

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

Nigeria is a country with the conglomeration of states with different people, cultures and religious backgrounds. Nigeria comprises Christianity, Islamic and traditional religions. The adherents of three religions, especially Muslims and Christians are often engaged in conflicts, leading to lose of lives and property. Hardly will a day pass without the two religions engaging in one conflict or the other. The religious scenario in Nigeria has assumed a violent dimension, leading to suicide bombing, loss of innocent lives and property. The area that is most affected with terrorists attacks is the defunct Northern region. That is, the North and the area called today Middle-Belt of Nigeria today. Even if there is a seeming peace, the relationship between Christians and Muslims is marked with mutual suspicion and distrust. These religious crises are more rampant in the Northern states and they sometimes bring about reprisal attacks in Eastern states of Nigeria. The reprisal attacks by Christians in Eastern Nigeria are directed to all the Northerners without distinction of religious affiliation. That is, both Christians and Muslims are victims of such attacks (Dzurgba, 2006). The Northern Christians particularly suffer death casualties at every twist of events. They loss lives in the Eastern part of Nigeria during reprisal attacks. This ugly situation calls for reflection on education as one of the possible measures of preventing religious conflicts and insecurity in Nigeria.

With over 400 ethnic groups belonging to several religious sects, Nigeria since independence has remained a multi-ethnic nation State, grappling with the problems of ethno-religious conflicts. Ethnic groups and religious intolerance have bought about the recurrence of ethno-religious conflicts. Major motivations behind most religious conflicts are economic and political, for, as one scholar puts it: in the struggle for political power to retain the monopoly of economic control the political class instigates the ordinary citizen into mutual suspicions resulting in conflicts. Colonialism did not cause the primordial conditions that generated conflicts between Christians and Muslims, but it made them worse. Indeed, colonialism established the basis for using identity politics as a means of accessing political and economic resources. Consequently, religious differences come to worsen political crisis. From the early 1980s, religion has been making increasing in-road into the political development of Nigeria, in spite of the official legal status of the country as a secular state. This is a status accepted by the majority of Nigerians, and it is clearly laid down in the constitution. Nigeria is at the moment experiencing major challenges. It is one of the fastest growing nations with a population that doubles every two and a half decades. Access to higher education and healthcare is limited. Poor infrastructure and weak leadership deficit have also conspired to impede the development of the country.

Attempts to entrench democratic rule and good governance have been truncated prematurely over the years since Nigeria gained her independence. The reasons are not farfetched. For instance, the attitudes of the political class are often devoid of basic religious moral principles which are pivotal for democracy and better initiative for good governance to flower. Religious moral principles are inevitable for or present nascent democracy and good governance to strive as it is in advanced democracies of the world (Akintola, 2007). Good governance and democracy have now been seen as a household name in Nigeria but it is unfortunate that our understanding of the concepts is very shallow. Orhungur (2005) postulated that a civilian government cannot claim to be a democratic unless it produced true good leadership that offers freedom for

the citizenry to elect their leaders. Denial of this by any nation that truly aspires to practice democratic rule must revisit its religious values to make sure that it is in line with the demands of democracy.

In conclusion, in order to foster religious harmony and sustenance of democracy in Nigeria, it is therefore pertinent to lay a solid foundation for a democratic culture, whose operators are fair to all irrespective of their circumstances. In essence, politicians, public officials and political office holders must be those who are not necessarily detached from religion, but who have the understanding that religion is in itself a tool for peace, progress and sustainable development. Such leaders would work to address the challenges of our history, the challenges of socio-economic inequalities, and indeed, the challenges of building vibrant and strong institutions for democracy and sustainable development.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Religious and ethnicity have been used as a cover to claim political representation and opportunities. Invariably, most politicians could hold at anything in the struggle for power, damning the consequences. In this regard, political differences have ignited many sectarian crises. It is therefore essential to free religion from the grip of dark forces either as charlatans, religious bigots or unfortunate political jobbers. In a bid to control religious intolerance in Nigeria, we must ensure that causes of disharmony are squarely addressed. In my view, the democratic system of government could undertake this exercise. However, in this regard, the capacity of democratic institutions must be strengthened to ensure that unpatriotic and mediocre politicians are cleared out. This study therefore seeks to investigate religious harmony and sustenance of democracy in Nigeria.

## **1.3 Research Questions**

The following are some of the questions which this study intends to answer:

- i) what is the prevalence of religious harmony among the three religions in Nigeria?
- ii) what are the factors that constitute to religious harmony and sustenance of democracy in Nigeria?
- iii) what are the impacts of the government towards fostering religious harmony and sustenance of democracy in Nigeria?

## **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to give assessment of religious harmony and sustenance of democracy in Nigeria. The specific objectives include:

- i) to evaluate the factors that constitute to religious harmony and sustenance of democracy in Nigeria
- ii) to assess factors that constitute to religious harmony and sustenance of democracy in Nigeria
- iii) to inquire the impacts of the government towards fostering religious harmony and sustenance of democracy in Nigeria

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The research will be conducted with the respondents who practice any of the three major religions (Christianity, Islam and African traditional) in Nigeria. It will enable us to understand their views on good governance and it can be achieved. It will as well contribute to good governance and national unity in the area Political science.

## **1.6 Scope of the Study**

This study will be carried out with religion leaders, politicians, students, and social scientists in some

selected states across Nigeria.

### **1.8 Limitation of the study**

The study will be faced with a lot of challenges and one of them is the problem of finance. There is not going to be enough funds to print questionnaires and to also transport the researcher to meet the desired respondents. Another one is time; the researcher is currently busy with the demand of his academics. A lot of assignments are available for the researcher to do and coupled with his desire to read and learn at the same time. These are the major challenges of this study.

### **1.9 Definitions of Terms**

The following terms were used in the course of this study:

**Religion:** a pursuit or interest to which someone ascribes supreme importance

**Harmony:** agreement or concord.

**Sustenance:** the maintaining of someone or something in life or existence.

**Democracy:** a system of government by the whole population or all the eligible members of a state, typically through elected representatives.

## **RELIGIOUS HARMONY AND SUSTENANCE OF DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA**

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