Religious conflict in Nigeria:
towards a re-awakening of the prophetic voice

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Abstract

Much work has been carried out in respect of religious conflict in Nigeria. Most of it focuses on perpetrators of collective violence, and the consequences on the victims, who are generally caught in the web of the pact between the instigators and perpetrators. These two visible parties in the conflict usually receive wide coverage and public attention, no less also from the church. However, little or no space has been devoted to the powerful roles of the instigators in the conflict. Through the gristmill of needs theory, it is argued that the most important cause of religious conflict in Nigeria is the unsatisfied wants of the instigators who use the army of socioeconomically deprived perpetrators to deploy violence. Just as the government has the onerous task to expose and punish the instigators and perpetrators of conflict, so does the church have the right to challenge the government to be alive to its responsibilities.

Introduction

The main focus of this article is to depart significantly from the generally focused areas of religious conflict in Nigeria. These areas include: perpetrators, victims, religious fanaticism or fundamentalism, political frustration or failure, ignorance or conversion, socioeconomic or ethnic differences, etcetera as the causes of religious conflict. While these are very germane, they have been thoroughly examined. The corresponding solutions are: calls on government to investigate and punish the perpetrators while the victims should be compensated; implementation of the various white papers at the government's disposal; improving the socioeconomic and security situation of the people, etcetera. The major responses from the church have been strong condemnation of the conflict; call on government to be proactive and to fully compensate victims and punish perpetrators, call for dialogue of life and action, etcetera.[2]

Although I agree with the above, it is my argument in this article that the roles of the instigators and their connection with the perpetrators have not been, and need to be, given serious attention. The prophetic voice of the church can only stand above all others if it takes a departure from its traditional way of responding to conflicts. Thus, it is argued that the church has the right to institute an independent inquiry into the inveterate destruction of its members and their property, and institute legal action, where possible, on the basis of the facts at its disposal. This is hinged on the fact that government or its agents and powerful people are believed to have been involved in the instigation of violence in Nigeria. I argue that the church has a critical responsibility to understand religious conflict in Nigeria. The following section will examine the Shariah and the 2011 post election conflicts as focal points.

The concept of needs and wants in human behaviour

The importance of departure from an over trod route cannot be over-emphasised because it is causal to critical understanding of reality and human existence. Abraham Maslow's significant departure from orthodox behaviourism and psychoanalysis, which he regarded as rigidly concerned with illness, is instructive. He enunciated a six-level hierarchy of motives that engender human actions: physiological, security and safety, love and feeling of belonging, competence, prestige and esteem, self-fulfillment and, curiosity and the need to understand. These human motivational drives occur both consciously and unconsciously, and foster both external and internal satisfaction. The process of human progress starts

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with the primary or lower order needs to the higher order needs, which have to do with self-actualisation. But Maslow did not distinguish between wants and needs. He did not also, perhaps, envisage that the most powerful unsatisfied needs can be a catalyst for positive and negative actions.[3]

The needs theory emphasises the fact of unsatisfied existential needs as the basis of conflict. Conflicts that "arise from frustration of specific demands … are directed at the presumed frustrating objects".[4] Coser observed that the needs approach explains the "effort of an active minority … to announce their unwillingness to continue accepting indignity and frustration without fighting back".[5] In other words, such a minority group finds only violence as an open channel to communicate their desperation and calls for public attention or recognition. Since the problem of indignity has deep psychological consequence, Coser argued that its solution would lie in open political access by all parties involved because it is "only where there exist open channels of political communication through which all groups can articulate their demands, are the chances high that the political exercise of violence can be successfully minimised".[6] In sum, therefore, there must be access to communication, dialogue or power, which is genuinely achievable in democratic pluralistic society through functional institution building, whether formal or informal[7], rather than through personal heroism or personality cult that characterises Nigerian politics at present.

The point is that when needs are abstracted or given academic interpretation, they fuel the embers of distrust at different levels of the social strata, or among the parties involved in conflict. Thus the higher order needs cannot be rationally negotiated, resolved or agreed upon if not identified first and foremost. Even if resolutions are reached, it has been observed that they do not last long insofar as they are not founded on identified causal drives.[8] Burton argued that there are "spillover" effects, which result from the leaders' internal, institutional or even personal problems deployed as a basis for conflict, which is often meant to "divert attention".[9] This smokescreen has often characterised religious conflict in Nigeria, which has been observed to be, more often than not, personal failure translated to the public space.

Since unsatisfied needs are potential and actual catalysts for conflicts,[10] it has been argued that there is the necessity to separate needs from wants in an attempt to understand how they instigate conflicts. In this regard Ted Peters argued that the post-modern society is so blurred by marketing strategies that it finds it problematic to distinguish between needs and wants. He observed that desire is often mistaken for a need; whereas in proper conceptualisation, "needs should be understood as those things that all people require just to be human: food, shelter, sleep, exercise, protection from danger".[11] These basic human needs are for survival and security, and "they are satiable".[12] On the other hand, wants have to do with human desire for uniqueness and superiority. These are insatiable. The more one gets the more one wants.[13] It is commonly observed that one needs more power to sustain one's present power status. This is why politicians are believed to do anything rational or irrational, moral or otherwise to get and sustain power.

Ian Barbour placed a moral responsibility on humanity when he emphasised prioritisation of human values in which needs should come above wants or desires. As he forthrightly put it, "All persons have a right to life and therefore a right to the basic necessities of life, including adequate food for survival."[14] Our understanding, and separation of needs from wants and desires, will certainly help in gleaning the motivations of the instigators and perpetrators of conflicts in Nigeria. In clear terms, the wants or desires of the instigators are different from the needs of the perpetrators. For the instigators, "wealth wants power, and power wants wealth"[15] whereas for the perpetrators, the needs of the 'stomach' are confused with higher order needs. Peters' point is apposite here:

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[3]   See "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory" accessed on 20th June, 2012 from http://www.managementstudyguide.com/maslows-hierarchy-needs-theory.htm For details of how unsatisfied needs may become a theoretical framework and justification for violence or *Pax armamenta*, see Imobighe, Thomas, "The Management of National Security" 10th Inaugural Lecture, Edo State University, Ekpoma, Nigeria, 24th July, 1998, 11-16.

[4]   Lewis A. Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (NY: Free Press, 1957), 49.

[5]   Lewis A. Coser, *Continuities in the Study of Social Conflicts* (NY: Free Press, 1967), 103.

[6]   Coser, Continuities in the Study of Social Conflicts, 106.

[7]   Peter Wallensteen, Understanding Conflict Resolution: War, Peace and the Global Space (London: Sage Publication, 2002), 39.

[8]   Edward E. Azar and John W. Burton (eds.) *International Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1986), 30-31.

[9]   John W. Burton, *Conflict Resolution: Its Language and Processes* (Lanham/London: Scarecrow Press, 1996), 41.

[10] Wallensteen, Understanding Conflict Resolution, 44.

[11] Ted Peters, God – The World's Future: Systematic Theology for a New Era (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 389.

[12] Peters, *God*, 389.

[13] Peters, *God*, 389.

[14] Ian G. Barbour, *Technology, Environment, and Human Value* (NY: Praeger, 1980), 250; italics in the original.

[15] Peters, *God*, 390.

> Nearly a billion people on our planet live in abject poverty, with illiteracy undercutting their opportunities and malnutrition rendering them physically handicapped and mentally weakened. If we were to think holistically, and if we were to apply our principle of distinguishing the want for … power from the need for the basics of life, we could ponder what good work a reallocation of resources would do in our world today.[16]

It is the foregoing analysis that sets the tone for the understanding of the relationship between instigation and perpetration of conflict.

Conceptualising the roles of instigators in religious conflict

Generally, three types of agents of collective violence have been concentrated on, namely: perpetrators, victims and bystanders. In most research efforts of the underlying evil of collective violence, substantial attention has been drawn to people who through the socialisation process have come to function effortlessly as perpetrators.[17] As Burton argues, this is part of the human needs approach in which "there are certain ontological and generic needs that will be pursued, and that socialisation processes, if not compatible with such needs, far from socialising, will lead to frustrations, and to disturb anti-social personal and group behaviours".[18] In broad religious terms, this kind of socialisation process is indoctrination in which adherents of a particular religion are systematically taught to hate others perceived as unbelievers. The adherents are made to accept their religious beliefs as superior, and the only ultimate truth in exclusion of others. This dogma replicates easily among the perpetrators of religious conflict in Nigeria, where in most cases causes of violence are not even verified before deploying violence.

Mandel argued that the focus for proper and lasting conflict resolution should be tailored towards the instigators where unrealised wants are the immediate precursor for instigation of collective violence. The instigators, by nature and function, do not necessarily physically "carry out the acts of violence themselves but tune and transmit the messages that will effectively motivate others to cause harm and to provide perpetrators with the requisite resources for accomplishing their tasks".[19] For instance, when Osama bin Laden was asked whether he was responsible for the bombing of two American embassies in Africa, he replied: "Our job is to instigate and, by the grace of God, we did that, and certain people responded to this instigation."[20] This, in unmistakable terms, shows that there is a powerful link between instigators and perpetrators even though the former are usually less visible.

Apart from funding perpetrators of collective violence, instigators have been known to wield greater social or political influence and a wider range of power over and above that of the perpetrators. The perpetrators in this sense act as a conduit through which instigators carry out their plans and achieve their goals. Even though perpetrators have access to weaponry, this raw power is dependent on the authority of the instigators which derives from control of wealth and possession of a large volume of information and strategies, which dictate how the power of the perpetrators is derived, and granted directly or indirectly by "the instigating elite, who also have the power to disable perpetrators if they so choose and even redefine them as the enemy, thus rendering them potential victims".[21] In fact, there are critical occasions in which perpetrators have been turned into actual victims when instigators discover they are in danger of being exposed by perpetrators. In this smart game, a different group of perpetrators is raised against the first group. In this scenario, instigators would have succeeded in diverting attention from themselves as the conflict becomes too complex to understand.

Instigators as catalysts of violent conflict have been observed to paint a rosy picture of a better life or point to a perceived source of threat to the survival of the group, without overtly demonstrating the fact that it is their desires that actually drive their actions. This is "performative contradiction" associated with instigation of collective violence, in which instigators intentionally lie to perpetrators in order to convince them that the cause is worth its salt.[22] The recourse to performative contradiction rather than discursive engagement between instigators and perpetrators is instructive. The former believe that rationally motivated action will be difficult to secure because it will question the moral obligation to violate others. For them rational engagement on the basis of factuality must be

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16   Peters, *God*, 390.
17   David R. Mandel, "Evil and the Instigation of Collective Violence" in *ASAP: Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 2002, 2(1): 102.
18   John Burton, *Conflict: Resolution and Prevention*, Vol. 1, (London: Macmillan, 1990), 33.
19   Mandel, "Evil and the Instigation of Collective Violence", 102.
20   Mandel, "Evil and the Instigation of Collective Violence", 103.
21   Mandel, "Evil and the Instigation of Collective Violence", 102.
22   Benedict Bujo, The Ethical Dimension of Community: The African Model of Dialogue between North and South (Nairobi: Paulines, 1998), 49.

deliberately and consciously avoided. The employment of performative contradiction has skewed the proper interpretation of situations and made perpetrators not only capricious, but also to always be subject to the whims of instigators.

Instigators have been perceived as real agents of social change. Since they can catalyse social change, it has been suggested that an intent focus on one instigator rather than a multitude of perpetrators can produce a higher positive result in understanding or preventing conflicts. This makes the social influence of instigators and perpetrators strongly asymmetric. As Mandel canvasses, "Instigators shape the thinking and guide the behaviour of perpetrators, but perpetrators have relatively little influence on the motives or plans of instigators."[23]

In the relationship between instigators and perpetrators in specific religious terrains, religious nationalism has been identified as one potent force to rally for support. In Nigeria, this fundamentalist ideological framework exacerbates feelings of threat of possible domination, whether real or imagined. Here, an egotistic sense of group cohesion of the Islamic extraction is maintained on the basis of strong moral exclusion and the establishment of the suffusing sense of *us* versus *them*.[24] The belief in the superiority, and false metaphysical indoctrination that the northerners, specifically Muslims, are born and have been structurally "positioned" by the British who colonised Nigeria to perpetually rule the country, has been continuously invoked by instigators and passed on to perpetrators who cause politically-motivated but often religiously-deployed mayhem.

Religious conflict in Nigeria

There are divergent opinions as to when exactly religious conflict started in Nigeria. According to Kazah-Toure, Nigeria started experiencing ethno-religious clashes from the pre-colonial period,[25] whereas for Sangosanya and Sha, it was the colonial construction of modern Nigeria which blurred ethnic identities that ignited ethno-religious conflicts.[26] On the other hand, Adamolekun traces the history of religious conflict to the post-colonial period, especially during the 1980s. This does not vitiate the fact that there are records of ethnic and political conflicts since the 1950s.[27]

One important fact that commands interest is that conflicts in Nigeria, especially in the northern part, are mainly politically motivated whereas religion is used to deploy them. This poses a serious question on the observation of the British Broadcasting Corporation in 2003 that Nigeria has the most religious people in the world.[28] At about the same time, Nigeria was described as almost the most corrupt country in the world. Another polls result said that Nigerians were the happiest people on earth.[29] Ordinarily, it would have been thought that high religiosity would have a corresponding display of tolerance. "Religious tolerance has historically been a more defining feature of African societies."[30] But the advent of the two ethical monotheistic religions − Christianity and Islam − has changed that posture.

In Nigeria, geography and religious phenomena and events appear to have symbiosis. One crucial area of this interface is the mapping of occurrences of conflict. Whatever influences geography and environment have on religious psychology and their propensity to violence, are still being investigated. It has been observed that an issue, whether religious or political that has sparked off violence among Muslims in the north has not had similar violent reaction among the southern Muslims. It is this observation that lends credence to the advocacy to go beyond the conventional focus on perpetrators, victims and bystanders of religious conflict in Nigeria.[31]

Nigeria witnessed the Maitatsine riots from 1980-1985, which most people have agreed to be the beginning of critical religious conflict in Nigeria. The Shariah debate has been a controversial one, and also a precursor of conflict. Whereas Section 10 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) says that there shall be no State Religion but Section 260 (1) allows for a

23   Mandel, "Evil and the Instigation of Collective Violence", 102.
24   Mandel, "Evil and the Instigation of Collective Violence", 104; see also Benson O. Igboin, "Religious Fundamentalism in a Globalised World" in C. O. Isiramen, et. al. (eds.) *Issues in Religious Studies and Philosophy*, 422-425.
25   K. Kazah-Toure, *Ethno-religious Conflicts in Kaduna State* (Kaduna: Human Rights Monitor, 2003), 21.
26   J. A. Sangosanya and P. Sha, Ethno-religious Conflicts and Human Rights Violations in Nigeria (Jos: Niri Press, 2005), 12.
27   Taye Adamolekun, "A Historical Account of Ethno-religious and Communal Conflict in Nigeria 1980 to 2002" in *The Nigerian Academic Forum*, 4(3), April 2003: 13-18.
28   Cletus T. Gotan, Nigeria's Religious Conflict: A Call for a Dialogue of Life" in Cyril Obanure (ed.) *Religion, Violence and Conflict Resolution in Nigeria* (Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2008), 93.
29   John Onaiyekan, *Dividends of Religion in Nigeria* (Ilorin: Department of Religions, 2011), 2.
30   Rosalind I. J. Hackett, "Prophets, "False Prophets," and the African State: Emergent Issues of Religious Freedom and Conflict" in Phillip C. Lucas and Thomas Robbins (eds.) *New Religious Movements in the 21st Century: Legal, Political, and Social Challenges in Global Perspective* (NY: Routledge, 2004), 151.
31   Benson O. Igboin, "From Religious Conflict to Religious Nationalism: The Nigerian Experience" being a paper presented at the Int'l Conference organised by the University of Ibadan, Dept. of History, between 8th and 12th August, 2010.

Shariah Court of Appeal, even at the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. This obvious contradiction has seriously questioned the secularity of the Nigerian state. It is for this reason that many scholars have resorted to describing it as a multi-religious rather than truly a secular state.[32]

When in 1999 the Zamfara State governor, Ahmed Sani Yerima, introduced the Shariah law (Islamic law based on the Quran) as the state law, the moribund controversy was re-activated. At its heels was violent destruction of lives and property across the north, the targets being Christians, their property and churches. Rev Fr Matthew Kukah recognised that through the prevalent religious conflict, especially the Shariah, one could determine the continued existence of the country. According to him, the introduction of the Shariah law should not be viewed as political.[33] This was in response to former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo's remark that it was political rather than real Shariah. For many Christians, and even Muslims, Obasanjo was right because under the presidencies of the northern Muslim heads of state Shariah was not introduced. Its introduction was therefore viewed as a considered attempt to disrupt the programme of the civilian administration headed by a Christian. As Odunfa argues "In the mainly Muslim north, religious conflicts tend to be instigated by political leaders who want to destabilise a government headed by a southerner and a Christian."[34] Chukwu buttressed this point when he argued that the abortion of the Miss World contest in 2002 was instigated by northern Muslim political elite to discredit the Obasanjo administration in the eye of the international community.[35]

Kukah would not want to dwell on the constitutionality of the Shariah law as introduced by the northern governors. Rather, for him, the need for it was made possible by state failure at all levels. The failure of the state was caused by the long military regimes that could not provide opportunities for the realisation of the basic human needs of the larger proportion of the population. Since the structured weaknesses of the state denigrated the opportunities of the poor, a vacuum was created which the Shariah filled. He further argued that rather than focus on the negative effects of the Shariah law or its constitutionality, evidence abounds that the number of cases handled successfully within a short time demonstrates its crucial need and functions at the material time irrespective of the sensational focus on Jangebi, whose hand was amputated for stealing a cow, and Safiyya, the woman caught in adultery. "The fact is that ordinary Muslims feel that justice is more real now than it was previously."[36]

For Kukah, Shariah law was justifiable because it was socially functional whereas for Re. Fr Joseph Kenny, its application to non-Muslims, whose property was destroyed and who were prevented from selling alcohol or given limited transport opportunities, rights to free association, discrimination due to gender and stalling their means of meeting their basic existential human needs must be considered holistically.[37] Ahmed An-Na'im, a Sudanese who observed the violence associated with the Shariah law in Nigeria, called for caution in attempting to introduce Shariah law in a pluralistic society like Nigeria. According to him, Shariah law does not appear to have a future as a normative system enactable and enforceable in comparison with the Western law and public policy. Rather, it has a foundational role in the socialisation process, sacralisation of social institutions and relationships as well as sharing fundamental values that can positively engender overall development in a democratic process.[38]

Kukah later realised that his earlier thesis on the Shariah case had to be reviewed. Thus, in spite of the failure of governance as fundamental to religious conflict, it is the fact, though not always acknowledged as empirical within academia, that the governors, especially in the north, patronise the spiritual leaders of fundamentalist sects to gain access to political power. By so doing, they must have entered into an alliance with them to protect them. Kukah also argued that the problem of addressing the Shariah and other religious conflicts lies with the fact that the government at all levels, which is the accused and the culprits, has always used its power to prosecute the perpetrators. This accounts for the reason nobody has been punished for religious conflict in Nigeria. Kukah also thought that his earlier position on Shariah could not be sustained when he argued that the people realised that "their own governors and public officers, the so-called holy men of yesterday and apostles of Sharia have been

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[32] Benson O. Igboin, "The Concomitance of Religious Conflicts in Nigeria: Secularity, Tolerance and Dialogue" in Adam K. Chepkwony and Peter M. J. Hess (eds.) *Human Views on God: Variety Not Monotony (Essays in Honour of Ade P. Dopamu* (Eldoret: Moi University, 2010), 137-150.

[33] Matthew Kukah, *Human Rights in Nigeria: Hopes and Hindrances* (Aachen: Missio, 2003), 24.

[34] Cletus N. Chukwu, "Religion as a Factor in the Nigerian Political Culture" in Peter I. Gichure & Diane B. Stinton (eds.) *Religion and Politics in Africa: Theological Reflections for the 21st Century* (Nairobi: Paulines, 2008), 62.

[35] Chukwu, "Religion as a Factor 62.

[36] Kukah, Human Rights in Nigeria, 28.

[37] See Joseph Kenny's response to the shariah debate in Philip Ostien, Jamila M. Nasir and Franz Kogelmann (eds.) *Comparative Perspectives on Shariah in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Spectrum, 2005), 290.

[38] Abdullahi A. An-Na'im, "The Future of Shariah and the Debate in Northern Nigeria" in Ostien, Nasir and Kogelmann (eds.) *Comparative Perspectives on Shariah in Nigeria*, 327.

caught in the same web of corruption like their other contemporaries".[39] This made the governors hypocritical about their intention on Shariah, thus strengthening the argument that Shariah was political, and not real.

An-Na'im argued that Shariah law as an ethical and legal tradition has complex aspects; thus it warrants a careful explication of which aspects are being implemented in a pluralistic society. If *dhimmah*'s aspect of it is enforced, it means that the Christians are relegated to second-class citizens while the traditionalists will be under attack except that "discretionary status of temporary safe conduct (*aman*)" is invoked.[40] If *riba* (interest-free banking system) is enforced, for example, the modern banking system is changed, in which case, the Shariah-practising states should not participate in the sharing of the profits accruing from it and also from the sale of alcohol, etcetera.[41] A call for total implementation of Shariah law, therefore, is an incitement to civil war. An-Na'im concludes that "Since … certain aspects of Shariah are simply inconsistent with basic constitutional government altogether, the enactment of such principles into law, or their adoption as official state policy, is inherently unconstitutional, even if the explicit text of the constitution might seem to indicate otherwise."[42]

The Shariah controversy has resonated in the activities of the fundamentalist sect, *boko haram*, which literally means Western education is abominable or sinful. It is this sect that is believed to have wreaked the post presidential election havoc in April 2011. The thread of the foregoing analysis is that the Shariah controversy is politically motivated and took religious garb to be enforced. That is why the states could not continue with it today. It also accounts partly for the emergence of the *boko haram* sect, which believes that they deceived the people. Thus, their abandoning Shariah amounts to collaborating with Western education and law, for which Christians, Muslims, police, soldiers, prisons, politicians, etcetera are being persistently attacked.

In the Shariah conflict, there are perpetrators, victims and bystanders who take the central stage of concern. The instigators who gain at the expense of the former, as usual, remain largely untouched by the grubby consequences of the conflict. Contrary to the opinion that it was the people who initiated Shariah, it is the case that the governors were believed to have been sponsored from outside to destabilise the country. The instigation still revolves around power shift because, as Thomas Hobbes noted, people's desire for power, prestige or ambition underlies their recourse to violence.[43] The desire to Islamise the country found expression in the perpetration of violence. The wants versus needs philosophy was demonstrated when in Niger State, perpetrators were paid between "N300.00 and N1000.00 so that they foment trouble and kill Christians".[44] Some of them who were apprehended confessed to this. Beyond that the perpetrators were eager to continue the mayhem across board because it was an opportunity to kill their creditors and those they had violated in order to permanently conceal their secrets.[45]

The "voice of Jacob and the hand of Esau" could also be discerned when some of the perpetrators were arrested with army uniforms and guns. "Each of the fake groups of soldiers was headed by a serving military personnel."[46] Debki, an eye witness, observed that some of the soldiers wore slippers and could not understand barracks language at which point they were arrested.[47] Obviously, this aspect of violence could have been instigated by the state authorities. The same strategy was employed in Jos conflict which led to the introduction of 'marked uniform' for the soldiers keeping peace in Plateau State, Nigeria.

The instigators of the Shariah conflict, apparently, could not be tamed because of the intricate nature of the Constitution on it; the Federal Government's response to the conflict was that it would die off naturally, while others argued about its functionality. The post election violence apparently did not present the same complex posture; it is clearer, except that the government seemed to be incapacitated to act, as has always been the case. Levi Obijiofor, among others, opined that Muhammadu Buhari, the

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[39]   Matthew H. Kukah, "Boko Haram: Some Reflections on Causes and Effects" in Simon O. Anyanwu and Isidore Nwanaju (eds.) *Boko Haram: Religious Conflicts and Dialogue Initiatives in Nigeria* (Owerri: Edu-Edy Publications, 2010), 12, 14 and 17.

[40]   An-Na'im, "The Future of Shariah, 329.

[41]   Timothy M. Obamuyi, and Benson O. Igboin, "The Consequences of Islamic Interest-free Banking in Nigeria" in A. Salami (ed.) *Journal of Economics and Financial Studies*, 1(1), (2004): 22-32.

[42]   An-Na'im, "The Future of Shariah, 330.

[43]   Cited in Akpenpuun Dzurgba, Prevention and Resolution of Conflict: Local and International Perspectives (Ibadan: John Archers, 2010), 6.

[44]   Victor Onwukeme, "Muslim-Christian Religious Conflict in Nigeria: A Christian Response based on Matt. 5: 44" in Cyril Obanure (ed.) *Religion, Violence and Conflict Resolution in Nigeria* (Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2008), 250.

[45]   Onwukeme, "Muslim-Christian Religious Conflict in Nigeria, 250.

[46]   Onwukeme, "Muslim-Christian Religious Conflict in Nigeria, 250.

[47]   B. E. E. Debki, The Tragedy of Shariah, Cry and the Voice of Masses: Kaduna Crisis from an Eye Witness, (Kaduna, 2000), 41.

presidential candidate of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) instigated the violence. According to him, Buhari had started uttering inciting statements nine months before the election. In August 2010, he said "there would be no Nigeria" if the election was not free and fair. As Obijiofor concluded, "Buhari cannot argue that he did not instigate the rioters and therefore he has no obligation to call them to order."[48] Buhari's almost 72-hour late response to the violence that "the CPC supporters have no hands in the violence"[49] did nothing to vitiate his apparent command to the perpetrators to "lynch anybody that tries to tinker with the votes".[50] As Abati observed, "Buhari's supporters in the northern states" are "united in their anger that a southern Christian, an unbeliever in their reckoning, and a product/promoter of Western education is now President-elect," which is counterproductive to their desire. So their chant: *ku ke so, ba muso hanni,* "it is Buhari we want, we don't want an unbeliever"[51] makes sense in the context of instigator-perpetrator dialectic.

For the perpetrators, the message of their instigator was understood that if he did not win the election, the whole process must have been tinkered with. The belief of his supporters is that once they voted, their candidate had won regardless of the fact that the constitutional provisions for winning are extant. Because the perpetrators are mainly ignorant of the law, Oladosu opines that they should not be blamed. Rather, the northern political leaders should accept responsibility for failing to educate their people unlike the case with southerners. In this case, he argued that the violence is a signifier: that unless illiteracy is tackled in the north, a class war is imminent between the impoverished and the wealthy.[52]

Government response has not departed from the known conventional ones: strong condemnation of the perpetrators and promises to compensate victims and inauguration of a judicial commission of inquiry. Right from the military era, the recurring terms have been "some misguided elements" or "unpatriotic elements" being responsible for acts of violence. These terms often reflect in President Goodluck Jonathan's speeches. For him, the perpetrators have exhibited intolerance and violence "for no justifiable reasons. I have directed that the perpetrators of these dastardly acts of violence … must be fished out and made to face the full weight of the law."[53] The Inspector General of Police also vowed to apprehend the perpetrators rather than the instigators.[54]

It has been argued that it appears the government does not have a clear idea of who the instigators are, or that the term "perpetrator" has been used to include the instigators. If on the other hand the government, for strategic or security reasons, decides not to disclose to the public the information about the instigators, not doing any tangible thing in this regard is "beyond the influence of rhetoric and reason".[55] The involvement of *boko haram* in the violence therefore seems understandable since it perceives that the government is incapable of intervening productively. According to a *fatwa* (decree) issued by *boko haram* after President Jonathan's speech, in so far as the democratic system is a reflection of Western value, its members are not bound to obey the country's constitution because it is at variance with Shariah. According to the members of *boko haram*, "we are not sorry for all the people that we are killing".[56]

Where there is precedence, as in Nigeria, that culprits are not punished for obvious offences against humanity and also against the State, we cannot rule out a consistent recurrence of violence. This is in respect of the previous commissions of inquiry set up by government to probe the causes of the perennial conflicts. Even when White Papers are issued, government has never done anything about them. This weakness, lack of political will, or because powerful citizens are implicated, who lobby against the implementation, has been a reiterated political tool of blackmail against government in subsequent violent occurrences. Thus, the promise to stem the tide of violence is no longer taken seriously. Clearly Christians have been the worst victims of all of the conflicts in the country. But must they and their leaders continue to follow the mouthed platitudes that have characterised their and government's response thus far?

The need to re-awaken the prophetic voice

The philosophy of voicelessness entails a situation of powerlessness and invisibility in terms of religious, social and political significance. It is a loss of vocal voice in the determination of one's fate

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48   Levi Obiojiofor, "Not by Force" in *The Guardian*, 22 April, 2011, 52.
49   Obiojiofor, "Not by Force" 52.
50   Rueben Abati, "For the Attention of General Buhari" in *The Guardian*, 22 April, 2011, 51.
51   Abati, "For the Attention of General Buhari", 51.
52   Afis A. Oladosu, "Weep Not, Buhari" in *The Guardian*, 22 April, 2011, 53.
53   See President Goodluck Jonathan's speech in *The Guardian*, 21 April, 2011, 9.
54   See "IGP Vows to apprehend Perpetrators" in *Nigerian Tribune*, 19 April, 2011, 3.
55   A. Agbo, "The Plot to Stop Jonathan" in *Tell*, 2 May, 2011, 44.
56   Agbo, "The Plot to Stop Jonathan", 46-47.

either as a result of structural arrangement or self-inflicted choice to remain voiceless because of fear of acting otherwise. In either case, voicelessness and invisibility can be secured on the basis of being regarded as "other", which means that one lacks the true or authentic sense of belonging. This situation can be exacerbated when one considers the tendency to pathologies of the social and political structure, as second rated citizens in a pluralist society.[57] Within the theme of the meta-discussion above, the marginalised and oppressed or voiceless people have taken the astute position of reinterpretation of contexts in human history with the sole aim of making their voices heard, even many times in non-violent ways.[58]

The beatitudinal life of Christians has been majorly interpreted to mean non-retaliation when they are wronged. This difficult demand is the summit of Christ's teaching. However, they can defend themselves only when it falls within the ambit of the principle of double effect. In which case, being faced with two necessary evils, the lesser should be chosen, which must necessarily result in supreme value placed on life.[59] However, Peters argues that even though violent reaction is not canvassed, the beatitudinal response must be proactive because of the emergent global space. According to him,

> It must confront the world in and around the church and interpret the fundamental symbols of our faith in light of the contemporary context. This contemporary context is feeling the impact of an emerging post-modern mind accompanied by a global future consciousness − the consciousness of a potential avalanche of disasters about to thunder down upon us. We need a faith that can face the future.[60]

The threat to the lives of Christians in Nigeria, particularly in the north, is real. It is for this reason that Christian political leaders must be called to order. Onwukeme notes that most of those in power who believe that politics is not essentially a dirty game, soon forget their faith when they get to power. "While Muslims think of their people and their religion, Christians are only concerned with their families and their pockets."[61] The president of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) recently announced that a retreat would be organised for all Christian legislators across the country. This is instructive and urgent in the face of the critical situation of its membership. It is hopeful that issues of the basic needs of the citizens which have been making them amenable to the caprices of instigators, as well as national security would be discussed, rather than pursue their selfish interest as usual. It is also hoped that the legislators would respond positively this time around.

CAN's president, Pastor Ayo Oritsejafor, took a vocal position against the instigation of the post election violence. According to him, the country's quest for unity would continue to be a mirage until those fanning the embers of violence were made to actually face the full weight of the law. According to him,

> Let us not pretend by always saying the violence is taking place in some parts of the country. People like Gen Buhari and others like him should not be allowed to roam the streets … I don't know how the Federal Government should sanction sponsors of such mayhem … but I think the government should do something … There are those who already have a religious agenda and they have been promoting it and working very hard to implement it … taking advantage of the political atmosphere to create the impression that what we are witnessing is political and not religious.[62]

Such words do not bear a familiar ring in Christian leaders' response to national conflicts. It is suggested that proactive pragmatic actions are needed by the church similar to that of the former Primate of the Anglican Communion (Nigeria), Peter Akinola, in his unwavering fight to defend the Bible in the homosexuality debate. His reactions were not just speeches, but also practical mobilisations and demonstrations in line with the scriptures.[63] The example of the prophetic role of the church in Kenya provides a scintillating impetus, where for instance, the Christian Churches Education Association, in January 2001, instituted an independent commission to probe "devil worship"

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57   Anthony G. Reddie, "A Dialectical Spirituality of Improvisation: The Ambiguity of Black Engagement with Sacred Texts" in Anthony B. Pinn (ed.), *Black Religion and Aesthetics: Religious Thought and Life in Africa and the African Diaspora* (Palgrave: Macmillan, 2009), 169.
58   Reddie, "A Dialectical Spirituality of Improvisation, 162.
59   Onwukeme, "Muslim-Christian Religious Conflict in Nigeria, 253.
60   Peters, *God*, 392.
61   Onwukeme, "Muslim-Christian Religious Conflict in Nigeria, 259.
62   For details of CAN President's reaction see *The Guardian*, 25 April, 2011, 64.
63   Sebastian Kim and Kirsteen Kim, *Christianity as a World Religion* (London: Continuum, n. d.), 95-96.

nationwide.[64] In order to achieve this, the church demonstrated courage by identifying with the faithful and abandoning siding with the ruling establishment, which had almost completely eroded its prophetic role.[65] Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) and other allied organisations have the onerous task, not only to advocate for compensation for victims and call for punishment of the perpetrators of the various conflict situations as a deterrent measure, but more significantly must also institute an independent commission to find out the real instigators of violence in Nigeria. This is a task none has undertaken in the history of the country. It should, where necessary, provide information to government on how best to manage the security problems bedeviling the country. It must also proceed to institute legal action on the basis of the facts at its disposal in order to reassure their members that the beatitudinal life is concretely safeguarded.

To do less than these minimum demands apparently betrays the prophetic office. This is because the prophetic consciousness brings about God's "politics" of justice. The tonality of the prophetic demand has led to a scarcity of prophets, and where some exist, they tactfully evade prophesying. The reason for this is set forth by Ukwuegbu in the following assertion:

> We lack the courage to dare and the energy to try new grounds; maybe because we are afraid of risking the static comforts that the status quo guarantees and ensures. We take comfort in the old-age (sic) wisdom that there is no need changing a winning team, without a critical assessment of whatever we regard as winning at all or winning for all.[66]

It is the re-awakening of prophetic pragmatism that will make for a departure from the conventional panacea to religious conflict in Nigeria which do not realistically solve but aggravate them.

The foregoing is not to take over the role of government. The government must go beyond conventional ways of reacting, promising and threatening to deal effectively with perpetrators without actualising it. It must be demonstrably proactive by providing adequate satisfaction of the identified basic human needs of the citizens. These include physiological needs, security, means for self actualisation, social recognition and identity, access to participation in public policy, economic opportunities, justice, cultural development, etcetera. Of crucial importance are the revamping of the economy and the honest fight against corruption. In so doing, government would have reduced the gap between wants and needs, for example, "want-get-ratio," "expectation need satisfaction" and "actual need satisfaction",[67] which are tools in the hands of instigators to incite conflicts. It must be known that "the greater the discrepancy, however marginal, between what is sought and what seems attainable, the greater will be the chances that danger and violence will result."[68]

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[64]   Hackett, "Prophets, "False Prophets," 167.

[65]   Emily J. Choge, "The Pilgrim Motif and the Role of the Church in Kenya in Politics" in Gichure & Stinton (eds.) *Religion and Politics in Africa*, 105-106.

[66]   Bernard O. Ukwuegbu, *The Prophetic Imagination & the Creation of Alternative Community* (Owerri: Edu-Edy Publications, 2007), 4.

[67]   S. A. Faleti, "Theories of Social Conflict" in S. G. Best (ed.) *Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies in West Africa* (Ibadan: Spectrum, 2006), 47.

[68]   T. R. Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 24.

Conclusion

We have argued that unmet human needs and wants have a way of resulting in conflicts of different kinds. Those needs − physical, psychological, social, spiritual − must be met because to provide access to one, for example food, and hamper access to another, for example worship, is tantamount to gross denial of all. However, the wants and needs categories must be understood from the broad spectrum of the network between instigators and perpetrators because the former's goal may be different from the latter even though the latter are used as the ground army of violence. Therefore, critical focus and taming of instigators has greater effect than devoting energy in managing perpetrators. While the government has the onerous task of confronting the instigators, it must also engage in educational policy that can enlighten the perpetrators and the general citizenry. The apparent failure of government in this regard is the basis for the prophetic voice as an alternative. The church as a stakeholder must provide an alternative prophetic consciousness by demonstrably involving itself in exposing instigators while not neglecting victims of conflicts. This is because the conflictual scenarios actually depict voicelessness against voicelessness and voicelessness within voicelessness. This is where the prophetic voice would sound louder: investing in education as a project for building virile future leadership for the country and the church with prophetic insight; taking the government to task as a way of providing needed leadership impetus, which the country is in dire need of, and intensifying its locale of interreligious dialogue, thereby providing religious leadership as well.

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