

RE-EDUCATION OF RELIGIOUS CULTURE: A PANACEA TO COUNTER TERRORISM AND INSURGENCY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The great monster trying to destroy Nigeria as a nation is terrorism and insurgency. The problem is that one of the three religions in Nigeria, that is, African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam, feel that they are the only religion that possess all the truth about God, and that everybody must accept it or die. With culture area approach, it was discovered that religion and culture form the mould from which every human being develop, and every religion has a particular culture from which it grew. Ipso facto, culture has great influence on the tenets of the religion that grew from it. For instance, Africa Traditional Religion is highly influenced by the culture of the particular area where it is practiced. Both Christianity and Islam were influenced by the culture of Asian people in the Middle East. The culture of the Middle East tolerates terrorism and insurgency, and these are found in these religions that emanated from there. Jesus Christ, however, re-educated Christianity that he expunged terrorism and insurgency from it. It was realized that most terrorist attacks and insurgency in Nigeria were caused by some Islamic groups. The re-education of Islamic culture will solve these problems.

Key words: Education, Religion, Culture, Panacea, Terrorism, Insurgency.

Introduction

Every human being is by nature a being astride of two worlds: the physical and spiritual world. These produce the matrix of human behaviour and action. The physical and spiritual natures of man form the seed from which the individual person germinates and becomes the offspring of the mother tree which is the society. It is on this note that Chidili (2005) rightly asserts that “culture and religion form the matrix of our behaviour and sees religion and culture as inextricably so intertwined that neither of them could do without the other”. In that case it appears that to behave properly in a given society means expressing the dictates of religio-cultural understanding of that society (p. 35).

As a result, a culture that accommodates violence also influences its religious concepts such that religio-cultural heritage will include terrorism as one of its values. The reason is that religion results from man's spontaneous awareness of a transcendental superior being and his total dependence on this transcendental being and responds to this consciousness by maintaining some cordiality between himself, his fellow human beings and the super-sensible world.

As man struggles to proffer solutions to the problems surrounding his existence, his finite nature becomes more pronounced. To that effect, Ekwealor (2015) aptly opines that,

The right understanding of religion affords man the wisdom that his powers to attain happiness are limited as a finite being. This sense

of insufficiency and finitude compels man to reach out to transcendence in a manner or manners culminating in an attitude of total dependence on a transcendent reality manifested through belief, faith-practice and worship (p. 323).

Culture on the other hand refers to the total way of life of a given society. This, according to Arinze (2001), includes “festival, languages, arts, greeting, dancing and music, food/feedings, discipline, body decorations by women, titles, shelter, agriculture-animal husbandry, horticulture and crops production” (p. 98).

A society that has its own culture and religion produces human beings that have all it takes to belong to that society. A religious culture in this context refers to the culture in which a religion is born. Since culture is man-made, and religion is man's response to the supernatural, the primogeniture of a particular society responded to mature according to their conception of the universe.

Since religion and culture mould and inculcate in a person this world view and philosophy of life, this work therefore tries to show that religion and the culture in which it is founded can contribute immensely to terrorism in African and in the world in general and that they can also contribute to counter insurgency.

Definition of Key Concepts

Keywords include: education, religion, culture, panacea, terrorism, and insurgency.

- **Education**

According to the new websters dictionary of English language (1994), education is defined as “instruction or training by which people (generally young) learn to develop and use their mental, moral and physical powers. A gaining of experience either improving or harmful” (p. 298).

However, Azubuikwe (2012) observes that the definition of education does not enjoy the same consensus that it enjoys as an indispensable instrument for human and national development. The reason is that scholars in their different areas of specialization proffer the definition of education to suit their field. He, therefore, cited Cookey (1972) who defines education in everyday sense to mean:

The formal training that is given in schools and institutions; that is, the acquisition of the ability to read and write and calculate. It could also mean the specialized training that is given on the job to enable people acquire skills in certain fields. In the wider sense, education could mean the training of the entire person to enable him not only to be able to read, write and calculate or to be

proficient in a given job, but also to enable him live reasonably in the society (p. 2).

- **Religion**

Arinze (2001) avers that Idowu defines religion as, Resulting from man's spontaneous awareness of, and spontaneous relation to his immediate awareness of a living power “wholly other” and infinitely greater than himself, a power mysterious becomes unseen, yet present and urgent reality, seeking to bring man into communion with himself (p. 5-6).

- **Culture**

From the anthropological perspective, Okoli (2015) refers to culture as “the sum total of the attainments and activities of any specific periods, race, or a people including their implements, handicrafts, agriculture, economics, music, arts, religious beliefs, traditions, language and story” (p. 232-233).

- **Panacea**

According to Hornby (2000), panacea means “something that will solve all problems of a particular situation” (p. 842).

- **Terrorism**

Hornby (2000) defines terrorism as the “use of violent action in order to achieve political aims or to force a government to act” (p. 1236).

- **Insurgency**

This, according to Hornby (2000), is “an attempt to take control of a country by force” (p. 623).

Major Religions in Nigeria

There are three main religions in Nigeria. They are: African traditional religion, Christianity, and Islam. African traditional religion is not violent or terroristic because African culture has amiable values which include hospitality, accommodation and acceptance of strangers, solidarity and community life. Hence, Pope John Paul II (1995) having toured many countries in Africa avers “African culture has acute sense of solidarity and community life. In Africa, it is unthinkable to celebrate a feast without the participation of the whole village. Indeed, community life in African societies expresses the extended family” (p. 5). He wholeheartedly expresses his wish and says, “It is my ardent hope and prayer that Africa will always preserve this priceless cultural heritage and never succumb to the temptation of individualism which is so alien to its best tradition” (p. 5). As a result, terrorism and insurgency has no place in African traditional religious society.

Christianity was born within Jewish culture. Jewish culture and their religion are so intertwined that they are almost inseparable.

Both are contained in the biblical books of Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy as the Law of Moses. Corcoran (1966) states that,

Because they were a holy nation each individual person had to contribute to the holiness of the nation; and so laws were needed not only for the whole nation as a nation to observe, but also laws for each individual member of the nation, hence the need for rules controlling behaviours among themselves (p. 78).

The Jews at that time were under theocratic rule so with divine approval, Moses made the laws and gave to the Israelites in the name of God and said;

“Behold I have given you ordinances as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land which you are entering to take possession of it. Observe them and put them into practice, for this will show your wisdom and prudence in the eyes of the people” (Deut 4:5-8).

Through the dynamism of culture the Jews picked some aspect of the cultures of the nations around them, even after their exile in Babylon 587-538 BC; they did not lose their religion and its

culture, though they lost the Hebrew language to Aramaic language. Hence Corcoran (1966) avers, “One thing the Jews brought from Babylon was the Aramaic language, which was similar to Hebrew. After the exile the Jews no longer spoke Hebrew. And so Aramaic was the language that Christ spoke” (p. 157).

The Jews, however, copied the terroristic acts of inversion, looting and insurgency which were very common culture in the Middle East. Judaism grew within this environment latter, Christianity emanated from Judaism. Both Christianity and Islam grew out of this culture in the Middle East.

The Role of Religious-Culture in Perpetuating Terrorism and Insurgency

The greatest danger threatening the existence of life in the world today is terrorism and insurgency. Incidentally, religion is the major source and causes of this danger. The Muslims are highly convinced that all revelations about God have been given to them alone and that these revelations are contained in the Quran. They look at all other religions including Christianity as unbelievers. They therefore see their mission as enforcers of God's will, to convert or destroy the unbelievers. This is the cause of terrorism and insurgency worldwide. Udoidem (2009) rightly opines that,

To Islamic purist, all other religions are either heretical or corrupt. There is no tolerance of any other view. He believes that it is Allah's will for all

societies to come under the Islamic flag and that Islamic law and religion may take control and undergird the whole of life for all peoples. For him it is only a doctrinally pure, non-corrupt Islamic nation that can please Allah. (p.155)

Christians on the other hand, strongly believe that Christ is the last and final revelation and at the same time, the saviour of the world. They hold tenaciously that Christianity is the true religion and so seek to convert all to Christianity so that they may be saved. After all, the holy Quran chapter 10 verse 94 says “If you are in doubt as to what we have revealed to you, ask those who read the bible before you, certainly the truth has come to you from your lord, therefore you should not be of the disputer”

The Christians also believe that God is merciful and willing to save all regardless of one's creed or race. These religious doctrinal contradictions have led the Muslims who feel that they have the monopoly of the truth to begin to act violently and terrorize people. They wish to Islamize the world or destroy it.

Some Terrorist Activities in Nigeria Caused By Religion

There are many terroristic activities in Nigeria caused by religion. For instance, during the constituent assembly of 1979, the Muslim students' society (MSS) pressed hard that the sharia be enshrined into the Nigerian constitution. As their arguments were

not taken, they resorted to threats, saying that if sharia is opposed, they put the entire nation into chaos. In April 1979, the protesters took to the streets in Zaria, Kaduna State carrying banners with inscriptions like “no sharia, no peace, no sharia, no constitution, no sharia, no Muslims, no Muslims, no Nigeria. Udoidem (2009) rightly observes that,

The interesting and significant aspects of the sharia crisis during the constituent assembly are that it introduced some new dimensions to religious conflicts in Nigeria. Unlike in the civil war, where religion was hiding under politics, with the sharia, politics was now hiding under religion. Also, with the sharia debate, religious conflicts now moved from level of cold war and war of words to the level of confrontation (p. 161).

During the Shagari administration, some radical Muslims felt that they would purify Islam by eliminating what was considered corrupt and unislamic. These include the collapse of moral base on which traditional Islamic society was founded, the Muslims who do not follow the letter of the law and the oppression of a group in the society known as the Talakawas. As a result, Alhaji Muhammadu Marwa who came to be known as Maitatsine organized the Kano crisis in 1980 which claimed the lives of many:

Christians and Muslims.

Since 1982 to this day there have been series of religious insurgences and terroristic activities in Nigeria. These include, the burning of churches in Kano in October 1982, on the 26th of that same October 1982 at Bulunkutu in Maiduguri, the insurgency claimed many lives and property of Muslims sects whom the Maitatsinians look upon as weak Muslims and non-Muslims, 27th February 1984 and on 29th April 1985 the Maitatsinians launched an offensive attack in Jimeta and Gombe respectively. In 1986 during Ibrahim Babangida's regime there were a lot of controversies over the attempted enrollment of Nigeria into the organization of Islamic conference (OIC). On the 6th of March, 1987, the Muslims attacked Christians at the College of Education Kafanchan. The insurgency spread to Kaduna, Zaria, Funtua, and Kano, homes, churches, business houses, hotels and people were set ablaze. The Ahmadu Bello University insurgency was in 1988.

The inter-religious conflict of Bauchi casted from 20th-22nd April 1991. The conflict spread like wild fire, leaving many heads rolling. As a matter of fact since after the Nigerian civil war there is no year that is free from terroristic activities and insurgency in Nigeria. Presently Boko-haram is menacing the whole country destroying lives and property, kidnapping, raping and terrorizing people in the name of religion. If care is not taken the menace of Boko-haram and the zeal for jihad may destroy Nigeria.

According to Udoiem (2009), "it would appear from the records of the religious riots that Muslims were always on the

offensive. But it must be mentioned that Muslims are often provoked into violent action by offensive preaching by some Christian evangelists. These brand of Christians are mainly from the new Christian Pentecostal movements” (p. 169).

It is noteworthy that the period of the emergence of the new Christian Pentecostal movements coincided with the period when Muslim-Christian confrontation became fierce. This seems to suggest that there is a direct link between fundamentalism, Pentecostalism, evangelistic movements and Muslim Christian conflicts. The identities of the churches that were burnt by Muslims during the Kano-October 1982 crisis seem to support this assumption. (p.179).

In fact, the Pentecostal fundamentalists are those group of Christians who have as their doctrines the opposition of the teachings of the mainstream Christian churches. Their message is spread through crusades, revivals and workshops. They usually fix their address system to face outside their church or to face another church or mosque to force anybody around the environment to hear them. The Muslim sharia law forbids Christians from public preaching in the predominantly Muslim environment. The Muslims resent them because they violate the law. The Pentecostal fundamentalist insistence on the public preaching, crusade and revivals in the Muslim dominated area are highly provocative to Muslims and leads to conflicts.

Some verses of the Bible and Quran that support Terrorism and Insurgency

In The Bible

The Bible says, anyone from the people of Israel or from among the aliens living in Israel who sacrifices any of his children for the Molech shall be put to death. The people of the land shall stone him (Lev. 20:2).

When Hagar was running away from Sarah, the angel of the lord stopped her and said to her,

Go back to your mistress and be a slave to her. I will give you so many descendants that no one will be able to count them. You are going to have a son and you will name him Ishmael. But your son will live like a wild donkey, he will be against everyone and everyone will be against him. He will live apart from all his relatives”. (Gen 16: 9-12).

Again, in the last words of Jacob he says, “Simeon and Levi are brothers, they use their weapons to commit violence for they kill men in anger, they crippled bulls for sport (Gen 49: 6-7).

Also, “the wicked man hides himself in the village waiting to murder innocent people, he spies on his victims; he waits in his

hiding place like a lion. He lies in wait for the poor, he seizes the poor in his trap and drags them away. The helpless victims lie crushed, falls into his power and are defeated” (Ps 10:8-10).

All these show acts of violence and insurgency in the culture of the place from where Christianity emerged. Jeremiah says, “I hear everybody whispering; terror is everywhere! So let's report him to the authorities. Even my close friends wait for my downfall perhaps he can be tricked they say, then we can catch him and get revenge” (Jer. 20: 10).

In the New Testament, sometimes, the Jews picked stones to throw at Jesus but he escaped. All these are acts of terrorism and insurgency.

In the Holy Quran

The Quran teaches that “when the sacred months have passed away, then slay the idolaters wherever you find them and take them captives and besiege them, and lie in wait for them in every ambush, then if they repent and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate, leave their way free to them, surely Allah is forgiving and merciful” (Quran chapter 9:5).

Again in chapter 9:29, it teaches, “fight those who do not believe in Allah nor in the later day, nor do they prohibit what Allah and his apostle prohibited, nor follow the religion of truth none of those who have been given the book (Bible) until they pay the tax in acknowledgment of superiority and they are a in state of subjection” (ch. 9:29).

Still on those who do not believe in Allah who are called the unbelievers, Quran says,

“Kill them wherever you find them. Drive them out from whence they drove you out, and persecution is severer than slaughter and do not fight with them in the sacred mosque until they fight with you in it, but if they do fight you, then slay them such is the recompense of an unbeliever” (surah 2:191).

There are many chapters and verses of the holy Quran which encourage terrorism and insurgency. And in the holy bible there are many instances that show that terrorism and insurgency have prominent place in the culture of the then Palestine where we have the cradle of Christianity.

Re-Education of Culture as a Means of Countering Terrorism and Insurgency

In as much as Christianity emerged from a society whose culture tolerates terrorism and insurgency the founder of Christianity Jesus Christ made frantic effort to re-educate Christian culture. Jesus Christ says,

“You have heard that people were told in the past, do not commit murder; anyone who does will be

brought to trial. But now I tell you whoever is angry with his brother will be brought to trial, whoever calls his brother, you-good-for nothing will be brought before the council and whoever calls his brother a worthless fool will be in danger of going to the fire of hell”. (Matt 5:21-22).

Jesus used such statements as, “in the past you were told.... But now I tell you ..., to re-educate Christian culture (Matt 5:27-28, 31-32). For example, he says, “You have heard that it was said, love your friends hate your enemies, but now I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt 5: 43-44, Lk 6:27-28, 32-36). About revenge, he says, ” You have heard that it was said an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but now I tell you...” (Matt 5:38-42, Lk 6:29-30). With this method he removed terrorism from Christian culture.

On the other hand, in as much as Quran has many verses, it also contains many verses that present Islam as a religion of peace. These peaceful verses can be used to re-educate the Islamic culture. Holy Quran 2:208 says “O you who believe enter submission one and all, and do not follow the footsteps of Shaitan, surely he is your open enemy”. Everybody supposed to have the freedom of worship for the Holy Quran says “There is no compulsion in religion. Truly, the right way has become clear, distinct from error

... (2:256). As a result there should be no violence or compulsion in countering people. The Muslim religious sects who rightly see terrorism and insurgency as evil should make effort to re-educate the culture of Islam just as Jesus Christ did to the culture of Christianity.

Conclusion

Almost all the terroristic activities and insurgency in Nigeria are in one way or the other connected with religion. For African traditional religion, African culture has so much influenced it that it has no room for terrorism and insurgency. Jesus Christ really re-educated Christian culture that terrorism and insurgency have no place in it. As for Islam, the Holy Quran contains verses that support terrorism and insurgency. The use of military might alone cannot help, the re-education of the culture in which the religion is founded, prayers, dialogue and change of heart can help curb terrorism and insurgency in Nigeria.

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