

## **ETHNICISM AND RELIGIOUS CRISIS IN NIGERIA: A STUMBLING BLOCK TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

*Nwabuiro Ideyi*

*Department of Philosophy and Religion*

*Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki*

[nwabuiroideyi@yahoo.com](mailto:nwabuiroideyi@yahoo.com)

### **1. Introduction**

Man arrived in the world without pre-notice by his creator who knows him and where he is in the world and his purpose in it. As man became conscious of himself, the world and his place in it, he has been ever curious to understand the purpose of his being in the world and how to make a success story of that purpose. In his efforts toward that end, he has arrived at the conclusion that an invisible hand that rules his affairs anytime and anywhere in the world is his well-being. A desire for the realization of his well-being is the mother of all his desires in the world- the first and last rung on the ladder of his existence.

What is man's well-being? The concept man's well being is a nebulous concept which calls for down-to-earth explanation in order to leave no one in doubt. Man's well-being is a network of his existential needs. What he seeks to acquire- to have at his beck and call in order to live well and die happy in the world. These needs are legion and among them are: adequate food, shelter, clothing, functional education and health systems; effective communication system; an atmosphere of peace, harmony and progress, security of lives and property; freedoms of thought, speech, assembly, association, rights to privacy, recreation and rest; opportunities to work, save and invest, rule of law and justice, self and collective fulfillment, etc. Man's activities, policies, organizations, institutions, etc, are judged good if they facilitate the attainment of these needs, and bad if they hinder their attainment.

As it is, positive or desirable changes taking place in these needs are regarded as development. That is to say the purpose of development is man's well-being. Through developmental strategies, man strives to harness all resources at his disposal with which to enhance, improve, promote, advance and preserve his well-being. Attainment of this, flowers in the chief goal of life universally acknowledged as happiness, courtesy of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle – the world legendary philosophers (Omoregbe, 2003:93-116). Thus, man's pre-occupation is development because he wants to make a success story of his being in the world. All generations of humanity desire and work to live well and die happy in the world and as well to leave it better than they found it.

Nigerians at the dawn of their country's independence on October 1, 1960 were faced with challenges of development arising from their dreams about the kind of nation they wanted to nurse and nurture to maturity. These dreams served as materials with which to draw national goals for Nigerian citizens to pursue. These national goals or objectives (section 1, sub-section 3) are for building: "a free and democratic society; a just and egalitarian society; a united, strong and self-reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy; a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens", (Ocho, 2005: 412-413).

Nigerians' poor performance in their efforts to actualize these national goals has attracted several descriptions to Nigeria from the views of concerned Nigerian citizens who are not happy the way the only country they can legitimately call theirs is wobbling in the realm of development. For this reason some people see Nigeria as a giant in size but a Lilliputian in worth; a country abundant wealth of resources cannot develop; a country that is a mere geographical expression; a country that is a marriage of inconvenience; a country with both citizens and supplicants as Nigerians; country its unity begins and ends in paper; a country holding a gold medal in corruption. While others see Nigeria as a country where wealth and poverty are sharing the same premises; where justice is for sale;

where democracy is seating in a wheelchair; where law is a respecter of persons; where money and power are pursued at all costs; where corruption is almost a norm; where a rogue in one part of the country is celebrated as a hero in another part; where ethnic loyalty has overshadowed national loyalty, etc. These soul – sapping descriptions of Nigeria are what confront any person interested in the plights of the nation and who insists that a spade must have no other name.

Many factors have contributed to this sorry situation of Nigeria but the paper is only concerned with how ethnicism and religious crisis have contributed to it. Leaning on the creative guidance of common sense, knowledge and wisdom and as well standing on the shoulder of history, the paper seeks to discover the causes and effects of these obstacles to Nigeria's efforts at development and suggests a way out.

## **2. Explanation of Terms**

**Ethnicism:** The term ethnicism is derived from another term ethnicity. The adjectival form of ethnicity is ethnic. The term ethnic as an adjective is used to describe a national, racial or tribal group of people that live in a particular territory under one government. It also refers to characteristics or traits of behaviour or mannerism peculiar to a group or groups of people which could be a nation, race or tribe. Ethnic group usually has common history, language, origin, culture, aspirations, and so on.

From this explanation of ethnicity, the term ethnicism is therefore seen as a network of ideas, dreams, notions, beliefs, opinions, attitudes and behaviours peculiar to a given ethnic group which determine actions and reactions of its members in their interactions with members of other ethnic groups within a polity whether national or international. When the members of an ethnic group are so much attached to their views and activities constituting this network, very much proud of them and strive to set them as standards for themselves and for other ethnic groups to imitate as

well as when the members see themselves as competitors with members of other ethnic groups over the available resources in their political society, ethnicity or ethnicism degenerates to ethnocentrism. When it is so, members of the ethnic group become ethnic fans, extremists and malignants who see the world events from their ethnic lenses and in their interactions with members of other ethnic groups always see their actions as right and actions of others in conflict with theirs as wrong. For them anything done by a member of their ethnic group against a member or members of different ethnic groups, no matter how immoral, wicked and reprehensible it is, he or she is right and must be defended against and protected from outside complaints and attacks. The heartbeat of ethnocentrism is segregation and the attitude of its supporters in relation to the members of other ethnic groups is always malignant.

### **3. Religion**

What is religion? In order to proffer a genuine answer to this question, it is very proper to trace the root of the term religion. Religion is derived from three Latin words: 'Ligare' meaning to bind, 'Relegere' meaning to unite or to link, and 'Religio' meaning relationship. Thus, the meaning of religion from its root shows that it is a link or an established relationship between two beings human being and a divine being believed to exist. In their relationship the former sees his existence and survival in the world as the handwork of the latter. For that the human being must believe in the divine being (the Supreme Being), worship him and live his life in the world according to the will of his creator.

Some scholars have tried to explain the meaning of religion. Charles M. Ezekwugo in his own explanation says:

Man originally started to seek for aid in spiritual forces because of problems. Such problems were the ones that defied human solutions. Thus man remained helpless in the hands of evil forces. The evil forces were considered inferior to or not

sufficiently powerful to hold man to ransom. Man thus conceived the idea that a higher force existed. This higher force could, if appeased, atone or propitiate, nullify whatever maledictions, taboos or malicious intention of man's malignant enemy, the devil and his cohorts. And so was born a body of knowledge and a way of life known as religion. Religion simply defined, means "a way to God". (1992:77)

In other words, religion is recognition of and belief in a higher force or being called God by man which has supreme power over everything including problems or evil forces man is facing. For that if man leads his life according to God's will, God is ever ready to use his power to assist him to get rid of his problems or evil forces in whatever form they appear.

For Haralembos, paraphrased by Kingsley N. Okoro, "Religion is a global socio-spiritual phenomenon, which binds human beings to their god or ultimate reality and their fellow human beings. Religion is also considered as a system of belief and practices by which a group of people struggle with the ultimate problems of life" (Uka, Okoro and Kanu, 2010:324).

For William James religion is "the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they comprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine", cited by S.A. Ekanem and A.E. Asira in (Uduigwomen). For Max Muller "Religion is a mental faculty of disposition which is independent of sense or reason, which enables man to apprehend the infinite under different names and varying guides" and for A.C. Bocquet religion is "... a fixed relationship between the human self and some non-human entity, the sacred, the supernatural, the self-existent, the absolute or simply, God" – all cited by S.A. Ekanem and A E. Asia in (Uduigwomen, 2006: 57).

These views from these scholars are attempts to explain or define religion. But whatever angle one looks at religion, the truth is that religion is recognition of the existence of a Supreme Being or Higher Being and an acknowledgement that this Supreme Being created him and has power over him and hence man is dependent upon Him for his survival in the world. For man to worship this Higher Being and do His will at all times and in all places is the first and last teaching of religion to man.

#### **4. God**

The Supreme Being who created both heaven and earth and everything in them is called different names by different tongues among which are God, Allah, Chineke, Jehovah, etc. But in this paper the term God is used. A part from being the Supreme Creator of all things animate and inanimate what other attributes does God possess as perceived by man? According to Jim Unah,

Aristotle and Aquinas have both furnished a static conception of God. Aristotle calls God the Unmoved Mover, the Uncaused cause or the pure act without potency. According to him, God is a self-thinking thought who is eternally the same and endlessly contemplating himself. The only object of God's concern is his own person. He has created the world and has since forgotten it. Following Aristotle, Aquinas has said that God is all-powerful, all knowing, immutable and eternal. The substance of Aristotle's and Aquinas' thinking is that God is a fossilized Being who is unaffected by what we do, (1995:58).

According to Joseph I. Omoregbe some later metaphysicians have stated some other attributes of God in addition to the ones pointed out by Aristotle. Deduction from those attributes shows that:

He is eternal (i.e. he has no beginning), omniscient, omnipotent, incorporeal, spiritual, simple, infinite, etc. He is not wise, but wisdom itself, not only good, but goodness itself, life itself, etc. To say that God possesses these qualities would imply that he derived them from another source, but he is himself the source of all these qualities and they are identical with his being. (2003:148)

For Jim Unah all believers in God are agreed that he is "... eminently good, perfectly just ... who listens to prayers, who grants requests, who can reward or punish, who gets angry, who, however, is merciful, kind and living. He is the maker and sustainer of the universe. He is providence par excellence", (Unah, 1995: 42-43).

In summary God is the Self-created Being, the uncaused cause, the Unmoved Mover and the source of every other being in existence; He is omnipresent because he is everywhere and every time; omnipotent because he has supreme power over everything animate and inanimate and omniscient because he is all-knowing and knows every being right from conception. From the moral perspective, God is love, goodness, truth, kindness, justice, mercy, forgiveness, patience, honesty, freedom, reward, punishment and all other positive values. For example, it is because of his love and mercy for man that God continues to endure man's transgressions right from the Garden of Eden-man the only being that made God regret to have created him. Also it is because God is punishment that any being that breaks any of the laws controlling the entire universe is punished accordingly.

As it has been seen, the world together with everything in it is not a product of an accident but of purpose. For that it behooves upon man to discover the purpose of his being in the world and live his life in accordance with that purpose. To do that is to comply with the will of God. And the beacon light that will help man to attain

this end is to observe these moral maxims: (a) Treat others as you would like them to treat you; (b) Love your neighbour as you love yourself; (c) Leave the world better than you found it.

Unless one strictly observes these moral maxims, one's dream to discover and attain the purpose of one's existence in the world and one's wish to do God's will, without mincing words, will begin and terminate as dream and wish. When that is the case, one becomes a disappointment to God, a malice to humanity, a misery to oneself, a virus to one's friends, a laughing stock to one's enemies, a relic to history, a problem to philosophy, a demon to religion, a social misfit to sociology, a crippled mind to psychology, a reject to science and a proverb to future generations. Adolf Hitler was a good example of this disaster. But when the opposite is the case, one becomes a crown to God, a lord of creation, a light to humanity, happiness to oneself, a miracle to one's enemies and a reference point to all intellectual disciplines in matters of development anyway and anytime in the world. Thomas Jefferson one time American president was a good example of this boost to humanity.

## **5. Development**

The term development is very popular among human beings to the extent that everything they do be it setting up a family, nursing and nurturing a child, setting up schools, governing states, establishing markets, enacting peace treaties, preparing for wars, searching for knowledge, building houses, cultivating friendships, creating religions and religious sects, establishing industries, etc, they have that thought at the back of their minds. Why is it so? This is because: first, that the thought for development is innate in man. For ever since man became aware of his presence in the world, to improve and continue to improve his conditions of living has been his first and last project. Second, because the purpose of development is peoples' well- being. Third, because man's claim of rationality as his natural endowment which gives him an edge

over other animals is considered true if he continues to make the purpose of development a success story in the world.

As experience – the best teacher- has shown, the popularity of development among human beings has equally resulted in distortion and misunderstanding of its meaning and purpose. Since nobody knowingly and willingly does wrong which means that every wrong done is as a result of ignorance, according to Socrates the great philosopher of all time, it means that distortion and misunderstanding of meaning and purpose of development is due to peoples' ignorance of what development means and connotes in all its ramifications. For that reason, leaning on human nature, experience, philosophy and history the paper seeks to explain the origin, meaning, purpose and nature of development.

Concerning the origin of development, man arrived in the world without pre-notice and also unaware of his presence in the world. As he became aware of his presence and as well conscious of his environment, he became curious about his being in the world. His curiosity led him to asking series of questions such as: who is responsible for his being in the world? Where was he before his journey into the world? What is his mission in the world? How does he relate with his fellow human beings and other beings? Why the phenomenon of death? Where does he go after life? His attempts to resolve these questions gave birth to development.

In his attempts to resolve the first question he discovered that he was brought into existence by the Supreme Being called God; the second that he was with God; the third, that his mission is to do God's will and also attain the ultimate goal of life-happiness; the fourth that he is to play the role of light for his fellow humans to find their way to the ultimate goal and as well to leave the world better than they found it; the fifth so that man will comply with law of nature which says every living thing must grow and die; and the sixth that where he leaves to after here is a matter to be decided by

his Creator based on what he has made of his existence in the world.

From these efforts by man to resolve these fundamental questions about his being in the world, it is obvious that development as far as man is concerned means recognition and acknowledgement of God as his creator and sustainer in the world. It also means all positive ideas, dreams, thoughts and activities entrained and embarked upon by man with a view to doing God's will and as well enhancing, improving, promoting, protecting and advancing the well-being of mankind as a whole which flowers in happiness—the ultimate goal of life. Fortunately for man all the resources he needs to make a success story of his life journey in the world by actualizing his ultimate goal are at his disposal.

As already hinted the purpose of development is peoples' well-being. The people's well-being is a network of their needs. These needs include among other things adequate food, shelter, clothing, access to education, functional health system, sound economic system, opportunities for employment, savings and investment, security of lives and properties, rule of law, freedoms of speech, association, assembly, thought; atmosphere of peace, harmony and progress, good governance, observance of moral values, etc.

Actualization of these needs has been what people all over the world have been dreaming of and as well the goal they have been pursuing with religious zeal since their life journey in the world. Persons, institutions, ideas, theories and practices that contribute to their attainment are considered good and those that do not are considered bad. If it is persons that are faltering, they are advised to change their minds and thus turn a new leaf. If it is institutions, ideas, theories, etc, they are improved upon so as to be relevant and supportive to peoples' efforts to attain their needs.

Some scholars have contributed to the clarification of meaning and purpose of development. Since development is as large as life-

meaning it has different dimensions which correspond with different spheres of human existence. Scholars more often than not, conceive the meaning of development from the sphere or aspect of human existence they are interested in. For instance, scholars like W. Arthur Lewis, Fei John and Constur, paraphrased by Monday L. Igbafen, conceive development from economic perspective. For them,

... a developed human society is one which the Gross National (sic) Product (GDP) or per capita income experiences sustained growth. What this implies is that development is an increase in the GDP of nation states. This is, however, the classical economist perception of development which until recently has dominated the discourse of development. (2003:1)

Joseph I. Omoregbe, acknowledges the importance of other dimensions of development in human society, but emphasises the importance of moral dimension of development as the bedrock upon which other dimensions can stand and make meaningful and positive impacts on the people's well-being. In his words:

Moral development and maturity on the part of the citizens of a country are pre-requisites for the development of that country. Indeed, moral development is the most important aspect of national development, for there can be no development of a country if its citizens are morally undeveloped and immature. Moral development on the part of the citizens is therefore *a condition-sine-qua-non* for development of any nation. It must precede the economic development through modern technology. Neither science nor technology can develop a country if its citizens are not morally developed. How can there be development in which

public funds are embezzled by those who control them and who are supposed to use them for developmental projects? How can there be development in a country in which self-interest is the dominant rule? Nor can the economy of any country develop if its citizens lack a moral sense of duty, the right attitude to work and a sense of moral responsibility to the society (2003:197).

Sure, man is the measure of all things, courtesy of Protagoras, and for that reason human or moral development should be at the centre of all development. For it is only morally developed citizens of any country will see, understand and appreciate with their eyes and hearts the fact presented by Habu Dawaki that: “The world is getting smaller everyday. We need each other to survive. We must learn to live together and win the race of life together (2005: 125-shake Hands...).

While Adebayo Adedeji, cited by S.K.B. Asante, supports the views of Omoregbe and Dawaki about development. In his words:

... we need to set in motion a development process that put individual at the very centre of the development effort; a development process that is both human and humane without necessarily softening the discipline that goes with development but which enhances man’s personality; a development process that does not alienate man from his society and culture but rather develops his self-confidence in himself and identifies his interest with those of his society and thereby develop his ability and willingness for self-reliance. (Omimode and Synge, 1995:6)

In other words any development process that is worthy of its name should focus on human persons; should help them to see and

harness what they have and show them how to use what they have to achieve their individual and collective goals in the atmosphere of peace, harmony, love, justice and co-operation in the interest of all.

Lawrence Ocho in his own contribution holds the view that development should be about people- their moral upbringing; and for that reason education which is an effective tool to actualize the purpose of development is a necessity. Thus in his words “Education is the process through which individuals are made participating members of their society... it is a process through which man realizes his potentialities and used them for self-fulfillment in the services of himself and others (2005:66).

Concerning the goal of development, the world development Report (1972:34) says: “Development is about improving the well-being of people. Raising living standard and improving education, health and equality of opportunity... Ensuring political and civic rights is a broader development goals”. In support of this view Christopher Uroh holds that the common item on the agenda of all human deliberations as regards development “...is the fact that the human person is taken, not as a means to an end but as an end itself. The central concern of any development project, therefore, is how to make human beings lead a better life (1998:3)

## **6. National development**

The word ‘national’ is an adjective derived from the word ‘nation’. A nation according to the Advanced Learner’s Dictionary is “large community of people usually sharing a common history, language, etc, and living in a particular territory under one government”. Some scholars see a nation as the same thing as a tribe. The only difference is that while a nation is a large community of people, a tribe is a smaller community of people but they all, according to Bodern Heimer cited by Jim Unah, refer to (a) people with common language, custom and mores; (b) with common historical, socio-psychological and political background; (c) a sense of

belonging; and may or may not occupy a definite territory. For instance, before the creation of a state of Israel in 1948, the Jews had no territory (1993:3).

An obvious impression from these explanations about a nation or a tribe is that there is a sense of unity among the constituting people and they pursue their individual and collective goals of life with due respect to that sense. If quarrel occurs as it is bound to happen among people in their daily interactions, their sense of unity enables them to settle the quarrel quickly at the table dialogue and this allows peace, harmony and progress to reign.

In this work a nation is understood and used as a country. Nigeria is country and it is composed of 36 states and the federal capital territory Abuja. Sometimes Nigeria is discussed from the angles of its spheres of activities engaged in by its citizens such as politics, education, health, religion, economy, social relations, communication, etc. Development, that is, positive or desirable changes are expected to be taking place in these spheres in all the 36 states including federal capital territory. When that is the case national development is said to be occurring. Thus, national development can be defined as an aggregate of development indices going on in every part of Nigeria. If for any reason any state is lagging behind in the development indices, the national development is compromised and Nigeria as a whole suffers setbacks.

Throwing more light on national development, B.O. Elugbe, paraphrased by Godspower N. Omorodion says that "... national development relates to the growth of the nation in terms of unity, education, economic wellbeing, mass participation government, patriotism and so an" (Udosen, 2006:26). While Joseph I. Omoregbe in his own contribution says that:

A nation is a living organization with many parts  
each with a distinct function and a distinct

contribution to make toward the well being of the whole. Each part needs to be developed; hence national development is the development of all the parts of the living organism which a nation is. (2003:194)

In other words, each part is as important as any other part and the end results are positive thoughts, actions and activities taking places in each of them which constitute what is called national development. Therefore, national development is a network of desirable activities in all spheres of a nation geared towards improvement of the well-being of its entire citizens

### **7. Causes of Ethnicism and Religious Crisis in Nigeria**

As already stated, ethnicism and religious crisis are, among the problems which have messed up Nigerians' efforts in development at all levels especially at national level. To the extent that Nigeria is now a history, a proverb, a byword as a country abundant wealth of resources- human and material – at its disposal cannot develop. Concerning ethnicism and religious crisis certain factors have been identified as responsible among them are:

First is abuse of these natural endowments in man: self-interest and social (group) interest. On the authority of the best teacher in the world, experience, no man is ready to dedicate himself to, remain active on his duty post and play out his best on any project his personal interest is not included. His self-interest is held in a high esteem to the extent that he regards its recognition, acknowledgement, promotion and preservation as the first law. He as well acknowledges the importance of his social interest as he is a social being who needs attention, concern and support of his fellow humans to attain his goals in the world.

A positive use of self- interest and social interest as a great enhancement of human relations, results in making every man to see himself as his brothers' keeper, a social bridge builder, a peace

maker, a problem solver, an agent of progress, an advocate of justice and unity and as well his brothers' promotion or demotion, joys or pains, etc, as his own. While negative use of self-interest makes it to degenerate to selfishness which is a moral disease, falsehood, stealing, violence, wickedness, etc, which have inflicted upon mankind all kinds of suffering. Also negative use of social or group interest makes it fall from grace to grass of ethnicism- a social concern which has given birth to group pride, arrogance, vanity, conceit, complacency, malignancy, etc, which have served as bricks used by victims to build social walls between them and opponent groups in their social interactions in a polity.

Nigerians are a byword of abuse of both self and social interests. The result is a continuous emphasis on personal or group interests at the expense of others' interest. Thus ethnic groups that make up Nigeria have been struggling over the resources of the country. The more one corners the nations' resource for oneself or one's group, the more one is noticed, heralded, esteemed and celebrated as a hero by the members of his ethnic group. Thus 'might is right'; "end justifies the means", etc, become the language of the strong; and 'live and let live', "love your neighbour as you love yourself", "treat others as you will like them treat you", etc, become the language of the weak.

Second is the advent of colonialism in Nigeria. Colonialism is a foreign rule exercised by one country over another country without the consent of the latter. This kind of rule was imposed on Nigeria by Britain who doubled as a slave master as well as a colonial master to some African countries in which Nigeria was among for so many years.

During the Colonial administration British representatives in Nigeria never hid the fact that the economic interest of their home country was the overruling hand that initiated, prescribed and determined all their thoughts, actions and activities in Nigeria. For that reason a view that supported their economic interest no matter

how destructive it was to the natives was welcomed; and one opposed to it no matter how good it was to the natives was rejected.

For this reason conglomeration of empires, kingdoms and states with their teeming tribes or ethnic groups exhibiting different cultures now called Nigeria, courtesy of Miss Flora Shaw who later became the wife of Sir Lord Frederick Lugard the first Governor General of Nigeria, found themselves in the marriage of inconvenience with their hands joined together in the amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914.

For the fear of solidarity among these ethnic groups against them, the colonialists on the surface operated through the Indirect Rule System which involved the use of traditional rulers accountable to them in running the public affairs of different regions in which the country was divided. While beyond the surface, was the Divide – and- Rule System which emphasized the differences among the ethnic groups and thus making it impossible for them to see themselves as one and thus unite and fight their cause on the platform of solidarity. Even though the constituting ethnic groups of Nigeria later ignored their differences and united to fight against colonial rule which resulted in their country's independence on October 1 1960, these perceptions of their differences re-surfaced in the post independence and their burning flames have been alive up till today, courtesy of ethnic fans and religious fanatics.

Third is ethnic politics. Politics is an art of governance which involves a contest for positions of power. As an art it has rules which govern the contest and all other activities taking place in it which all actors in political realm must observe. Its end is to harness, enhance, promote, advance and distribute available resources in a nation in such a way that all interests- individual, group and national- are recognized and conciliated in a manner that promote the well – being of the entire citizenry. Those occupying positions of power are under obligation to see to it that politics

attends its sole aim. Olusegun Oladipo in his own contribution says:

Politics, ordinarily and in the best traditions is a noble art, primarily concerned with the conciliation of interests in a society in a rule-governed manner. It is not an end in itself. Rather, it is a means to the achievement in any human community of a condition of freedom in which the people are able to perform their duties to their society and pursue their interests in a manner that promote the growth and development of the society. (1999:29)

This is the aim of politics about which all human societies strive day in day out to achieve. But in Nigeria the efforts of Nigerians towards that end have always been thwarted, wrecked and aborted due to ethnic politics. Ethnic politics is a struggle among the constituting ethnic groups in Nigeria over the available national resources. Each group strives to corner the lion share of the resources for its members. In the process politics has become a do – or- die affair, erecting walls between ethnic groups and individuals, letting loose thought- provoking contumelies among the people and regarding national unity as a relic of history which has no place in the present scheme of things.

Abubakar Dangiwa Umar, the conscience of the nation, highly disturbed by the widening gap which the annulment of the June 12, 1993 general election had caused among the ethnic groups in the country, writes to the head of state Sani Abacha to do something about the matter so as to save the nation from disintegration. In his view, paraphrased by John Okwoeze Odey, “The divisions that had arisen among the various ethnic groups in the country had become so deep and so devastating that they have become a simmering volcanic discontent waiting for the slightest opportunity to explode,” (2004:30). Odey equally observes that: “In Nigeria people generally try to protect the interests of those who come

from the same ethnic divide with them whether those whose interests they defend are right or wrong” (2004:42).

Ethnic politics among the ethnic groups in Nigeria has resulted in many explosive crises which one of them saw Nigerians engaged in civil war which lasted thirty months starting from 1966 when the military took over power. This ethnic politics has let loose among Nigerians especially the rich and powerful corruption, greed, robbery and violence which have made Nigeria’s abundant resources scarce in the interest of a few individuals and some ethnic groups at the expense of teeming number of individuals and ethnic groups, and nation’s co-operate existence. As far back as sixties when Nigerians won their country’s independence, ethnic politics has been bulldozing political terrain of Nigeria to the detriment of the country’s dreams of a great nation where one lives for all and all live for one in atmosphere of peace, harmony, love, justice, progress, co-operation and development. This ugly situation made Alhaji Tafawa Balewa who later became the first prime Minister of Nigeria according to J. Osutokun to lament in 1947 that “Since the amalgamation of Southern and Northern provinces in 1914, Nigeria has existed as one country only on paper .... It is still far from being united” (Akinyemi, et al, 1980:99).

Fourth is slave trade. Before the advent of colonialists in Nigeria there was already a phenomenon of slavery and its victims were called slaves. These were usually people captured during a war between one tribe or ethnic group and another. The captives (slaves) were distributed among the elders of the victorious tribe and the former lived with the latter serving them. The obedient and hardworking slaves often regained their freedom and thus enjoyed the rights of free people.

This was the kind of slavery practised in Nigeria before the advent of the foreigners who came and changed slavery into a business venture. Slaves became goods to be sold to those who needed them

at a high price. Slave traders from foreign lands met with some Nigerian chiefs and provided to them valuable goods in exchange of slaves which they carried to their home countries for sale. These chiefs never sold their own people, their tribal people but rather sent warriors to go to neighbouring tribes and captured people to be sold as slaves. This action brought serious and deep quarrels among the tribes which made them not to see eye to eye on any issue. Each saw nothing good in the other except potential slaves and for that they were always at daggers drawn at each other peeping through the windows in the thick walls of sentiments separating them.

Nothing is permanent in the world except change says a Greek philosopher Heraclitus. Therefore, with time both slavery and slave trade were stopped and the tribal groups found themselves united as one country called Nigeria through amalgamation of 1914 under the directive of Lord Frederick Lugard, the British chief representative then in Nigeria. While the constituting ethnic groups were trying to see good in each other and outlive the injuries of the past occasioned by slavery and slave trade, their foreign rulers, conscious of their economic interests felt that solidarity among these natives was likely to raise political questions against their rule over them.

For that reason they introduced “the divide- and- rule system” though unofficial but was a platform upon which they continued their administration. The motive of this system was to prevent the ethnic groups from uniting their forces against them. So, it sowed the seed of segregation in their midst, nursed and nurtured it to maturity by emphasising their differences and undermining their similarities. They at first succeeded partially and later failed completely as Nigerians regained their freedom and secured the independence of their country in 1960. That notwithstanding the divide- and- rule was revived by neocolonial Nigerian leaders who perpetuated it then and still doing it through ethnic politics to the present time.

Fifth is religious bigotry. Religion is among the greatest virtues ever happened to man in the world. Good deeds it has done to man are so many. Among them are: it has helped man to understand, acknowledge and appreciate the fact that he and the rest of the universe are creation of another being – the Supreme Being. It has also helped man to understand who, whom, what, why and where he is in the realm of existence and how he can use knowledge and skills arising from this exposure to make a success story of his journey in the world. Also it has as well left man with no iota of doubt that he is in the world to do the will of his creator. The will of his creator is expressed in these three universal moral maxims: Love-love your neighbour as you love yourself; the Golden Rule-treat others as you will like them treat you; development- strive to be positive change you wish to see in the world and as well leave the world better than you found it.

If man observes these moral maxims, God, Jehovah, Allah, Chineke, Oludumare or what ever name the Supreme Being is called, will be happy with him and man himself will be surprised to notice that earth is a version of God's kingdom. But if abused due to ignorance, pride, arrogance, selfishness, haughtiness, greed, malignancy, etc., man will discover he has made a hellhole of earth, and thus becomes a disappointment to God. Man is guilty of the latter; hence God regretted to have created him, to have adorned his head with a cap of creative thinking.

In Nigeria this abuse of moral maxims has let loose all manners of moral vices in religious realm. Religion which is supposed to be what it is a universal canopy providing hope, security, peace, harmony, positive attitude and development has been privatized, ill-directed and segregated to the extent that the adherents of one religion will see adherents of other religions as malignant competitors, opponents and enemies. For instance in Nigeria the three major religions are: Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam. Adherents of Traditional Religion are tolerant of Christianity and Islam while Christians and Muslims do not

tolerant each other and the both dismiss adherents of traditional religion as pagans and non-issues often directed by Satan, believed to be the chief cause of problems in the world.

For this reason, hatred, malice, disagreement, quarrel and war have become common features in relationships between Christians and Muslims who are fated to live together in one country, to share dreams of their country and to join minds and hands together to actualize the dreams of their country among which are: “a free and democratic society; (b) a just and egalitarian society...” (Ocho, 2005; 4 12). In other words, every Nigerian is free to choose any religion he or she likes to worship the same creator. But Christians and Muslims observe this in paper and not in practice. That is why each group are making efforts to force the other to accept their own faith as new converts or quit existence being a misnomer in the world. They see nothing wrong in these their thoughts and actions. No wonder Blaise Pascal, commenting on the tragedy of intolerance among the different religious adherents, says: “Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction” (Dawaki, 2005: 37 Shake Hands...) Religious bigots from both faiths consider it a big and unpardonable sin to tolerate and deal with each other for whatever reason.

Sixth is discrepancy in development. Discrepancy in development among the constituent ethnic groups is one of the thought provoking issues in Nigeria. For due to ethnic politics which gives birth to ethnic leaders occupying national positions, the country's amenities are not evenly distributed among the constituent units of the country. The ethnic leaders in positions of power at national level usually use the opportunity to provide a lot of amenities such as good roads, functional health system, well-equipped schools, employment opportunities, appointments, etc, to their areas at the expense of other areas whose sons and daughters are not among those in the positions of power. The creator and distributor of country's amenities is political power and this power has remained

for too long in one part of the country – the Northern part as if other parts are just appendages to Nigeria.

This lack of power shift was recognized by Abubakar Dangiwa Umar as a serious threat to the unity of our country Nigeria as he felt it has made Nigeria seem to belong to the people of the North alone. He pointed out that when Nigeria was 38 years old as an independent country the North had ruled Nigeria for 35 years. So when Sani Abacha told the people that he had come to pull the nation out of the precipice, Umar says the “people thought there was going to be power-shift and there was that opportunity to have power shift to the south, so that at least we can reassure people that the country belongs to everybody” (Odey, 2004:41). So at the time Nigeria celebrated the golden jubilee of its independence anniversary- 50 years old, power shifted to South but once which lasted 8 years under the former President Olusegun Obasanjo. So out of 50 years Nigeria has lasted the North has ruled the country for 39 year and the South 11 years. The power has again shifted to South – South under President Goodluck E. A. Jonathan.

Thus, the concentration of power in one part of the country has caused uneven distribution of country’s amenities among the Nigerian people. And this has made the affected people to feel marginalized and sad over their unjust treatment. This heightens ethnic loyalty at the expense of national unity. The Niger Delta in the South is a good example where the lion share of the resources that sustain the entire nation come from and yet the area is a sorry sight to behold when compared to some other areas like kano, Kaduna, Plateau, Lagos, etc, in the country in terms of development. This has given rise to the Nigeria Delta crisis which has advertised Nigeria the world over as a place where justice is seating in a wheelchair, the hands that feed the nation are bitten and wealth and poverty are sharing the same space.

## **8. The Effects of Ethnicism and Religious Crisis on the National Development.**

The preceding discourses have shown that ethnicism and religious crisis in the country have been a serious setback to Nigerians in their dreams, efforts and aspirations to develop the only country they have like other developed countries in the world. Their dreams, sad to say, have remained mere dreams, their efforts unproductive and their aspirations barren due to the negative activities of ethnic fans and religious bigots which have disfigured the face of the nation from beauty to ugliness, wealth to poverty, the pride of Africa to the shame of Africa, from unity to disunity, etc. The adverse effects of these roadblocks on the national development are legion but only a few will be discoursed here.

First is a threat to the country's unity. Ethnic and religious conflicts promote ethnic loyalty among the ethnic or tribal groups in the country and undermine national loyalty. The undermining of national loyalty has reduced the unity of the country to paper unity which begins and ends in the constitution of our dear country as it is never observed in reality. For this reason some leaders, if not all, at national level are national leaders in name but personal and ethnic leaders in reality as they are more concerned with their personal and ethnic group interests and ready to do anything to enhance both at the expense of national interest.

No event that demonstrates this more clearly than a reaction of one of the so-called national leaders in the person of Olusegun Obasanjo when he was the president of Nigeria to some Muslim fanatics' protests in kano on October 12, 2000 against America's reprisal mission on Afghanistan believed to be harbouring Osama bin Laden the main target of their attack which caused a lot of damages in the country resulting in death of not less than 200 Nigerians and destruction of a lot of properties. It happened that the president was in Paris, France attending a UNESCO conference. When he came back and saw losses inflicted on Nigerians by the protesters, his reaction was less than what was expected of a national leader as nothing was done to the wreckers

of the havocs. John Okwoeze Odey commenting on his reaction says:

When he came back, he visited the city of Kano and after seeing the extent of the damage done there, he declared as usual: “we won’t tolerate the destruction of lives and property. Just using an excuse whatever to start breaking into shops, destroying buildings and causing disaffection is not the best”. Once more, and as usual, the president promised that he would dig to the root of the matter. Having made that empty and deceitful promise, he directed his attention then to work by hook, by crook and by intrigue to ensure his second term in office. He achieved that goal through the madness called election 2003. Till today, almost three years after, he is yet to keep his promise of digging into the root of Kano’s religious intolerance and consequent bloodshed. (2004:22)

His unfulfilled promise was a delay tactics to calm the nerves of the concerned Nigerians, the relations of those killed and those whose properties were destroyed in the disastrous event who wanted to pay these wreckers of lives and properties in their own coins. What was uppermost in his mind was his second term in office. For that he did not want to mar his chance by bringing the protesters cum destroyers to book nor did he want to create the impression in the minds of those Nigerians who were disturbed by what happened that he was not going to do something about it for the safety and security of lives and properties in Nigeria. He pursued his selfish interest and succeeded and thus allowed his promise to remain a mere promise until he left the office. The events like this are as many as the number of Nigerian leaders. Hence the main problem of Nigeria is selfish leaders who are primarily concerned with their personal or ethnic interests to the

detriment of the nation's growth, stability, development, democracy, unity, peace, security and survival.

Second, is abuse of human values among Nigerians. Human values are those values which have made man's existence in the world meaningful. Among them are fear of God, respect for human life, love, peace, tolerance, forbearance, forgiveness, kindness, patience, faithfulness, devotion to duty, meekness, self-control, humility, knowledge, truth, honesty and so on. But the value of all values is fear of God (since man is in the world solely to do God's will), followed by respect for human life (since human life is wearing the image and likeness of God). These values are ends themselves while other values serve as means to attain them.

But these highly esteemed human values have been so much abused in the hands of ethnic fans and warriors, and religious fanatics. In any event of disagreements between them and their fellow Nigerians, they usually ignore these life sustaining values and quickly initiate and execute mayhem meant to bring about bloodshed of some innocent Nigerians and destruction of their hard earned properties. For example kano in December 1980 was bloodbath when Maitatsine and his group of fanatics struck and killed 4177 people at one fell swoop" Newswatch, 1987: 6 (cited in Odey, 2004: 76). All other states in the Northern part of the country especially Boronu, kaduna, Bauchi and Plateau have witnessed several losses of lives and properties due to religious crises. If fear of God can be so ignored and human life so wasted despite the fact that they are the value of all values, then what become of other values such as love, truth, justice, honesty, etc; are better imagined than described. It is for this reason an embezzler of public funds at national level is treated as a rogue by other Nigerians while members of his ethnic group and his religious faith treat him as a hero.

Third is lack of trust and fellow-feeling among the ethnic groups and adherents of different religious faiths in Nigeria. Trust is belief

by a person in the goodness, strength and ability of others. It is confidence he or she has in others because he or she considers them as reliable, trustworthy, honest, etc, in their attitudes to life. A person's interaction with others is based on this trust and continues as long as the trust is intact with its flame of confidence. The interaction stops when doubt comes up in the mind of an interacting person and takes the place of his trust. While fellow feeling is a positive attitude of concern a person has for others. He is happy with them and celebrates with them over their joys and successes and as well sympathies with them over their pains and failures. Thus without trust and fellow-feeling human interactions and co-operation in the adventure of life will be unproductive and life itself will be destitute of sustaining ingredients.

But it is sad to observe that trust and fellow-feeling are among the first casualties in the hands of ethnic fans and religious fanatics who have developed a mindset which positions them to see people outside their narrow ethnic groups and religious faiths as unhealthy competitors, evil-agents and as a mirage and dismissed them with a wave of hand. People are agents of development and no development can take place among these people living in the same country but who do not trust one another; who do not interact in atmosphere of mutual support; who do not share goals of the nation and exchange views concerning how to realize them using strategies collectively adopted as good.

Fourth, is bad leadership. A leader of any group be it a family, a peer group, a community, an organization, an association, a religion, a state or a country is held by his followers as a role model and they look up to him for direction in every sphere of life. His ideas, thoughts, actions and mannerisms are highly respected and imitated by his followers. A good leader inspires his followers to a great height and thus enables them to focus their attention, energy, time and other resources on things and ways of living that will enhance, promote, improve and advance their well-being. If the leader happens to be a bad one his bad ideas, thoughts, actions

and mannerisms are equally imitated especially by the unwary people among his followers who regard him as God's or Allah's representative on earth.

This way of looking up to a leader has caused a lot of setbacks to Nigerians' efforts at development. Some leaders- spiritual and secular- drunk with their positions become careless with their thoughts, utterances and activities which have many times ignited the fire of ethnic and religious flames with its devastating consequences on co-existence, peace, unity and development of Nigeria. For instance, Sheikh Abubakar Mohammed Gumi, in 1987, was quoted as saying:

If we want Nigeria to be a good country, to join hands, we have to follow one faith (Islam). If we follow one faith we will be a good country ..... Nigerian unity, if I am to do my best, is to try to convert Christians and non- Moslems as much as possible. Until the other religious become minority and they will not affect our society. (Odey, 2003: 29 – 30)

So, for him Nigeria is not a good country and cannot become one unless all Christians and non – Moslems in Nigeria become Moslems by discarding their own faiths and embracing Islamic faith. He should not stop there but go further to say that before Nigeria will become a good country every Nigerian whether male or female should discard his or her name and adopt his name being the only name recognized by Allah.

If a leader of Sheikh Gumi's position could intentionally make such a statement it becomes so obvious that religion in the hands of shortsighted leaders is a dangerous weapon, in fact, more dangerous than any deadly poison. And if gold can rust what becomes of iron is anybody's guess. In another occasion, Sheikh Gumi was quoted as saying: "Christianity is nothing" (Soyinka,

1999: 6). The former president of Nigeria Olusegun Obasanjo “a Christian” by religious faith was also quoted to have said: “CAN my foot” (Odey, 2004: 42) in his reaction to question put to him by the Chairman of Christian Association of Nigeria, Rev. Yakubu Pam concerning ethnic, religious and political crises in Plateau State which had resulted in declaration of state of emergency in the state.

These types of antagonistic statements which cause segregation among Nigerians, which destroy instead of build the nation and which have made Nigeria to remain a Gant in size but a Lilliputian in moral worth are common among most of our leaders. The first rug on the ladder of nation building is cooperation among the people. This all important rug is missing due to the activities of our leaders. As neo-colonial leaders they may forget any other thing they learnt from our former colonial masters but not “the divide-and – rule” Nigeria applied during the colonial era and inherited by our present leaders who are always alert to ensure that any hint of solidarity among the people are destroyed at the incubate stage. For there is nothing tyrannical leaders fear so more than people’s solidarity as history has shown no tyrant the world over has ever faced its devastating flames without being consumed. This lack of solidarity among the people has been a big stumbling block to Nigerians’ efforts at national development.

#### **9. The way out**

Nigerians, sad to observe, are at the sea of problems, concerning their existence on this portion of God’s province called Nigeria, sailing without a landing point in view. All their efforts as regards solving their numerous problems such as bad leadership, apathy of the masses, ethnicism, religious crises, political manipulation, poverty, corruption, ignorance, etc, have been one step forward and two steps backward. The reason for their predicaments among others is because they are a part of their problems to be solved. This is a fact they must accept and ready themselves to accept truth

about which history is owing to mankind as a whole and them in particular.

First, is that all the ethnic groups that constitute a sovereign state known as Nigeria should accept the fact that Nigeria belongs to all of them. For that they should join hands together to work for the realization of their country's dreams: (a) a free and democratic society; (b) a just and egalitarian society; (c) a united, strong and self-reliant nation; (d) a great and dynamic economy; (e) a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens (Ocho, 2005: 413), which they have all accepted as worthy to be pursued and sustained with all the resources at their disposal.

Nigeria's population is large, about 140 million. But this number is far less than the population of the countries like India which is about 700 million and China which is about 2 billion and all the ethnic or tribal groups that constitute each of the countries still live together in peace and work together for the enhancement, promotion and advancement of their individual and collective well-being. Both China and India like Nigeria had experiences of colonialism, but unlike Nigeria, they have outlived the negative aspects of it and improved and expanded the positive aspects of it and continue to improve on them using their creative resources. Hence as today the both countries are industrialized and the resulting positive impacts on their citizens and the humanity as a whole have earned them a place in the comity of developed nations of the world. Therefore Nigerians should outlive their illusive differences and unite as one body which they are and pursue the actualization of the dreams of their country which is only possible in the atmosphere of peace, unity and cooperation.

Second is good leadership. No nation can find its way and experience positive development in all spheres of its endeavour without the light of good leadership. A good leader comes from the people, lives his entire life for the people and dies for the people. A good leader is the chief servant of the nation and his dreams, ideas,

thoughts and activities always zero in on how to enhance, improve, promote, protect and advance the well-being of citizens as a whole irrespective of their ethnic groups and religious faiths. A good leader is a role model and an inspirer and people look up to him as a holder of light for them to find their ways to their individual and collective destinations. A good leader in Nigerian political terrain, smeared by citizens' fears of insecurity, pains of inflicted injuries, worries about the next target of suicide bombers- courtesy of Boko Haram, weaknesses of the moral life of their leaders, sorrows about the killing of innocent Nigerians, devastating poverty , etc, caused by frequent political, ethnic, social and religious crises in the country, should know that Nigerians as a whole need love, care, trust, justice, understanding , recognition, encouragement, feeling of belonging and atmosphere of peace, freedom and creative thinking to play out their best in the areas of their callings in the field of development.

Thus, given this situation, Nigeria needs a leader or leaders who "... should be custodians of truth. They should be men and women who build trust, inspire commitment, and generate confidence in others by a positively influencing them through their life": (Dawaki 2005: 95- Shake hands-). So exemplary leaders are what the country needs to run its affairs. Leaders who know that ..."nation building can never be wished into existence, it has to be worked for by men and women who are not only God's conscious , but those whose honesty and truthfulness is the core of their being, the essence of their thought life and the integral part of their lifestyle" (Dawaki, 200595-Shake Hand-). These types of leaders must be the change they wish to see in their country, work for the change and seen by their followers to be working for the change. That is to say, they should use their own life to demonstrate the change they wish to bring about in their country. What they preach must be what they do both in their public and private life. They are never shortsighted leaders. Unlike politicians who are so much worried about what is going to be their fate in the next election,

they are highly esteemed statesmen whose concern and focus is what is going to be the character of the next generation. Nigerians need these kinds of leaders having suffered so much under the activities of their opposites.

Third is enlightenment of Nigerian masses. The Nigerian messes are those Nigerians who are everywhere in the country except where decisions that affect their lives either for good or for bad are been taken and executed without thinking about them let alone seeking their consent. The thought provoking sorry conditions of these Nigerians made one of the gadflies of the country, Olusegun Oladipo to divide Nigeria into two: the Nigeria of the rich whose members are called citizens, who have at their disposal everything that makes life comfortable and worth living such as money, wealth, health, privilege, etc. The Nigeria of the poor whose members are called supplicants who daily wish they had died a stillbirth than to live and experience everything that dehumanizes life such as hunger, poverty, slavery, disease, deprivation, ignorance and so on. In his words:

It is no longer a revelation. It is a reality we confront everyday that we have two Nigeria- one for the rich and the other for the poor. In the Nigeria for the rich, everything is in place; money, comfort, health, privilege, power, access to opportunities, patronage... name it. In the other Nigeria, however, the story is different even though they are many things too. In this Nigeria, you have want hunger, deprivation, lack of access to opportunities, ignorance and what else? Of course, you have disease, poverty, lack of personality, in fact. All things that go with human degradation. (1999:39)

What an ugly, sad-provoking, soul-sapping but true picture of Nigeria is this? The only country both the citizens and supplicants can call theirs in the world is now a proverb. A country wealth

cannot develop due to evil machinations of some men and women. Nigeria has been made a heaven for the former and a hell for the latter.

But all hope is not lost. Since “where there is will, there is way” is a saying whose truth has been confirmed by common sense, supported by knowledge and approved by wisdom. There is hope for the Nigerian masses and for the entire citizens to build a country of their dream- a great nation. But Nigerians as whole and Nigerian masses in particular have to think, strive and work to realize their hope by becoming positive changes they wish to see in this God’s providence called Nigeria. They have to rise as one body and say NO to injustice and its perpetrators in whatever language they will understand and obey.

The tool and only tool Nigerian masses need to actualize their hope is enlightenment, otherwise, called knowledge. This great virtue, in fact, virtue of all virtues, according to Socrates, if they embrace it and submit themselves to its guidance, they will realize who they are, where they are, what they are and why they are in the world. After helping them to know all these phases of their existence, it will equally help them to discover to their utter surprise that all they need to actualize the purpose of their mission in the world and the dreams of their nation are at their disposal and among them is creative and positive thought. This is in-built in every human being and every good edifice in the world is a handiwork of this kind of thought. Through it they will understand their birth in Nigeria was not by accident but by intention of the Supreme Being who assigns them goals and wants them to discover their individual and collective goals and attain them and as well leave the world stage better than they found it. That they are not appendages to Nigeria for that their human rights must be respected and seen by all to be respected.

Through it they will understand that democracy is the only hope for Nigeria to develop politically, economically, socially,

educationally, morally, culturally, etc, and become a country where peoples' votes count, human rights respected, constitution obeyed, jobs opportunities created and accessible to all and moral rules observed by all. Where one lives for all and all live for one. This is because democracy is government of the people, by the people and for the people, courtesy of Abraham Lincoln a great friend of humanity and a man of all ages. Through it they will understand that the fertile soil in which a seed of dictatorship gets planted, germinates and grows to maturity and begins to lord it over the helpless masses is apathy of the masses. This truth is conveyed to mankind by Frederick Douglas as follows:

If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favour freedom and yet deprecate agitation, are men who want crop without ploughing up the ground, they want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. Men may not get all they pay for in the world, but they must certainly pay for all they get. The limits of tyrants are determined by the endurances of those whom they oppress. (Bennethe, 1984:160-161)

In other words, nothing good in the world be it human right, freedom, development, good governance, democracy, access to opportunities or equal treatment – name it, can be had on the platter of gold, that is, without struggle. So, Nigerians have to demand from themselves and from their leaders through consistent purpose-oriented efforts what they want in their country. Through it among other things not stated here, the Nigerian masses will understand that what tyrants or dictators in the name of leaders fear so much and do not risk confrontation with it is the solidarity of the masses. Hence they are ever ready to do anything to make sure

that people do not unite among themselves. This is the reason why a divide – and – rule system was introduced by our erstwhile colonial masters and inherited by our neocolonial leaders who have been using it to ignite the inflames of ethnic and religious crises which have kept the people divided, many lives and properties destroyed in the interest of the beneficiaries (the leaders and their sycophants) and at the expense of the Nigerian masses.

Fourth is strict observance of the three universal moral maxims- Love; the Golden Rule and Development. These moral maxims, courtesy of enlightenment, are tools needed by mankind to understand and appreciate the world and its teeming resources and use them to improve their conditions of living in the world. With strict observance of these moral maxims the world as a whole and Nigeria in particular will be transformed into heaven we have been longing for; and abuse of them will change Nigeria into hell which we dread.

What is this priceless concept called love? Love is heaven on earth; kindness in action; truth in settlement of disputes; enlightenment in a situation of ignorance; patience in difficult times; forgiveness in the face of insult; sympathy in the scene of injuries; justice in distribution of resources; protest in the scene of injustice; mercy in the scene of guilt caused by sincere ignorance; respect for and recognition of dignity and sacredness of human life. Love is also living in fear of God by doing his will. It is being your brothers' or sisters' keeper. It is celebrating with them over their successes or weeping with them over their failures. It is foresight which sees a man in a boy, a woman in a girl, a king in a servant, a possibility of peace in a crisis-redden state, knowledge in ignorance, beauty in ugliness, development in backwardness; a professor in a student, etc. It is because of all these things made possible by love that it is highly esteemed as a builder of good human relations in the world and hope for the establishment of the Universal Brotherhood.

No wonder Habu Dawaki and Norman Vincent Peale describe love as follows: For Dawaki:

Where there is love, insecurity vanishes, envy is crippled, jealousy suffocates, hatred is drowned, malice and the wanton destruction of life and property become extinct. For love thinks always in terms of other persons' good. It seeks to unite and knit souls together. Love speaks out on behalf of the voiceless. It sees potential and worth in every human being. It sees beyond the weaknesses, shortcomings, limitations and failures of others. It is neither prejudiced or color blind. It does not see people as statistics or numbers but as persons. (2005: 125-126- Shake Hands)

For Peale,

Love is well termed the greatest of all virtues, because of its remarkably curative properties. Love is always a symptom of self-forgetfulness and when you love people enough to forget your own miseries and take their troubles to heart, then you lose your misery and your depression is dissipated. This is why the Bible is constantly urging us to love one another. (1980: 215)

So love is the key that can open the door of gold mines of human and material resources in Nigeria and a ticket every Nigerian must have in order to make a success story of his or her life journey in Nigeria irrespective of ethnic group and religion he or she belongs.

Another one is the Golden rule. The golden rule as a moral maxim says that everybody must treat others as he or she would like them treat him or her. It says what belongs to all must be shared by all. Nigeria as a country belongs to all Nigerians no matter the tribe of

a person's birth or a person's peculiar culture and his religious faith. For that it is wrong to treat some Nigerians as citizens and others as supplicants as we all have the same legitimate right of citizenship of Nigeria. We all are carrying the same burdens on our heads- the burdens of actualizing the dreams of our country. These dreams have remained as dreams since 1960 when the founding fathers of our country won the independence of our country Nigeria.

They are not happy where they are when they see the seeds of a great country they sowed in the early sixties are still in the nursery stage. They are equally enveloped in tears when they see that the fault is put to the doors of those who received the baton of leadership from them. To wipe out their tears Nigerians both the leaders and the led must tread on the right path which leads to the promised land of greatness which is observance of the stated universal moral maxims. It has been tested by common sense, verified by knowledge, confirmed by wisdom and approved by the teacher of all teachers experience as attitudes Nigerians need to cultivate in order to secure a place in the sun and a place for their country in the comity of developed nations live well and die happy in the world.

Another one is development. Development is an innate desire in man that makes him improve his conditions of living in the world. For this reason man is always striving to leave his present better than it was in the past and as well his future better than his present. In his own contribution to explain what development is all about S.A Ekanem holds the view that "... development involves a systematic and conscious process of change, progress which is innovation and advancement. It indicates an improvement, on what was to what is..."(Uduigwomen, 2006:28). While Chinua Achebe and Ade Ajayi in their merit award lectures, as paraphrased by Olusegun Oladipo, argue that: "Development is not a linear activity in which the old is replaced by the new in a mechanical manner. Nor is it simply an economic activity in which only the

experts can participate. Rather, it is a comprehensive activity whose goal is human well-being” (1999:121-12). So, development, given the views of the cited scholars, is not a product of chance, not a thing to be had on a platter of gold, not a manna expected to fall from heaven or an outcome of a miracle. But rather it is an outcome of conscious efforts directed towards attaining a certain goal usually the people’s well-being.

Nigerians are in a dire need of development in all sectors of their endeavour- education, economy, religion, health, social relations, morality, etc. Fortunately, they are well blessed with resources- human and material- needed to bring about their development. Where the problem lies is management of the available resources in the interest of all Nigerians. Solution to the problem is just this: Nigerians to be the change they desire to see in Nigeria- to be the agents of development in all facets of their living. God provided food for birds but He did not put it in their nest. Authors provided knowledge in their books but they did not put it in the heads of their readers. So Nigerians have to creatively and positively use the resources God has provided for them to achieve their goals.

Fifth is right use of religion. Religion is a universal phenomenon- a fact of human life. Its influences on mankind ever since they discovered where and why they are in the world are tremendous. Through it we understand that we are beings of another being called the Supreme Being. Through it we understand that our first and last task in the world lies in doing His will and his will is expressed in the three universal moral maxims: (1) Love you neighbour as you love your self.;(2) Treat others as you will like them treat you; and (3) Be the change you wish to see in the world. As it is seen, it is doing God’s will that mankind as a whole and Nigerians in particular can fulfill themselves in the world. Religion should be an acknowledgement of God’s good deeds to humanity which should begin with gratitude and end with gratitude. It should be a bridge between human beings and their Creator, and between individuals and their fellows.

So the role of religion, whether Christianity, Islam, Africa traditional religion, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism or the like is to help its adherents to do and continue to do God's will. But as experience has shown, religion has lost its essence in the hands of the adherents of the preceding forms of religion in that regard. Hence religious realms have witnessed a lot of crises and wars among the adherents. It is for this reason religion is now being described as a mixed blessing. It is for the same reason that Karl Marx describes it as the opium (the sleeping tablet) of the people. Religion, having fallen from grace to grace, whatever good it has done to humanity it has equally rendered to them its opposite. It is now a canopy of virtues and vices. The adherents love as well hate; build as well destroy, initiate peace move and as well ignite machine of wars, worship God and as well listen to Satan ( Satan correctly described as man's selfishness ), etc.

Objective observers of religious activities in the world irrespective of robes they are wearing-theism, atheism, animism, deism, pantheism, etc- all agree that this is a true picture of religious activities in the contemporary world. Lives and properties lost in Nigeria, for example, as a result of religious crises are better imagined than described. Yet all these lives and properties were destroyed by people who claim to be worshiping God or Allah. And no earthly father let alone a spiritual father the Supreme Being would like his children and their hard and justly earned properties be so destroyed. It is written in the Bible: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you. And pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you" (Matthew, 5: 44). Yet they ignore it and do these havocs with conviction that God is with them.

So, for Nigerians to experience national development through the perspective of religion, they have to embrace the virtues of religion – love, truth, justice, peace, fellow feeling, kindness, patience, hope, etc. and shun fanaticism, malignancy, bigotry, hatred, segregation, lying, violence, war, etc. These vices are anti-religion

and anybody who indulges in them is far from the canopy of God let alone doing His will.

### **10. Conclusion**

In the preceding discourse, attempts have been made to identify factors responsible for ethnic and religious crises in Nigeria and their adverse effects on Nigerians' efforts at national development. Some of these factors include selfishness, neocolonialism and ethnic politics with their do-or-die activities, religious bigotry, slavery, discrimination and segregation. These stumbling blocks to nation building found in every part of the country have been perpetuated by ethnic fans and religious fanatics with common malignant intention to commit any crime in deference to their ethnic loyalty and in the name of "God" or "Allah" or the likes.

The adverse effects of these crises in all the spheres of the country are such that even a person with a stone heart cannot avoid weeping for Nigeria. The unity of the country has been reduced to nothing as people are more interested in ethnic unity than national unity. Life which is the value of all values, treated as an end in a civilized society, is treated as an object by ethnic and religious warriors provided it is a life of an opponent. Trust and fellow-feeling are dead in Nigeria as ethnic fans and religious fanatics see people from other ethnic groups and religious faith as enemies and for that not ready to have any dealings with them let alone having trust in them or sharing fellow – feelings with them. Also bad leadership has equally inflicted a lot of havocs on the nation to the extent that it is now a common knowledge that, according to Chinua Achebe, "The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership .... The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership" (1983: 1).

Since every problem has a solution so it is with Nigeria's problems. Once there is will, there is way. Ethnic fans and religious fanatics should hear what Martin Luther King (Jr) says about the contemporary world. In his words: "The world is changing, and anyone who thinks he can live alone is sleeping through a revolution ...we must learn to live together as brothers or we will perish together as fools" (Dawaki, 2005:123). Nigerian leaders have to lead by example, observe the stated universal moral maxims, insist on the rule of law, believe in one Nigeria one nation, in the adage: united we stand and divided we fall, carry every Nigerian along by giving him or her a sense of belonging and leaves no one in doubt that one's life, humanity and citizenship are recognized and respected.

The Nigerian masses knowing quite well that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely, according to Lord Acton, should be interested in public affairs and always alert to use their power of solidarity which corrupt leaders fear so much to check any abuse of power by them. Democracy depends on the masses to thrive; for that they have to be alert and wary on their duty post so as to stop in time any attempt by erring leaders to abuse peoples' rule which is what democracy is both in theory and practice. So Nigerians use your lives to demonstrate changes you wish to see in Nigeria. The only people that can stop you from achieving the goals of your well-being are the people enveloped in your apathy, thinking your negative thoughts, doubting the power of your solidarity, seeing yourselves as puppets in the hands of the leaders, leaving to God what is within your power to accomplish and leaving till tomorrow what can be attained today. Nigerians should be grateful to God that all the resources they need-human and material- to enhance, promote, advance and preserve their well-being in Nigeria are at their disposal, although at potential state, but theirs for the creative asking.

In case they fail to play the agents of positive changes they wish to see in their own part of the world, they should not blame God or

Satan or leadership of the country. But rather should blame themselves who have preferred to sleep through a revolution; to remain dumb in the scene of injustice; to sing praises of corrupt leaders for the sake of picking crumbs falling from their table; to complain about the wrongs going on in the country in the safety of their different houses; to fan the flames of both ethnic and religious crises in the country initiated and sustained by the leaders by influencing them through the use of money to support the divide – and- rule system meant to destroy peoples' solidarity. Nigerians it is left for us to make our country a paradise or a hell. The ball is now in our court- the court is our awareness of the goings-on in the country and our application of non-violent resistance to stop those events and practices that are against our nation' s dreams. History is watching us on the stage.

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