highest good and happiness. The sense of the expression "blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall see God" as used by Jesus Christ in the sermon on the mount is that the person who makes peace is involved on the task which God Himself, the author of peace is doing and so the reward is that such persons will become the *huioi* that is sons of God. In other words, the person who makes peace with God, himself and his neighbours are carrying out the divine purpose of God, leaving out the virtue and attribute of God as the God of peace. Thus, such persons stand to be called the sons of God. God is a God of peace and so all who tend to follow Him must leave a life of peace with themselves, their neighbours and God. They must resolve to doing the very act of God always in order to be called His sons (2 Corinthians 13:11; Romans 15:33; Hebrews 13:20).

Barclay (2006) affirming this thought asserts that the person who unites men is carrying out the divine plans of God, while the man who divides men and those who ferment troubles in the church, society and among themselves are doing the direct opposite of the will of God. They are involved in doing the work of the devil and cannot be called sons of God. Oladoye and Adeola (2022) note that Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount as expressed in Matthew 5:9 calls on Christians to be keenly involved in making peace among aggressive people. They maintain that the peace being referred to here is not living to attain personal peace and comfort or avoiding any sort of conflict only but living to help resolve conflict and make peace wherever there is hostility within their neighbourhood, society, church, and even within oneself.

Apostle Paul in his epistle to the church at Rome writes that "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18). He further writes in his second epistle to Timothy "Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour" (1 Timothy 2:1-4). Also, the epistle to the Hebrews writes "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord" (12:14) and the Petrine text remarks "Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it" (3:11). These scriptures emphasize the need for peace building and to maintain peace at all times especially among people of every race, religion, sex etc. It further underscores that God's children must embrace peace and work towards all that tend to foster peace and peace building. It also shows that the Bible encourages peace and peace building. Peace and peace building as presented in this biblical text is not optional but mandatory as it reveals the nature of God and Christians must constantly live out such nature and attribute.

The Role of the Church in Peace Building

Having remarked that the Nigerian government has failed in providing proper leadership and security which is her cardinal responsibility to her citizens, the question now is how can the church contribute to peace building in Nigeria? The church can foster peace building in the Nigerian clime by placing emphasis on Servant-Leadership as against the autocratic and egocentric leadership which has dominated the Nigerian society thus bringing about ethno-religious conflicts. This does not infer that the church is the problem of the Nigerian nation. Servant-leadership refers to leaders who dedicate themselves to service and meet the needs of the people that they govern (Atere, 2012). The purpose of servant leaders is not to dominate, marginalize, defraud, work against the citizen's hopes and aspirations or infringe on the rights of their followers as seen in the contemporary times but to serve the masses. Servant-leadership centres on the people and not the leaders. Servant-leadership is people oriented and not selfish. As exemplified by Abraham (Gen. 13) and Jesus Christ, the Nigerian socio-political and ecclesiastical spheres would have been better if this leadership style is imbibed by those who occupy various leadership positions from the federal to the grassroots whether they are Christians or Muslims. In other words, servant- leadership refers

to the philosophy of leadership that puts serving others as the ultimate priority. Importantly, true leadership is basically for the good of the followers and not for the betterment of the leaders but the reverse is the case in the Nigerian clime. Therefore, if the church emphasizes this style of leadership and applies same in the religious circle, this will transcend to their adherents who occupy leadership positions in the society and position of trust in government thus, vices such as greed, avarice, selfishness, looting, corruption and other vices which have enabled insecurity in the Nigerian nation, impinging on national development will be minimized completely. As rightly observed, when there is the right kind of leadership, insecurity and other societal vices are bound to diminish and peace sustained.

In a similar line of thought, the church and her leaders in promoting peace building, sustaining peace in the Nigerian sphere must be advocates of justice, fairness and equity. The Church and her leaders must not stand aloof but speak against injustice, oppression, apartheid, victimization, ethnicity, nepotism, sectionalism and denial of rights and privileges melted on its citizens by those who occupy leadership positions. The church and her leaders in promoting peace building and to sustain peace must stand alongside the oppressed, marginalized, care for the poor, weak, orphans and hungry and those discriminated against thus giving them a sense of belonging (Matthew 25:31-46). When there is fairness, justice and equity for all in the Nigerian society, there will be little or no avenue for conflict, protest or bloodshed in the Nigerian clime but peace will be ensured and sustained. Thus, the marginalization of the oil producing communities in the Niger Delta regions, the killings of human beings and destruction of hard earned properties by insurgents, the current economic down turn and political instability in Nigerian such as the one in Rivers State between the former Governor and now minister of the federal capital territory E.N. Wike and the current Governor S.J. Fubara which culminated in a failed attempt to impeach the sitting governor by the Rivers State house of Assembly led by Martin's Ameawhule, the arbitrary disengagement of over one thousand five hundred staff gainfully employed at the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Rumuolumeni after nine months of dedicated services, brain and financial drain without salaries, the lopsided appointments and recruitment exercises conspicuously observed within the federal and state civil service commissions in the present and past military and

democratic government and other socio-ethical, religious and political upheaval calls for the intervention of church leaders to speak and caution the leadership of the time in other to forestall protest, conflict, anarchy. Church leaders must not be complacent neither should they dine with leaders who take advantage of their citizens' rights but they are called to be a voice to the voiceless, act as defence to the defenceless.

Following this line of thought, Adekunle O. Dada (2019) remarks that in a bid to promote peace building and sustain peace in the Nigerian clime, a transformed, prophetic and holistic message of the church leaders is inevitable. A transformed message as noted by Dada is Christocentric and devoid of any kind of sentiment and inciting utterances which is capable of causing mayhem. He notes that the Christo-centric messages of the church leaders must never be sacrificed on the altar of personal gains. He insists that the true messages must be preached and not watered down with the intention of making gains from the members or getting rich quick. He sternly avers that most socio-economic and political crisis involving corruption, ethnocentrism, bribery, conflict, violence and other vices, as witnessed in the Nigerian society and in the contemporary churches would have been reduced considerably if not completely eradicated, if church leaders in the recent times adhered to the true messages and delivered same as required by them without mixing words or attempting to change the message. Accordingly, in being prophetic, as exemplified by Old Testament prophets such as Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Nathan, Isaiah, Amos among others, church leaders must be ready to condemn injustice in the society particularly those melted on the poor and the oppressed. Church leaders must seek to address the plight of the masses, empathising with the poor, the hungry, the vulnerable and the dispossessed. This can be done effectively and efficiently by consciously speaking the truth to the powerful elites that promote and carry out the culture of poverty in the society through the mismanagement of resources endowed in the Nigerian clime, in this way peace could be ensured in the Nigerian society.

Similarly, the church and her leaders in a bid to promote peace building in the Nigerian society must call on all stake holders in the Nigerian society to eschew inciting utterances, promote disciplines and tolerance among religious sects. Religious bodies must carefully teach their religious adherents their basic religious

beliefs; this is in addition to the ethos and beliefs of other religious organizations. By so doing, peace would be achieved in the Nigerian society and conflict averted. This assertion is premised on the fact that most ethno religious conflict in the global community (Nigeria inclusive) is as a result of inciting statements made by leaders of one religious' body towards another. Others may be as a result of a misconceived ideology or theology of other people's religious belief and tradition among others. Thus, a proper understanding of other people's belief, theology and religious tradition will go a long way in fostering peace building in the Nigerian society. More so, a balanced theological training by religious institutions is required for a proper dissimilation of the right messages and to forestall the spread of heretical teachings capable of inciting religious adherents against other religious faithful (Amadi-Nche, 2020).

Conclusion

This paper centred on how the Church could contribute to peace building in Nigeria society. Having undertaken a historical reflection on ethno religious conflicts in the Nigerian society, their causes and effects on the people and their land and the biblical perspective on peace and peace building, the paper argued that the Church could enhance peace building by teaching and preaching peace in their religious centres, advocating for servant leadership as against autocratic leadership. Also, the church could promote peace and peace building by being prophetic and transformative in their messages. The paper insists that true messages should not be sacrificed on the altar of personal gratification. Similarly, the paper maintains that the church could foster peace building in the Nigerian society by promoting social justice, truth, fairness and equity in the Nigerian clime and by calling on all stake holders in the Nigerian society to eschew provocative utterances, religious bigotry, and fanaticism but be part in providing corporate social amenities which will help to ameliorate the plight of the masses. Besides, the church in a bid to promote peace and peace building in the Nigerian sphere must be ready to confront, correct and rebuke the leadership of the present Nigerian government especially when they are out to malign and oppress the masses through the implementation of unrealistic policies and laws, detrimental to the people and their land. The church must stand with the weak, the poor, vulnerable and advocate for an all-inclusive government in the leadership of the people to achieve peace and peace building in the Nigerian space.

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