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REVIVAL OF RELIGIOUS MORAL VALUES AS A PANACEA FOR INSECURITY IN NIGERIA

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I. Introduction

The idea of writing this paper was conceived in view of the recurring decimal of insecurity in Nigeria coupled with the failure of all measures taken so far towards curbing it. One cannot but think that the faulty and precarious security system in the country is attributable to collapse of religious moral values. Therefore, this paper discusses religion and security issues from an ethical perspective. This becomes necessary because religion is a dominant factor in security discourse and the application of its moral values is expected to stem the tide of insecurity in a country populated by many religious people.

Our theoretical foundation is Divine Command Theory which, asserts that the standard of right and wrong is the will or law of God. It holds that an action or kind of action is right or wrong if it is commanded or forbidden by God. In

other words, what ultimately makes an action right or wrong is its being commanded or forbidden by God. This theory has its root in the world view of philosophers and scholars like Thomas Aquinas, Augustine, William of Ockham,¹ and Idowu.² The popular opinion held by them is that ethics is rooted in religious beliefs and that God is the absolute source of ethical values. It follows that the standard of morality is to be identified with God's law or commandment. The fact is that if religious people obey divine commandments, violation of moral values which could engender insecurity would have been avoided.

II. Interaction between morality and religion

As convincing as this argument is, many a scholar believes that morality is not dependent on religion. It follows that in their thinking, insecurity cannot be explained in term of religious immorality. Thus there are two divides, namely those who see morality and religion as interacting entities and those who argue for the autonomy of ethics.³ As noted above, Divine Command Theory depicts morality as a fruit of religion. The point is that God made man in his own image and gave him some qualities that are inherent in him. One of such is the sense of right and wrong, which is referred to as conscience or the law written on man's heart. The Yoruba people call it *Ifa aya* (the oracle of the heart) or *erikokan* (the witness of the heart). It cannot be disputed that Islam in its origin was not to an extent influenced by moral ideal of the ancient Arab and to all true Muslims; religion is a law which regulates human conduct. Karl Barth and Emile Brunner are affirmative that morality is ultimately derived from the divine will⁴. On the other side of the divide are those who debunk the foregoing claim. Their viewpoint is premised on morality being a product of man's rationality and what the society wants or forbids. They claim further that the attitudes of many religious people do not suggest that moral consciousness can accrue from religiosity. Supporting this, Omoregbe says that many people who profess no religious beliefs and belong to no religion live exemplary lives of moral standard while those who belong to various religions live immoral lives⁵. Apparently, in contemporary time, the rate at which religious centres are proliferating is inversely proportional to good conduct. However, in our opinion, religion has a significant role to play in respect of morality and that moral inclination on the part of all and sundry (especially religious people) is a panacea for insecurity in Nigeria.

III. Nature of Insecurity in Nigeria

The problem of insecurity in some parts of Nigeria is better imagined than experienced. This manifests in different ways and solution is not forthcoming. That lives are not safe in Nigeria is not an overstatement. Cases of armed robbery abound with attendant loss of precious lives; in some cases, security agents are helpless or they simply aid and abet crime. On several occasions, police men have shot innocent citizens on account of their refusal to give bribe. Activities of ethnic militia groups have crippled the security system. Though, these group claim to be fighting the injustice meted out to their people, they in some cases inflict hardship on defenceless people. There can be no accurate statistics of those who have died and property that have been destroyed as a result of attacks masterminded by the Odua People's Congress (OPC), Movement for the Actualisation of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Bakasi Boys, Egbesu Boys, and Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND)⁶.

Kidnapping has become a lucrative business in Nigeria. Perpetrators kidnap people and demand a huge amount of money as ransom from their family, failure to comply can lead to their being killed. Also the phenomenon of street urchins is a security risk. In the northern part of the country for instance, the Almajiris have continued to aggravate the security threat. According to a source, most of them migrate from Chad, Sudan, Niger Republic and Mali. They were separated from their parents very early in life. They grew up in very harsh environments and they are seen on streets, begging for alms. They have no means of livelihood and have plenty of idle time. Consequently, they are easily used as a breeding ground for criminals⁷. Associated with this are delinquent children in every part of the country who will no doubt develop into problematic adults. Many of them are drop outs and are not engaged in any vocation and the only way they think they can survive is to take to crime. Therefore, they are easily brainwashed and always available to be used to engage in dastardly acts after they might have been offered a paltry sum of money. Such vulnerable people are very likely not to be worried about the rippling effects of their actions on themselves, others and the society at large. Also, the political scene has not been insecurity-free as political thuggery and electoral violence are regular features. The first and second republics were truncated due to political violence while the post-election violence of 2011 almost culminated in the extinction of Nigeria as a country. There is no ambiguity in the claim that insecurity arising from violence is one of the reasons politics is understood as a dirty game.

On a sad note, religion has to a large extent contributed to insecurity in Nigeria. Despite the secular nature of the country, religious crises have continued unabated. This development has worsened the security situation. People can still recall the Maitasine riot of the 80, the Sharia controversy especially in Kaduna and Zamfara States and violent reactions to some publications against prophet Muhammed. The scenario in Plateau State is not amusing as the place has been in the web of ethno-religious crises for many years. It is pathetic that Jos, the state capital that was fondly referred to as the city of tourism is now derisively branded a city of pieces and terrorism⁸.

The most devastating of all is the Boko Haram phenomenon, which is dangling between religion and politics. Since it came to public domain in 2009, Boko Haram incursion has not stopped. It assumes new and more dangerous dimension almost on daily basis and it is apparent that all security measures taken so far are non-effectual. States like Borno and Yobe have become conquered territory. Is Boko Haram a religious or political movement? One cannot say with precision as their attacks are multi-faceted. If it is a religious movement, which religion does it uphold? Yes one can say that members are Muslims but are their activities Islamic? Agreed churches are destroyed and Christians are attacked, but why are some Muslims attacked and Mosques destroyed? The Emir of Kano, Alhaji Ado Bayero narrowly escaped assassination not long ago while an elder statesman ShettimaAlli was kidnapped after a Jumat on May 3, 2012. Also Vice President Namadi Sambo's apartment was attacked. The victims are all Muslims. These episodes among others have made it difficult for people to be convinced that Boko Haram has a religious agenda. If Boko Haram is a political movement, which party do its members belong to? It is very difficult to know where the group is domiciled. Perhaps one can safely assume that it is both religious and political. This inhibition must have impelled President Jonathan to come out with the idea of its facelessness. However, the fact remains that no group has ever held Nigeria to ransom like Boko Haram or how can one explain the threat of 2010, which forced the Federal Government to change the venue of the 50th anniversary of independence? The point being emphasised is that Nigeria is a failed state as far as security is concerned.

IV. How has insecurity affected Nigeria?

One major effect of insecurity anywhere in the world is loss of lives. This Nigeria has continued to experience. Arriving at any figure is a mission impossible, but it is clear that many innocent lives have been lost. It is equally a fact that the corporate existence of the country is threatened. There has always

been a clamour for division of the country as a result of happenings that are not unifying. This assumed international dimension in 2010 when the late Libyan leader, Gaddafi advised that Nigeria should be divided on religious grounds and later on ethnic factor because of wide spread condemnation of the first statement⁹.

Following the Sharia controversy of year 2000, many people from the southern part of Nigeria kicked against posting their children and wards to states where the Islamic legal system was operational for youth service. The same thing re-echoed in 2011 when some corps members died during the post-election violence. The issue of NYSC is a serious concern because the scheme was instituted to foster unity among the various ethnic groups that the country is made of. Moreover, there is always a reprisal any time a particular ethnic group is attacked. For this reason, it is now considered dangerous and fool hardy by some people to settle outside their geographical area.

The economic implication of insecurity cannot be overlooked as no investor will be willing to invest in war torn areas coupled with strained international relations that insecurity portends. Many foreigners have been kidnapped with some deaths recorded. On another note, the recurring cases of vandalism can only be explained in terms of economic retrogression coupled with the percentage of budget that goes to security every year while other sectors suffer neglect. The political scene is also not insulated from the dangers of insecurity. That insecurity has led to loss of international recognition is a fact. Apart from unwillingness of many foreigners to stay in the country, the recent visit of American President, Barak Obama to Africa was indicting as she (Nigeria) was ignored owing to insecurity¹⁰. Such is becoming a repeated occurrence given his refusal to visit the country in 2009 because of the manner in which the 2007 general elections were conducted. The foregoing is our story in Nigeria and it can be blamed on neglect of religious moral values, which is a spin-off of misplacement of priority on the part of religious adherents both leaders and followers having reduced religion to mere social activity, without sense of commitment and morality.

V. Religious moral values and security matters

Our concern in this section is to examine some religious values viz- a- viz their implications for security. To the best of our knowledge, keeping these moral values will no doubt engender peace in any society. In this piece, religious moral values are actions prescribed for religious adherents to integrate into all aspects of life. They are referred to also as do's or positive principles. They cut across the three major religions practised in Nigeria. Thus

man must live a moral life because morality is commanded by God as advanced in the Divine Command Theory.¹¹ The list of ethical principles in religions is long. However, we shall discuss some of them that concern security.

The first one is **justice**. In religious ethics, justice means giving an individual what he or she deserves. This is a clear departure from philosophical ethics, which explains the concept to mean many things. Justice is not the same thing as equality, which at times could lead to injustice. The word equity is a good way of understanding justice. To be just is to be fair to all and sundry, collectively and individually irrespective of race, colour, sex, social status, ethnic background or religious affiliation. In Islam, Christianity and traditional religion, justice is a sine qua non for well-being. The Quran in Surah 5:8, 10:90 and 57:25 emphasizes the imperative of justice while the Bible recommends it in Proverbs 21:3, Amos 5: 24 among several other passages. As expressed in various proverbs and sayings such as *Ibi a bi eru la bomo*, every human being is the same as far as process of birth is concerned and *Aparo kan o gaju kan lo-no* bird of the same class is taller than others. These sayings express nothing other than justice. It is germane to ask if justice is practised in Nigeria. Cases of violence and agitation were/are prompted by perceived injustice. Boko Haram is claiming this while the Niger Delta region became a theatre of war as a result of maltreatment of indigenes, which have nothing to show for their being oil producing area. In this case, we can talk of injustice from within and without. This has come to be a part of the insensitivity of government. Some leaders of the area are equally agents of injustice. This development led to the activism of Ken SaroWiwa and others who were executed in 1995. According to Familusi, "The Niger Delta became engulfed with conflicts when the indigenes felt cheated because crude oil, which is the mainstay of the economy of Nigeria is produced in that area yet the people and the territory continue to suffer neglect. This necessitated their clamour for resource control."¹²

Also, we see love as a prerequisite for peace. Though a very broad and in a way an inexplicable concept, it is a fundamental element in religion. The Bible describes it as the fulfilment of the law. (I Cor.13). Love is expressed in hospitality, care, sympathy, empathy and spirit of oneness. It can be said that where there is love, justice will prevail and other vices will be avoided. Love is analogous to the golden rule, which states that "Do unto others what you expect them to do unto you". (Matthew 7:12). Muhammad in his Sunnah says "No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself".¹³ A Yoruba adage says "*Bi a ba begi nigbo a foro ro ara eni wo*" that is, while felling a tree in the forest, one must think about the direction it will go. In other words, in whatever we do, we must always be conscious of those who will be affected. Immanuel Kant opines that an action will be adjudged to be

good if the actor would want it to be a universal law¹⁴. As good and beneficial love is, it is a scarce commodity in Nigeria. This is to say that its absence has largely contributed to insecurity in Nigeria. The happenings of recent time especially in the northern Nigeria can only be explained in term of lack of love.

Every religion has account of how man was made, God being the giver of life. Consequently, it is sacred and it can only be taken by the giver—God. This is explained in Job's statement “God gives, God takes, blessed be the name of God. Taking another man's life is an aberrant behaviour in religious ethics. Thus efforts are to be made towards its preservation. But the question is how sacred is human life in Nigeria where dead bodies litter roads and where lives are lost at very regular intervals even in the name of religion? To say the obvious, lives are no longer construed to be sacred; the result is the Nigerian experience.

Security in any society is also anchored on honesty; which is described as the best policy. To be honest is to be truthful, plain, straightforward and trustworthy. Social relation is based on this principle and jettisoning it will lead to interpersonal dissension. Honesty is expected of leaders and followers. In fact, every Nigerian who recites the National Pledge expressly promises to be honest; this is a demonstration of good citizenship, which is a sacred duty of religious people.

The Ifa Corpus stresses the benefit of honesty as follows:

Ototosisenikannikii

Mu niiku, sugbonti muni

Hu ewuorinene

It is only rectitude that prevents one from dying young

And enables one to grow exceedingly hoary¹⁵.

The Quran metaphorically refers to truth as a missile to be hurled at falsehood, thus knocking out its brain. Muslims are enjoined to be honest in words and deeds. Quran (2: 42) says “And cover not the truth with falsehood, nor conceal the truth when you know what it is.” Also, honesty is indispensable to Christian living. As stated in the Bible, “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people (Prov. 14: 34). Pathetically, many Nigerians of all statuses are dishonest. As many leaders are dishonest, many a follower is not in any way better. A line of the national pledge that says “To serve Nigeria with all my strength” has been replaced with 'To serve Nigeria is not by force' in some quarters. Leaders who fail to lead by good example cannot expect their followers to be faithful. There are many unresolved issues in this country that are premised on mistrust on the part of the government. One will not be wrong to think that a leader must not make any promise that will not be fulfilled but there are many of such in Nigeria. That is why embarking on strike is the only

weapon that workers have. There is an emerging conflict on whether President Jonathan will contest in 2015 having promised in 2011 (according to some people), that he would not seek re-election. Although this cannot be substantiated, one expects promise to be kept if it was made in the first instance. There are many reasons to suggest that leaders at all levels are insincere. They are more concerned about retaining power, which Awolowo describes "as tenacity of office, that is: "a political monstrosity, whose characteristics are an inordinate and shameless love of power for its own sake, and a morbid tenacity for public office even when all the legitimacy for continuing in such public office has (sic) completely, disappeared"¹⁶. Many of the wars waged against the Federal Government are bye-products of betrayal of trust. In the political terrain, many of those who were used and abandoned after election have become social miscreants.

We must not end this section without talking about the principle of tolerance, which must be demonstrated in religious, social and political relations. To be tolerant is to endure hardship and recognise the inevitability of conflicts. Provocation will come but retaliation is not always the answer. Lending credence to this is an aphorism: "An eye for an eye leaves everybody blind." With tolerance and perseverance, violence will be avoided; and dialogue will be applied. Virtue according to Aristotle lies between two extremes. In this case, it will be wise to imbibe the virtue of moderation while agitating for rights even in the face provocation. In ethics, some rights are believed not to be enforceable. In fact, that one has a right does not mean that such a right must be asserted in all cases. Sometimes, it may be one's duty not to do so. For example, the need to claim a particular right may lead to conflict among individuals or groups and it will be wise if that right is forgone by one or some of the contending parties in the interest of the entire community. The capacity of knowing when to assert a right and when not to, is a fine and rare quality of a moral person¹⁷. It follows that as reasonable as some of the activities of militias are consequent upon violation of rights and other grievances, tolerance could have been a veritable tool. We are not oblivious of the fact that tolerance cannot tolerate intolerance, but it is not in all cases that violent reaction could bring expected results. The advice given by Jesus in Matthew 5: is a compendium as well as summary of every sermon on tolerance. In Surah 41:34-35, Muslims are enjoined to tolerate everybody, non-Muslims inclusive while in indigenous African society, harmonious life manifests traits of character like contentment, patience, gentleness, avoidance of vindictiveness and quarrelsomeness, temperance, moderation and seeking the goodwill of all¹⁸. Experience has shown many Nigerians are not tolerant in spite of their religiosity. A good way of knowing how patient a Nigerian could

be is when he or she is behind the wheel. There have been cases of Pastors raining curses on other drivers only to discover that the offenders were members of their churches. How would such people preach tolerance? The aforementioned values have been discarded by many a religious practitioner and it is a negation of Divine Command Theory. Consequently, victims have no choice but defend themselves and this is largely responsible for security problems in Nigeria.

VI. Recommendations and conclusion

As was suggested in this work, the problem of insecurity in Nigeria can be blamed on non-adherence to religious moral values. On this note, we recommend a total revival of these values at every level of existence so as to curb the menace. This can be achieved by engaging in practical and purpose driven religiosity as opposed to hypocritical religiosity. The church, mosque, school, family and other agents of inculcating morality must be alive to their responsibilities by extolling virtues that can enhance peace. The maxim 'Practice what you preach' is very relevant at this moment because people are prone to not leading by good example. Therefore, we recommend moral rectitude for leaders so that followers will be challenged to live moral lives. More importantly, integrity must not be sacrificed on the altar of materialism. If this happens, religious leaders will have the boldness to tell the truth rather than becoming apologists of ungodly leaders. The spirit of patriotism cannot be done away with in this matter as lack of it is also an issue in insecurity. If Nigerians are patriotic, they will have the love of their country at heart; and most of the problems confronting her would not have arisen in the first instance. One way of achieving this is to act the contents of the national pledge rather than mere recitation, which has become a non-effectual ritual. The government must be more practical about resolving the security problem. Appropriate step must be taken at the right time. Thus, force must not be used where dialogue is the answer. The huge amount of money spent every year on security has not yielded any positive result. Are perpetrators of insecurity known? If they are known what legal actions has the government taken against them? This requires urgent actions.

The state of security in Nigeria is horrendous. The country is under a serious siege and the failure of past attempts to curb insecurity does not help the situation. It is for the reason that a revival of religious moral values is advocated. This is expected to be helpful in a country populated by religious people like Nigeria, where paradoxically, the Divine Command Theory is not conformed with.

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