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## The Dangers and Challenges of Deprecating Religiosity in a Heterogeneous Nigerian Society

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### Abstract:

*Historically, religion has been a subject of various interpretations. However, the history of religion can be as old as mankind. In all the events of human life religion has remained topical, attractive and sensationally controversial. Many atrocities and productive developments have been created in the garbs of religion. Just because of religion, the merging of Nigeria as a country has been a called to questions. Nigeria and Africa in general prior to 1914 was known for their indigenous religions. Islam arrived in the northern Nigeria around eleventh century and subsequently the arrival of Christianity arrived between seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Initially, the present Nigerian state was homes to multiple of kingdoms and tribes before they were amalgamated in 1914 by the colonials. After much pressure, Nigeria gained independence from the colonial masters. Just as some tribes and groups have risen to question the rationale behind the amalgamation and existence of the Nigeria as one country so has negative understanding and applications of religious tenets by some citizens have almost drifted the Nigerian state to the edge of precipice.*

### 1. Introduction

Virtually in all Nigerian parlances, religions are often highlighted from the functional and positive dimensions and perspectives. The dysfunctional and negative dimensions of religion which sometime can be covert are rarely discussed. In some instances, religious loyalties are seen from the lens of virtues. Probably, it was against this backdrop that revered scholars like Mbiti asserts that Africans are “notoriously religious”. But critically, the absolute loyalty to religion sometimes contributes to dysfunctional religiosity which fuels tensions and conflicts between groups or nations. Nigeria is said to be the most populous African country and highest concentration of black race with a population of about one hundred eighty (180) million. Even though, the figures right from independence era have been highly controversial, to some people half of the population is Christians while the other half is Muslims. Whatever the exact percentages are, it is clear that Nigeria is a country with very large Christian and Muslim populations. This situation makes the country a potential fault line between the two different identities with its attendant civilizations.

Right from the amalgamation, Nigeria has been struggling to manage some other challenges confronting her but the problems of religion have roundly brought the country to her knees. It has weakened the social systems, institutions, created crises that claimed millions of innocent lives and it has crippled her journey into nationhood and have all her dreams of a virile Nigerian society decimated. In view of this, Nigerian religiosity has been tools for instabilities, war, conflict and violence.

### 2. Clarification of Terms

**Dangers:** The plural of the word “danger” means liability or exposure to harm, risk, peril and menace. **Challenges:** implies a new difficult task that tests the ability and skill of somebody. It also means an invitation to compete in a fight, contest in a game and so on. **Deprecating:** from the term “deprecate” means something that is valueless, negative and retarded. **Religiosity** from the word “religion” though yet to have a generally accepted definition, means the quality and act of being religious, strong piety and devoutness. **Heterogeneous Society** A society can be simply described as a group of people living together who share similar customs and laws. However, in a heterogeneous society the citizens are made of people of different cultural affinity, values and beliefs. Heterogeneous society occurs when the component entities mutually agree to live together. Many heterogeneous societies are borne out of the forces of colonialism as it is in the cases of Nigeria and most African nation-states. Contextually, the Challenges of Deprecating Religiosity in a Heterogeneous Nigerian Society means how the dysfunctional, negative and exploitative dimension of religiosity has crippled the dreams of building a united and virile Nigerian state. It is a study of unbiased analyses of the negative impact of paucity of religious ideals to a heterogeneous society like Nigeria.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

The Functionalist and Conflict theories are adopted in this study. Iruonagbe (2013) avers that Durkheim one of the proponents of Functionalist theory believes that social life is impossible without the shared values and moral beliefs that form the collective conscience. The absence of the aforementioned threatens social order, social control, social solidarity or cooperation and the unity of the people (p.5). Coser (1956), one of the disciples of the foremost originator of the conflict theory, Karl Marx, said that conflict is a

struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals (p.3). Ani (2012) affirms that conflict manifests as products of interactions amongst human beings and groups who plot to outwit others (p.158). This theory is used because it implies that conflict is generated by the quests to protect one's identity and maximize one's interest. Functionalist theory is employed because religion is one of the factors that a society needs to properly function. Therefore, the society will be in danger if religion refuses to perform or functions negatively. The theories are employed to highlight the dangers of using religious tenets in achieving political and other personal ends in a multi religious and cultural Nigerian state.

#### **4. Nigeria in History**

Abiola (1984) states that between the eleventh century and the European colonial conquest in the nineteenth century, the area known as Nigeria today was homes of sophisticated kingdoms and societies. But Britain declared Lagos a colony in 1861 and 1906, the colony of Lagos and the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria which included the former Niger Coast Protectorates that were hitherto administered separately were merged to form the Southern Protectorates (p.153). Adigwe (1979) said that the Sokoto Caliphate was conquered in 1903 and after the conquests the British were able to create the Northern Nigerian protectorate. From January 1914 amalgamated both the Southern and Northern protectorates (p.170). Nigeria was granted independence on 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1960 under a constitution that provided for a parliamentary system of government. However, the Military came on the scene on 15th January 1966, when Major Nzeogwu and five other majors staged a coup-d'état that claimed the several lives. Uwechue (2003) said that the coup of 1966, though, later turned sour and with this and other factors such as counter coup, massacring of the Igbo people in the north and Gowon's inability to abide by the Aburi Accord, late General Ojukwu declared the independence of Biafra and the Nigerian civil war ensued (p.401). It ended in bitter and bloody in the defeat of Biafra in 1970.

Gowon's administration was knocked out of office after series of allegations such as corruption and inability to announce a realistic time for Civilian hand-over. Awosefo (2005) avers that Murtala Mohammed and his group took over the government (p.136). Ademolekun (1985) said that Murtala Mohammed's regime was short lived through a bloody coup of 13th February, 1976 that claimed his life while his Second in-Command General Obasanjo, completed his programme of Civilian rule that later produced Shehu Shagari as the president in 1979 but the administration was knocked out through a coup by Major Gen. Muhammad Buhari on 31st December 1983 (p.22). Awosefo (2005) states that Buhari's government was on 27<sup>th</sup> August 1985 overthrown through a bloodless coup that produced Ibrahim Babangida. He continued until in 1993, when he bowed to public pressure after the annulment of the widely-talked about June 12th 1993 election believed to have been won by late M.K.O Abiola. He inaugurated the Interim National Government headed by Shonekan and in his word "stepped aside". But on 17th November 1993, late General Sani Abacha forced Shonekan to resign and he took over government (pp.143-144). Abacha died in office on 8th June, 1998 (p.11).

Ademolekun (1999) confirms that Abdulsalami Abubakar, who handed over to a Civilian rule under Olusegun Obasanjo, on 29th May, 1999 took over after Abacha's death. (p.24). Nigeria re-attained democracy on 29th May 1999, when it elected Olusegun Obasanjo who after eight years handed over to Umar Yar'adua on 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2007. After prolonged illness, Yar'adua died on 5th May 2010. Then with the "doctrine of necessity" as propounded by the National Assembly, the Acting President, Goodluck Jonathan who acted as Vice President before then was on 6th May 2010, sworn in as the replacement for the late Yar'adua. Jonathan picked Namadi Sambo, the former Governor of Kaduna State to be his deputy until in 2015 when they vacated offices for General Mohammad Buhari (rtd) and Prof. Yemi Osinbajo respectively. It can be summed that between 1914 and 1946, the country operated on the Southern and Northern Protectorate basis. With the arrival of Richard's Constitution in 1946 up to 1967, the country was grouped on the regional basis while between 1967 and 2011, the country has been divided into six geopolitical zones, thirty-six states and seven hundred and seventy-four local government areas

#### **5. Religious Pluralism in Nigeria**

Pluralism suggests divergent views, ideas and opinions. Religious pluralism is understood not only as diversity and multiplication of religions but also as the interaction of religious communities within a given society. It is all about the existence of a number of groups of people that belong to different races or have different religious beliefs in one society. Therefore, it suggests that pluralism points to the existence of many groups of people, with tribal, ethnic, political and religious differences. There is a relationship between religion and other social institutions in the society. The kind of relationship that exists in a heterogeneous society like Nigeria often received divergent religious views. Apart from Christianity, Islam and traditional religions, Nigeria is home to many religions of the world. For example, when the Federal High Court in Abuja granted bail to the leader of the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB), with one of the conditions to produce a Jewish leader as one his sureties. To the chagrin of many people, a respected Jewish leader stood and signed for his release. A religious pluralistic society refers to an environment where there are many religious beliefs, concepts and ideologies. In that case, many religions exist in Nigeria but three of them shall be briefly discussed.

#### **6. Islam**

Within one hundred years of Muhammad's death, the original Islamic community through trade, expansion and conquest became an Empire that spread out to all over the world. According to Emelike (2011), the Islamic world extended from the Arabian West to the North Africa and the eastern Spain to Indonesia (pp.225-248). Success and power were regarded as both signs of divine guidance and the rewards for the community. Nwanaju (2011) said that Islam came into northern Nigeria as early as in the eleventh century and was well established in the state capitals of the region but by the sixteenth century, it spread into the countryside toward the Middle Belt and uplands (pp.405-420). In the central part of Nigeria known as the Middle Belt, the Islamic adventurism was stopped by the

resistance of local peoples who refused to be incorporated into the emirate states. However, Nze (2007) notes that the Fulani-led jihad of the nineteenth century however pushed Islam into Nupe and across the Niger River into the northern Yoruba-speaking areas (p.33). The Colonial conquest established a rule that caused active Christian evangelistic campaign not to occur in the northern Muslim region. Salmone (1991) states that by 1990s, the two religions have continued to compete for converts in the Middle Belt, where ethnic groups and families had adherents from each persuasion (p.54).

Kenny (1996) avers that Islam is known to be much more accommodating to local customs and practices than Christianity which is said to be very critical of traditional customs. There are two features of Islam which is essential to understanding its place in Nigerian society. They are the degree to which Islam permeates other institutions in the society and their contributions to Nigerian religious pluralism. As an institution in the emirate society, Islam includes in its practices daily and annual ritual obligations, the pilgrimage to Mecca, Sharia law, established view on politics, family life, communal order and appropriate modes of personal conduct in most situations. Public meetings often began and ended with Muslim prayers and everyone knew at least, the minimum Arabic prayers and the five pillars of the religion required for full participation. Public arbitrations were carried out mostly by local leaders with the help of religious experts and Alkali Courts which provided widespread knowledge of the basic tenets of Sharia law (p.123).

Amanambu (2013) confirms that Sunni (derived from sunna) or Orthodox Islam became the dominant sect in Nigeria, the most widespread and practiced religion in the nineteen Northern States of Nigeria. However, the region is evenly mixed with Christians in some States such as Plateau, Taraba, Kaduna, Benue, Kogi, Kwara and the Federal Capital Territory. There is slightly a balance of Christian, Muslim and Traditional religious practitioners' population that spread in some southern States such as Kwara, Ondo, Osun, Ogun, Oyo and Lagos. There exist also a sizeable number of Islamic practitioners in the western part of the country but they are limited to mostly the Yoruba speaking parts. In contrast to the predominantly Southern Nigeria where there is no recognized supreme religious authority, for instance, Catholics in the country owe their religious allegiances to the Pope who lives as far as Vatican, the head of Islamic religion in Nigeria is the Sultan of Sokoto Caliphate who along with a number of Emirs presides over the affairs of the religion in the North. While Islam is propagated in the North through jihad and trade, in the South, a number of Islamic movements that propagate the Islamic religion include NAFSAT, HIZBULAHJI movements, ANSAR-UDEEN society among others. Islam came into Nigeria long before Christianity could set its foot on the land. The spread of Islam in Nigeria was largely by jihadism and other means like trade (pp.12-14)

## 7. Christianity

Christianity came to Africa through the missionaries from Europe particularly Ireland, England, Portugal, Italy and America. In Nigeria, Christianity is predominantly found in the seventeen states in the Southern part of Nigeria which consist of the Yoruba, Igbo and other minorities from the Niger Delta region as well as parts of the Middle Belt region. Up till the late 1980s, most of the strong Christian religious movements in Nigeria were the orthodox churches such as the Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodists and others which date back to the pre-20th century era. Christianity came to Nigeria according to Nze (2007) in two phases: which is in 1515 and 1842 (p.24). apart from these mainline churches, Christianity has grown into many other movements which Amanambu (2013) groups as follows: *Mainline Pentecostals*; these are the groups like Assemblies of God, Grace of God and their likes who are also foreign churches founded in the country. They are like the mainline churches but have since been taken over by Nigerians. *Indigenous Pentecostals*; they are those churches founded and owned by Nigerians and they include: Living Faith Church, Christ Embassy, the Lord's Chosen, Deeper Life, Gospel Faith International and host of others. Finally, there are the African instituted churches founded by the Africans out of their worldviews, experiences and revelations and they are patterned after African culture. These include: Aladura, Cherubim and Seraphim, Abosso Apostolic Faith among others (p.14).

However, these days the Pentecostal wing of the church mostly the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Christ Embassy, Living Faith, the Lord's Chosen Charismatic Revival Ministry, Omega Fire Ministry and others are growing in popularity and gradually depopulating the mainline and orthodox churches. Amanambu (2013) argues that they do this by engaging in the theology of prosperity, earthly success and employment of maximum use of flamboyant, colourful and aesthetics methods of evangelization to convince their listeners. Some Pentecostal churches such as Deeper Life Bible Church and Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries claim to be more concerned with spiritual matters more than others. They usually mount an ill-fated campaign against the mainline churches by describing them as too rigid or misguided and old-fashioned preachers of salvation (pp.14-15).

## 8. Indigenous or Traditional Religions in Nigeria

This is a home-grown religion that emanates from the people's world-view. It is referred to as "indigenous" because it springs from the environments and feelings of the people. There may not be the total number of indigenous faiths or practitioners in Nigeria however they are not as numerous as the other two major religions in Nigeria. But many Africans, not minding their various educational and religious attainments still consult the practitioners of this religion for solutions concerning their various challenges.

Before the arrival of both Islam and Christianity, Metuh (1981) argues that each major group of what later became known as Nigeria had its distinct political units and religion under what is generally referred to as African Traditional Religion (ATR). Many gods and goddesses such as Ogun (god of iron), Sango or Amadioha (god of thunder) and many others were feared and revered in different parts of Nigeria (p.66). The exact population of each religion has been controversial, but Adiele (1993) said that a popular estimate puts it at Islam 50% Christians: 40 %, other religions including traditional adherents and even atheists were put at 10% (p.55). Amanambu (2013) posits that the traditional religions suffered seriously because whenever the British colonialists encountered any institution which they considered to be in opposition to their mission, they did everything to liquidate it, even if it meant having to use the force of arms. The onslaught claimed many powerful traditional institutions such as the Ibinukpabi oracle of Arochukwu in the

present day Abia state and the Ekumeke society among the Ika group of Bendel state. The destructions greatly arrested the political influence of such leaders as the Eze-Nri, the Atta, some Obas and a number of traditional Yoruba chiefdom (p.16). In the words of Fafuwa (1974), the common theme in all these instances was the resistance of the people who were colonized by those who controlled and dictated their cultural, religious and economical lives through the "Bible, Business and Bullet" (74). A number of powerful secret societies such as the Ogboni and Ekpe had to undergo some metamorphosis to come in line with the new order.

There are other religions in Nigeria whose degrees of influence are yet to be ascertained and they include: Judaism, Hinduism, Baha'i faith, Chrislam, Grail movement, the Reformed Ogboni fraternity and others. But Nigeria is known to be predominantly religious with these three main religions: Christianity, Islam and Traditional Religions.

### **9. Dynamics of Religiosity in Nigerian**

Religion is a unique phenomenon in the Nigerian society. Apart from some major political parties with wider interests, religion is a major factor that has succeeded in bringing sizeable numbers of Nigerians under one umbrella, irrespective of their ethnic and social considerations or status. The large crowds of people that participate in religious celebrations and other gatherings such as crusades, revival programs, quoranic recitations and public lectures show how seriously Nigerians take religion. People are ready to interact through it especially with other Nigerians who share their belief system. The same way, many Nigerians can stake their lives for their religious beliefs and organizations. Nwatu (1996) in this line of thought noted that there is a complex relationship between these two ideas because many religious leaders, not minding their religious leanings, devote themselves with adequate times denouncing these changes because they feel these changes are bound to affect the essential religious truths of their various religious traditions (p.43). On the other hand, it appears that periods of rapid social changes are also usually periods of considerable creativity in religion as new forms of worship are developed and existing ones in a bid to exist, fight to be sustained. The dynamics of Nigerian religiosity is clearly seen in their general attitude to religion and its activities. In their business premises, vehicles, offices, houses and roads are adorned with various religious symbols, stickers, banners, signposts and so on. It has got to a point where most educated Nigerians are intellectually inclined to even some blind religious faith. Others have a pathological aversion to critical thinking and free inquiry as far as religion is concerned.

Meanwhile, this dynamism has permeated virtually all aspects of the country's life. For instance, religious meetings are now conducted virtually everywhere in markets, streets, shops, schools-in libraries, lecture halls and even in laboratories. A good number of lecturers and teachers have either abandoned or combined both teaching and research with evangelistic vocations. There appear to be no longer a clear demarcation between religious duties and academic work.

Amanambu (2013) argues that as Islam and Christianity continue their decades of long battle for control of the nation's educational system, Nigerian schools have been turned into breeding grounds for evangelists and missionaries who later turned religious militants, terrorists and bandits. The irony of religions in Nigeria however is that all religions, irrespective of their ideological differences have more or less similar core values that it uses in keeping the society organized. For instance, no religion tolerates corruption let alone promotes it but the looters of Nigerian public wealth pay tithes and zakat to these churches and mosques. They donate generously to support various religious bodies they belong to. Most times their presence in the congregation influences effectively the nature of sermons delivered by some of the clerics. Some of them have built or facilitated the building of mosques and churches in many places across the country and most of them are also patrons of various religious organizations-a measure that has boosted some of the clerics' fellowship base amongst the masses. There appear to be a subtle correlation between such ironic religious phenomenon and bad leadership that bedevils the country. Perhaps, the group that carried out the study which credited Nigeria as the most religious people on earth must have been carried away by a number of factors like the huge crowds of adherents that turn up for religious programmes among all the adherents. It seems that they were also impressed by average Nigerian attitudes of expressing his/her religiosity that often range from display of religious symbols and verbal reference to religion almost in everything (pp.54-67).

In the view of Nze (2007), Nigeria's "religiosity" is further underscored in the government's deep and largely unnecessary involvement in some religious matters like Muslim and Christian pilgrimages through these excuses public funds are unnecessarily misplaced and even largely misappropriated. But in the core Muslim and Christian countries pilgrimage is handled by private tour operators (p.25). Even with its deficiency and frailties, Nigerians have chosen to appreciate and tolerate cleric institution more than any other institutions. The news making rounds in the society that some religious leaders are stealing, cheating, fornicating and are not really up to par had not dissuaded majority of Nigerians from believing in the efficacy and influence of religious leaders. The dynamics of Nigerian religiosity is that it permeates everything about the country.

### **10. Dangers and Challenges of Deprecating Religiosity in Nigeria**

Arguably, religion has made some unique and indispensable contribution to satisfying human needs as well as social integration. In fact, it plays crucial dual roles in the life of an individual and society, it satisfies the social, psychological and spiritual needs of individual. It performs many valuable services and functions for the society. The force with which Nigerians have appreciated and accepted religions have not gone without some remarkable challenges and some of the challenges are discussed below:

#### *10.1. It Sustains Negative Status Quo*

In the context of this study, negative status quo implies the adoption and maintenance of uncritical, illogical and unproductive life. Nigerian is naturally blessed and endowed with unmatched resources that should have made everybody rich. But Ahiuma (2016) said that statistics available from Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed that over 112 (one hundred and twelve) million Nigerians are "extremely poor" (p.16). Probably, Nigeria would not have been in this type of economic, political and social quagmires

it found herself if her citizens have not tolerated or accommodated it. They are tolerating it because of fear of what their reaction will land them into, subjective sentiments and some questionable religious injunctions that everything should be left in the hand in the hand of God. Most of the catchy words among these groups include, "it is well", "it shall be well". The culture of maintaining the negative status quo has arguably contributed to the dastardly methods of choosing leaders in Nigeria to point where a rogue and even a death person can be allowed and supported by his/her kinsmen and others with parochial interests to rule from the highest office of the land. Maintenance of unreasonable status quo seems to project that Nigerians enjoy suffering. What Nigerians have tolerated since independence cannot be tolerated in any other mature and saner climes. Nigerians are not in love with retarded living but because many have been drunk in the wine of religion where *utopianistic* society is envisaged very soon. Hence, they are easily deceived by the political contractors and thereby supports the existing social order and encourages both the privileged and dispossessed to accept the status quo.

#### *10.2. Deprecating Religion Creates Stratified System*

In some mosques and churches especially in the cities, the wealthy members are revered and made to sit in a different place from the poor. Most of offices created in the religious organizations in Nigeria are not meant for spiritual, sacred and religious development and services but to attract and honour the wealthy in the society. Most of the clubs and associations existing in the society exist in religious organization.

#### *10.3. Deprecating Religiosity Creates Inter/Intra Division and Intolerance in Nigeria*

Osaghae and Suberu (2005) argues that there are sub-cleavages in Christianity with the Protestants comprising Anglican controlling about the 10% of Christians in Nigeria, Baptist 8%, Methodist 5%, Lutheran 5%, the Catholics 15%, the Evangelical Church of West Africa 2%, Jehovah's Witnesses 5% and a myriad of others such as the Aladura, Cherubim and Seraphim, Celestial Church of Christ constituting about 20% of Christians. The Pentecostal denominations constitute about 30% (p. 11). Many have argued that the fundamental division of Christianity in Nigeria has led to the rapid growth in numbers of followers in the last few years with the majority of adherents, especially the youths, joining the church from the older and more traditional denominations. Thus, the formation of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) is yet to bring about the expected unity in Christianity. Muslims also belong to a number of sub-cleavages that include Ahmadiyya 12%, Sanusiyya 5%, Tijanniyya 3%, and Quadriyya 8%. Similar to its Christian counterpart, Islam also has umbrella bodies which aim at propagating Islam and harmonizing different understandings. Notable among these organizations is the Jamaatu Nasril Islam (JNI) which was established by Sardauna of Sokoto in 1961 and Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (SCIA). These bodies have not brought the needed unity and peace among the Muslims. Otherwise, the Maitatsine, the Izala movement, the Shiites, the Talibans and most recently the Boko Haram which claims that it wants to establish a pure Islam based on Sharia law and the abolition of unorthodox innovations as well as the creation of an Islamic rule should not have sparked off. Nigerian deprecating religiosity has driven Nigeria along the line of denominationalism and sectionalism. The idea of adopting or identifying with a religious ideology in the name that it is the only truth and way leads to tremendously negative effects. These effects include prejudice, bigotry, discrimination, hatred, ethnicism and all kinds of violence which are the characteristics of deprecating religiosity.

#### *10.4. Deprecating Religiosity Creates Irrational Fear in the Minds of Many Nigerians*

The starting point to this is based on the religious teaching and idea of sin. Religionists are understood to be born sinners and impurity. They need to purify themselves or risk the anger of God by going to hellfire where they will experience eternal suffering. Therefore, to avoid the horrible punishment of hellfire, religion demands that people follow the dogma of religion as mark of true obedience. This makes people to naturally be in a continuous state of fear wondering whether their actions are right not taking cognizance of their religious tenets. In view of this, many Nigerians are not bold enough to go further and deeper in understanding things about life rather they grudgingly swallow everything passed on to them. But the irrationality of fear created by deprecating religiosity in Nigeria has not made many of them are not afraid of looting public treasury, engaging in examination malpractices, carrying out injustices against some group of people because of hatred.

#### *10.5. Deprecating Religiosity Fans the Embers of Ignorance*

Most of Nigerians are contended what their sacred books, Pastors and Imams are saying without venturing to understand the virtues and tenets any other faith and practice. Even those who attempt to probe further do it by disparaging other faith while they magnify theirs. Of course, knowledge, reason and wisdom are incompatible with dogmatic religious ideologies. Religion is confining people's minds in the dark of ignorance and those who are in search of the light of truth are being condemned by religion. In this way, religion keeps people blind by all sorts of beliefs that are not based on any factual or experiential evidence. There are many challenges facing Nigeria and her citizens which demand physical actions to handle but many Nigerians sleep their houses, churches, mosques, night vigil, religious conventions and other religious activities. They are made to pray for a solution on everything. Most Nigerians believe that everything is caused by the evil spirits. If the police and other security agencies arrest them, they attribute it to the veil spirit. According to Seun (2017), the personal Assistant to President Muhammadu Buhari on Social Media, Laretta Onochie, accused the political elites in Nigeria of travelling as far as India and Niger Republic to hire soothsayers and marabouts Pastors to pray for the death of Buhari. Onochie, could not disclose the identities of the politicians and the pastors she claimed were hired (p.4). This assertion was probably made to placate the president and his ardent cohorts but it has brought the faith of the president and his followers to ridicule. It seems their God could no longer answer prayer or defend them. Otherwise why should she fidget because the

gods of India and Niger? Has the triumphalist religiosity of Nigeria diminished? Nigerian will blindly and subjectively vote a mediocre into then turn back to pray for him or her to be directed by God. Most of many religionists are using and enjoying today such as Face book, twitter, medicine, power is invented by those who are not drunk in the wine of religion.

#### 10.6. *Deprecating Religiosity Hinders Social and Economic Progress and Promotes Superstitions*

In this case, many Nigerians oppose all kinds of scientific discoveries and technological advancement such as the protests against polio meningitis, and family planning among others. According to Nwabughio (2017a) Governor Abdulaziz Yari of Zamfara State said that the outbreak of Type C Cerebrospinal Meningitis in the country was a direct punishment from God to the people of Nigeria for their various sinful acts (p.9). It makes people fatalistic. Instead of human effort and hard work, they start believing on God's desire and believe that everything is predestined. This kind of thinking makes people idle and thereby the progress of society is hampered. According to Nwabughio (2017b), the acting and Vice president argues "Great economies and great nations, prosperity and abundance of nations and communities are created by men and not spirits. No matter how much you pray or fast our country cannot grow without some of us deciding to do the hardwork that makes nations work" (p.6). Many Nigerians have abused him for it.

#### 10.7. *Deprecating Religiosity Encourages Exploitation in Nigeria*

The version of Nigerian religiosity seems to a very large extent justified the position of Karl Marx on religion. Barretti (1991) notes Karl Marx argues that religion is a tool which the bourgeois used in exploiting the proletariats (p.13). False teaching steered by vested material interest and some of the prosperity gospel have propelled the questions of religion in Nigeria to a controversial dimension. Virtually all the revenues accruing to the churches and mosques go to the senior pastors and Imams while junior ones are roundly asked to wait for their time. Iwuchukwu (2010) argues that the *Alamajiri* syndrome is being championed by some malams who expect the children to bring back percentage of their earnings to them (p.52). These people cannot commit this type of treatment on their own children rather they are sent to study outside Nigeria to study. Some clergy are today being today buying airplanes while the poor members who cannot sincerely and squarely eat three square meals keep paying tithes and zakat used in fueling these aircrafts. Most of the schools built with their contributions hardly accommodate their children because of exorbitant fees. Nigerian version of religion contributes as one of the root causes of exploitation and thereby instituting all manner of poverty, slavery and impunity in society.

#### 10.8. *It Beclouds Sense of Objectivity and Sound Reasoning*

Arguably, the most dangerous aspect of deprecating religiosity in Nigeria has been the idea of *religionised* politics and some of the Nigerian politicians feed from it. They employ religious sentiments to woo unsuspecting Nigerians and by extension cause division between them and people from other faiths. Virtually all the politicians who clamored and championed *sharialisation* and Christianization of Nigeria hardly work towards the realization of their missionary agenda as soon as they get juicy federal office. Moreso, when a person at the helm of affairs emerges from a particular religious leaning, his group will do everything to protect and blindly support him even if he is a robot. If any objective assessment or criticism is made on his performances, his religious group fiercely reacts or even attacks the critic(s). Paradoxically, in the end, Nigerians are at the losing end. This is because these politicians have their interests and they only work to realize them. Hence, movements that they started with a search for religious purification often turn into the quest for the establishment of political kingdom. Religion kills objectivity and critical thinking among Nigerians even among some of the educated ones.

### 11. Conclusion

It appears that its force and power are more evident in the heterogeneous society. It can bind and still divide people. It can make and mar people. It can bring peace and war. It is like a double edge sword. Arguably, in almost all the heterogeneous societies around the world, religion often serves as a source of potential conflict and as well as peace. Where its function tilts towards the peaceful and loving dimensions, the society achieves mutual cohesion, understanding, atmosphere of tolerance, peace and rapid development. But where its function takes to the contrary, the society is left at the mercy of mediocre, bigots, atmosphere of rancor and bitterness, subjective thinkers, senseless killings, looting of public properties, conflicts, general instabilities and reliable toll in the hands of Nigerian politicians in achieving their nefarious goals. In the case of Nigeria, there are many avoidable mistakes the country has experienced because of deprecating religiosity. Apart from the interests of the political class, virtually every other thing is reduced to the lens religions. The danger of deprecating is that it kills innovation, ingenuity, objectivity and virtues necessary for harmonious existence in a heterogeneous society. This is because the citizens are often ignorant of other faiths and the antics of the ruling class have compounded the issues.

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