DOCTRINAL SUPREMACY COUNTERCLAIMS OF LIVING FAITHS; THE CASE OF CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM IN THE RELIGIOUSLY PLURALIZED NIGERIA AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract
Nigeria as a religiously pluralized country is being bedeviled by her religious plurality. Many socio-economic challenges confronting the country today can be blamed on her religious diversity. This unfortunate development is however as a result of the seemingly unending rivalry, which this paper suspects is occasioned partly by the attitude of doctrinal supremacy claims and counterclaims between the two major religions (Christianity and Islam) in the country. The perennial controversies of doctrinal supremacy claims and counterclaims between these proselytizing religions constitute serious impediment to the possibility of a peaceful interfaith relationship, the development which set the stage for incessant religious tension has constitutes a cog in the wheel of sustainable development in the country. This paper therefore aims to investigate the influence of doctrinal supremacy counterclaims of these received religions on interfaith relationship in Nigeria, and its implications on sustainable development. This paper explores the various conflicting points of doctrinal supremacy claims and counterclaims of the two religions, it focuses attention on the influence of doctrinal supremacy counterclaims on interfaith relationship in order to bring to focus, the implication of interfaith tension on sustainable development. Because of the historical nature of inter-religious relation in Nigeria, the historical and descriptive approach is employed in the analysis, and the secondary method was used to elicit information. The paper established that doctrinal supremacy claims and counterclaims is a precipitate of religious rancor which interdicts sustainable development in Nigeria. It therefore recommends that adherents of different religious faiths in Nigeria eschew the proclivities of doctrinal fanaticism in order to give way for peaceful interfaith relationship and meaningful sustainable development.

Keywords: Doctrinal Supremacy Counterclaims, Interfaith relationship, Religious Pluralism, Sustainable Development, Nigeria.

Introduction
There is no gain saying that Nigeria is a pluralized country, especially in terms of tribes, culture, language and religion. A country with an estimated population of about two hundred million people, her population earns her the status of the most populous country in sub-Saharan Africa. The large population of Nigeria is however polarized along the line of diverse religious affiliation. As a religiously pluralized country, Nigeria houses many religions and secular world-views. The most popular of the religions in Nigeria are Christianity, Islam and
African Indigenous Religion. Even though there is neither a scientific representation of the numerical strength of these religious groups nor of their geographical distribution, according to Sampson (2012: p.4), none the less, one can conveniently argue that the Islamic faith preponderates in the northwestern and northeastern parts of the country (comprising of Sokoto, Zamfara, Borno, Yobe, Katsina, Kebbi, Jigawa, Bauchi, Taraba, Gombe and Adamawa States). On the other hand, Christianity is more prominent in the South-East and South-South geographical zones (comprising Imo, Enugu, Anambra, Abia, Ebonyi, Delta, Edo, Bayelsa, Rivers, Cross River and Akwa Ibom States).

The South-West and North-Central zones (comprising Lagos, Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Ekiti, Osun, Kaduna, Niger, Plateau, Nassarawa, Benue, Kogi States and the Federal Capital Territory respectively) have a reasonably balanced numbers of Muslims and Christians. There is also the presence of the traditional religion in most parts of Nigeria. Even though the traditional religion, despite its autochthony, enjoys low public patronage in recent time, and is often marginalized, it has a fair degree of followership.

Meanwhile, the diversity of Nigeria, especially in the arena of religion is supposed, and in deed, expected to be to the advantage of the country. But on the contrary, her religious plurality can be blamed for many socio-economic challenges confronting the country today. Corroborating this observation, Odudele (2006: p.11), argued that experience shows that religion is a source of conflict that produces lawlessness, disorder, insecurity and instability in the society. Ogundepo and Okedigba (2013: p.154 citing Hegeland,2008) also aligned with this submission by considering it ironic that the religious dimensions of all our lives which should inspire peace between individuals and nations through altruism, forgiveness, and harmony, is now responsible for some of the planet’s most sickening crimes and horrendous wars. Ogundepo and Okedigba (2013: p.154 citing Selengut,2008) further argued that religion is thought to be opposed to violence and seen as a force for peace and reconciliation, yet, the history and scriptures of the world’s religions tell stories of violence and war as they speak of peace and love. Each religion’s adherents claim divine favour for themselves over and against other groups. This sense of righteousness leads to violence because conflicting claims of superiority based on unverifiable appeals to God cannot be adjudicated objectively.

So, the major religions in Nigeria, especially Christianity and Islam are constantly at loggerhead. The traditional religion too is not by any means insulated from religious violence too. For instance, in parts of Kogi, Kwara, and Nassarawa states, masquerade activities associated with traditional religion have been a major source of conflicts. The foremost incidence of religious violence since Nigeria’s return to democracy in 1999 was triggered by an alleged violation of traditional religious rite. In Ogun State for instance, it is on record that a crises situation erupted from the killing of a Hausa woman by the Oro Masqueraders for violating traditional rites on the 11th of July, 1999. The situation degenerated into a violent clash between Yoruba traditional worshipers and Hausa groups in Sagamu in that year (Sampson, 2012: p.4). A very resent example of a religious rancor ignited by the traditional religion is the experience in Ire-Ekiti, in Oye Local Government Area of Ekiti State, in which two persons were gruesomely murdered and several others sustained varying degrees of injuries, in a violence that broke out as a result of the step taken by the state government to check the spread of corona virus in the state. According to the New Telegraph of 11th of August (2020: p.6), the violence broke out when the adherents/worshipers of Ogun- (the Yoruba god
of iron) protested against the cancelation of the annual Ogun Onire festival because of Covid-19. The governor of the state- Kayode Fayemi had stopped the celebration of all traditional festivals across the state because of the ravage of corona virus. In order to enforce the directive, the traditional ruler of the town- the Onire of Ire-Ekiti, Oba Victor Bobade told the Ogun adherents to shelve the year’s celebration. This did not go down well with the worshipers. In the violence that erupted on Sunday 9th of August 2020, a car belonging to the monarch was set ablaze, two persons were shot dead, many were injured and valuable properties were destroyed.

Though, previous research findings point to the fact that different factors are responsible for the various inter and intra religious rancor that have bedeviled Nigeria. For instance, contestation for space, the acrimony in the struggle for power and supremacy in the control of the state apparatus between the Christians and the Muslims, ethnocentrism, ignorance and poor or lack of understanding of one’s own religion and that of others, among others, have been chronicled as potential causes of religious tensions in Nigeria. This study however suspects that, doctrinal supremacy counterclaims of Christianity and Islam gave birth to the attitude of doctrinal fanaticism which serves as the primary factor and the premises for other secondary factors of inter-faith and inter-denominational/sectarian tensions in Nigeria. In agreement with this observation, Udoidem cited by Arukwe (2004: p.177), believes that impetus to these inter-religious violence are given by the basic philosophies of these religions; where, for instance, Islamic philosophy divides the world into 2 camps – “believers” and “infidels”. Believers being the Muslim faithful who believe that there is only one God, with Muhammad as His only true prophet, with infidels, on the other hand, consisting of non-Muslims, particularly Christians who are regarded as “blasphemers”. On the other hand, in Christendom, the divinity of Jesus, His sonship of God, as well as the belief that salvation is exclusively for only those who believe in, and accept Jesus as the only means amongst other ideologies, also pitch Christians against the people of other religious faiths, especially the Muslims who only see Jesus as one of the several prophets/servants of Allah, and refute His divinity and sonship of God. As such, the Christians see Muslims and others who share the Islamic view of Jesus or who do not embrace Christian Christology, as non-believers.

So, with the mindset that these above conflicting doctrinal or ideological sentiments and other differences set the stage for the perpetual rivalry between Christianity and Islam, this study therefore examines the doctrinal supremacy counterclaims of Christianity and Islam in the religiously pluralized Nigeria and its implication on sustainable development in order to suggest way out from the socio-economic sustainability retrogression being faced by the country.

Conceptual Definition

Inter-faith Relationship

The concept ‘interfaith relationship’ is made up of two lexemes of ‘interfaith’ and ‘relationship’. The word ‘interfaith’, means “involving persons of different religious faiths” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2020). “It describes an interaction between people of different religions or faith traditions”, but, it is more than that. It is also about understanding our significant differences, but also recognizing our similarities, and working together for peace, justice and healing in our world (United Religions Initiative URI, 2020). Our argument in this discourse is however hinged on the first meaning. Meanwhile, the word ‘relationship’ is an ambiguous word that can attract different meanings depending on the contest in which it is
used. Its definition, according to the Cambridge Dictionary (2020) as: “the way in which two or more people feel and behave towards each other” suits the contest of this discourse.

From the point of view of the above etymological exposition, ‘interfaith relationship’ can therefore be defined as the way in which two or more persons or people of different religions or faith traditions feel and behave towards each other. Such relationship may be cordial or otherwise. The pertinent issue here is that, whatever form of relationship that exists between people of different religions or faith traditions in a society, be it peaceful or otherwise, influences the fortune and misfortune of whichever society the relationship is exhibited. As pointed out earlier in this paper, in Nigeria as a religiously pluralized country, the two dominant religions i.e. Christianity and Islam are constantly at loggerhead. This rancorous relationship between Christianity and Islam is affecting sustainable development in Nigeria. This study therefore probes the influence of doctrinal supremacy counterclaims of Christianity and Islam on the feelings, behaviors and interaction between these rival religions and its implication on sustainable development.

**Sustainable Development**

The concept ‘Sustainable Development’ suggests an enduring, remarkable, non-terminal improvement in the quality of life, standard of living and life chances of people. Such development must be capable of surviving generations over a prolonged period of time. It favours a progress curve in human development, encompassing enhanced creativity, for increased productivity (Akinwumi and Ibimilua, n.d.: p.11).

Sustainable Development has been defined in so many ways, but the most frequently quoted definition is from Brundtland Report, according to which it is defined as “the development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs”. The idea of sustainability, which stems from the global quest to conserve both the global natural resources and social-economic fortune for the benefits of both the present and future generations, and the sustenance of a better and comfortable human race on the planet earth, without compromising the planet, is the foundation for today’s leading global framework for international cooperation – the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (International Institute for Sustainable Development, n.d.).

Specifically, Sustainable Development is a way of organizing society so that it can exist in the long term. It implies taking into account both the imperatives of the present and those of the future, such as the preservation of the environment and natural resources or social and economic equity. ([https://youmatter.world>definition>definition])

Sustainability is development that satisfies the needs of the present without compromising the capacity of future generations, guaranteeing the balance between economic growth, care for the environment and social well-being. Many challenges facing humankind, such as climate change, water scarcity, inequality and hunger, can only be resolved at a global level and by promoting sustainable development: a commitment to social progress, environmental balance and economic growth. It is a call to action to protect the planet and guarantee global well-being of people. These common goals require the active involvement of individuals,
business, administrations and countries around the world. (https://www.acciona.com/sustainable-development)

So, the commitment to the noble and lofty idea of the agenda 2030 i.e. Sustainable Development is the expected responsibility of every reasonable society, and even individuals. In this respect, it is expected that every reasonable societies strive and work in commitment to promoting, and the achievement of the SDGs. In this connection, a serious and civilized society should preclude all tendencies considerable as inimical, antithetical, and which are capable of shattering the realization of Sustainable Development. Whereas, the perennial controversies of doctrinal supremacy claims and counterclaims of religions, especially of Christianity and Islam in Nigeria, which threatens inter-religious peace, this study argues constitutes unbearable threat to sustainable development in the country.

Various Points of Conflicting Doctrinal Supremacy Counterclaims Between Christianity and Islam

Doctrinal supremacy claim is the belief in, or claim of doctrinal superiority or doctrinal absoluteness. In religiosity, doctrinal supremacy claim has to do with the situation whereby adherents of a religious faith, denomination or sect, lay claim of doctrinal superiority or doctrinal absoluteness, while attributing falsity to other religions. It is the common experience in multi-religious societies. In societies with religious plurality, adherents of different religions, denominations or sects, make claims and counterclaims of doctrinal superiority or doctrinal absoluteness. In Nigeria for instance, the two major religions i.e. Christianity and Islam hold opposing/conflicting beliefs about God, the person of Jesus Christ, Prophet Muhammad, Salvation, Sin, Angels among other ideological differences. Meanwhile, and as pointed out earlier in this discourse, impetus to the various inter-religious violence that have bedeviled and are still bedeviling Nigeria are given by these basic philosophies i.e. doctrines or belief systems of these religions. The various points of conflicting doctrinal or ideological claims of these religions (Christianity and Islam) are captured in the table 1 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BELIEF (DOCTRINE)</th>
<th>ISLAM</th>
<th>CHRISTIANITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>God</td>
<td>Only one God- called Allah</td>
<td>Only one God – a triune being called God or Yahweh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus</td>
<td>A prophet who was virgin-born, but not the son of God</td>
<td>Divine Son of God who was virgin-born. He is God’s Word and Savior to humanity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crucifixion</td>
<td>Jesus was not crucified. someone was substituted for Jesus and He (Jesus) hid until He could meet with the disciples</td>
<td>A fact of history that is necessary for the atonement of sin and the salvation of believers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus’ Resurrection</td>
<td>Since Muslims do not believe in the crucifixion, there is no need to believe in the Resurrection</td>
<td>A fact of history that signifies God’s victory over sin and death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Muslim Belief</td>
<td>Christian Belief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinity</td>
<td>A blasphemy signifying belief in three gods. In Islam, the trinity is mistakenly thought to be God, Jesus and Holy Spirit</td>
<td>The one God is eternally revealed in three coequal and coeternal persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sin</td>
<td>Sin is disobedience to the established law. Sin does not grieve Allah</td>
<td>Sin is rebellion against God. Sin grieves God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Man is created by Allah, but not with original sin, men (Muslims) are servants of Allah but not Allah’s children since Allah begets nobody</td>
<td>Man is created in God’s image, born with the original sin, and is sinful by nature. Men (Christians), through Jesus Christ are also children of God, but not just mere servants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation</td>
<td>Salvation is achieved by submitting to the will of Allah. There is no assurance of salvation- it is granted by Allah’s mercy alone</td>
<td>Salvation is a gift accepted by faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ on the cross and provided through God’s grace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible</td>
<td>Muslims accept the Bible (especially the Pentateuch, Psalms, and Gospel) insofar as it agrees with the Qur’an</td>
<td>The Bible is the inspired Word of God that is complete and not to be added to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qur’an (Koran)</td>
<td>A later revelation that supersedes and corrects errors in the Bible</td>
<td>Not accepted as divine revelation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammad</td>
<td>The last in the line of prophets and, therefore, the final authority in spiritual matters</td>
<td>Not accepted as a prophet or legitimate theological source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angels</td>
<td>These divine messengers are created from light and are not worshipped. Satan is an angel</td>
<td>Angels are defined in the Bible as heavenly servants of God who act as His messengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last Days</td>
<td>There will be bodily resurrection and final judgment with final destination. All Muslims go to heaven, though, some must be purged of their sins first. All infidel are destined for hell</td>
<td>There will be bodily resurrection in the last days. Final judgment and eternal destination (heaven or hell) will be decided based on acceptance of Jesus as savior and His removal of the sin which separates each person from God</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adopted from NSRK Ravi, (2016), with modification and additions by the author
The adherents of each of these two religions i.e. Christians and Muslims, hold tenaciously with unwavering commitments to these conflicting doctrines and ideologies, and consider any iota of liberalality as blasphemous and sacrilegious; they do anything humanly possible to defend their beliefs whenever occasion arises. David (2017: pp.180&218), attested to this observation when he posited that the Muslims are proud and thankful to be Muslims, and to belong to the community to which Muhammad was God’s special messenger. They are loyal to this community and, in times of danger, will fight bravely for it. He also asserted that some Christians, both men and women, are willing to give their whole lives in the ministry of the church.

Adherents of these two religions also consider as a religious obligation and a calling to bring others to embrace their beliefs. According to Ayantayo (2018: p.5), the two of them lay claim to some passages of their scriptures and religious traditions to prove their arguments. Christians refer to the following passages of the Bible:

**John 14:6:** “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the father except through me.‘”

**Acts 4:12:** “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heavens given among men by which we must be saved.”

**John 3:16:** “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”

**1 Timothy: 2:5:** “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

**John 3:36:** “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”

**John 10:9:** “I am the door, if anyone enters by me, he will be saved and go in and out and find pasture.”

On the contrary, Muslims often quote the following portions of the Qur’an:

**Surah 3:19:** “Truly the religion with Allah is Islam.”

**Surah 3:85:** “And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted of him and in the hereafter he will be one of the losers.”

**Surah 48:28:** “He it is who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth.”

What came out of this, is what Mala, quoted by Ayantayo (2018: pp.5-6), labels as particularity trust, which is the belief held by different religious practitioners that there is no good thing in other religions different from the one a person practices. And in history, this religious mentality has had sinister effects on intra-religious and inter-religious relations in Nigeria.

So, the adherents of Christianity and Islam thus employ a disparaging and stereotyping style of preaching in their acclaimed soul winning mission. Meanwhile, According to Sampson (2012: p.23), the disparaging or critical preaching is one of the most common causes of religious violence in Nigeria. First, both religions claim monopoly of religious truths as well as the absolute prerogative to eternity in heaven, this religious cliché is contemptuously imbued in the public preaching of both religious groups, as religious sermons are often laden with messages signifying the monopoly of salvation and truth. In extreme cases, the messages transcend the traditional monopolization of essence, thereby delving into the arena of judgmental and scornful delegitimization of opposing religions and their prophetic symbols. For instance, the March 1987 religious violence in Kafanchan, Kaduna state was allegedly
caused by a Christian preacher, who allegedly used verses from the Qur’an to delegitimize Islam while justifying the exclusive existence of salvation within the ambience of Christianity. Muslims in Kaduna had also alleged that one Revd. Abubakar Bako, publicly sought to interpret the Qur’an in a manner that disparaged Islam, in addition to making some uncomplimentary comments about Prophet Mohammad. Much resent similar experience to the above, though of the intra-religious type, is the case in a Kano Upper Shari’a Court sitting at Hausawa Fillin Hockey on Monday 10th of August 2020, which sentenced a 22-year-old man to death by hanging for blasphemy against Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). The judge, Khadi Aliyu Muhammad Kani, gave the verdict after finding Yahaya Aminu Sharif guilty as charged. Sharif, a resident of Sharifai in Kano metropolis was accused of committing blasphemy against the prophet in a song he circulated via WhatsApp in March 2020. Following the incident, protesters burnt down the singer’s family home and led a procession to the Kano Hisbah Command’s headquarters. The court also sentenced one Umar Farouq of Sharada area of Kano metropolis to 10 years imprisonment for making derogatory statements concerning the Almighty Allah in a public argument (New Telegraph Tuesday, 11th, August, 2020: p.30). The point being made here is that the attitude of doctrinal supremacy claims and counterclaims, as demonstrated in the above table, mutates into the tendency of fanaticism. And consequently, adherents of each of these two religions consider the adherents of the other as ignorant and potential candidates of hell and eternal condemnation, worthy to be delivered by means of conversion from the supposed impending self-imposed danger of eternal condemnation. For instance, Islamic philosophy as has been indicated here earlier, divides the world into 2 camps – “believers” and “infidels”. Believers being the Muslim faithful who believe that there is only one God, with Muhammad (pbuh) as His only true prophet, with infidels, on the other hand, consisting of non-Muslims, particularly Christians who are regarded as “blasphemers”. On the other hand, in Christendom, as indicated in the above table, the divinity of Jesus, His sonship of God, as well as the belief that salvation is exclusively for only those who believe in, and accept Jesus as the only means amongst other ideologies, constitute the sine qua non of faith, which also pitch Christians against the people of other religious faith, especially the Muslims who only see Jesus as one of the several prophets/servants of Allah, and refute His divinity and sonship of God. As such, the Christians as indicated earlier see Muslims and others who share the Islamic view of Jesus or who do not embrace Christian Christology, as non-believers. So, these conflicting claims of doctrinal superiority lead to doctrinal fanaticism which set the stage for the incessant religious crisis in Nigeria, the peak of which is the pandemic Boko Haram insurgent activities that is currently ravaging the northern parts of the country.

The Influence of Doctrinal Supremacy Counterclaims of Christianity and Islam on Interfaith Relationship in Nigeria

As has been demonstrated in the forgoing, the proclivities of doctrinal supremacy claims and counterclaims of Christianity and Islam mutates into the attitude of doctrinal or ideological fanaticism exhibited by the adherents of the two religions. The attitude of doctrinal fanaticism thus pitched the adherents of each of the two religions against one another, and this consequently leads to perpetual feelings of hatred, and unfriendly interaction between the two religions. They are thus constantly at loggerhead. Little wonders Ogundepo and Okedigba (2006: p.156), posited that some adherents of religions are so emotionally and dogmatically attached to their religion that they can hardly tolerate the views and opinions of others. Quite often, they take seemingly harmless expressions by others about their religion...
DOCTRINAL SUPREMACY COUNTERCLAIMS OF LIVING FAITHS...

as offensive. A case in reference is that of Isioma Daniel, a graduate of University of Central Lancashire, who worked for Thisday Newspaper, whose 2002 newspaper article comment involving the Islamic Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), sparked off major religious riots and caused a Fatwa (death sentence pronouncement) to be issued on her life.

The 2002 edition of the Miss World beauty pageant was to be held in Nigeria, but there was a general resentment and opposition from the Nigerian Muslim community, Isioma Daniel, a fashion writer with Thisday Newspaper, as reported by Astill and Bowcroft (2002, and quoted by Ogundepo and Okedigba2006:pp.156-157), made this remark:

The Muslims thought it was immoral to bring 92 women to Nigeria and ask them to ravel in vanity. What would Mohammad think? “In all honesty, he would probably have chosen a wife from one of them”

According to Daniel, the offensive sentence was added at the last minute, she saw it as “funny and light hearted” and didn’t see it as “anything anybody should take serious or cause much fuss”. This seeming innocuous statement led to a violent religious riot that killed more than 200 persons and left well over 1000 persons injured while over 11,000 people were made homeless. In fact, Thisday’s office in Kaduna was burnt despite the paper’s apology and retraction in the front page. The government of Zamfara state, through the Deputy Governor, Mamuda Aliyu Shinkafi in a broadcast on 26th November, 2002 issued a fatwa against Isioma. She had to resign from the newspaper the day after the article appearance and soon after, for fear and security reasons, left Nigeria for Benin and later went into exile in Europe.

By the way, the case of Journalist Isioma quoted above was not the beginning of religious crises in Nigeria. From a historical perspective, it can easily be recalled that while Islam entered the country from the North, Christianity came in from the South. Both religions have similar expansionist goals and that is where the similarity ends. While Christianity expands through verbal and moral persuasion, Islam puts its point across with the sword. As Christianity moves up to the North, Islam started pushing its way down to the South. The two opposing religious beliefs met at the middle Belt of the country, and set in motion, a wave of spiritual conflict that culminated in perennial crisis in Plateau state. With the irreconcilable opposing beliefs/doctrines between the Christians and the Muslims, the stage was set for a violent conflict in the Middle Belt as well as other parts of the North (Stephens Children Home, 2013).

Precisely, Religious conflict in Nigeria goes as far back as 1953, and in the case of the town of Tafawa Balewa, to 1948. The Igbo massacre of 1966 in the North that followed the counter-coup of the same year had as a dual cause the Igbo officers’ coup and the pre-existing (sectarian) tension between the Igbo and the local Muslims. This was a major factor in the Biafran secession and the resulting civil war. The 1980s saw an upsurge in violence due to the death of Mohammed Marwa (”Maitatsine”). In the same decade, the erstwhile military ruler of Nigeria, General Ibrahim Babangida enrolled Nigeria in the organization of the Islamic conference (OIC). This was a move which aggravated religious tensions in the country, particularly among the Christian community. Also in the 1980s, serious outbreaks between Christians and Muslims occurred in Kafanchan in Southern Kaduna state, in a border between
the two religions, propagated by extreme leaders who were able to rally a young, educated group of individuals who feared that the nation would not be able to protect their religious group. The leaders were able to polarize their followers through speeches and public demonstrations. The activities of some of these sects have in recent times led to loss of lives and properties as they moved about destroying government facilities which they see as legacies or replica of western culture in their various communities. This religious campaign has seen increase in gun battles between the members of these sects and security forces with loss of lives witnessed on both sides. Although, direct conflict between Christians and Muslims were rare, tension did flare between the two groups as each group radicalized. There were clashes in October 1982 when Muslim zealots in Kano were able to enforce their power in order to keep the Anglican House Church from expanding its size and power base. They saw it as a threat to the nearby Mosque, even though the Anglican House Church had been there forty years prior to the building of the Mosque.(https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/religious_violence).

Kamal-deen(2016: p.1), observed that these category of conflicts exists mostly in the Northern parts of the country, where the main protagonists are Hausa/Fulani Muslims and Christian ethnic minority. According to him, and in corroboration of the contention of this discourse, the ‘pagan question’ seems to play a major role in creating a climate of suspicion and intolerance among the groups. For instance, the religious crisis in Kafanchan in 1987 which started from the college of education was precipitated on 6th of March by what was considered as blasphemous remarks when a convert from Islam to Christianity was said to have misinterpreted the Holy Qur’an while preaching. This led to a fight between the Christians and the Muslims on the campus. Later, it was spread to the Kafanchan town as well as other six towns in Kaduna state: Katsina, Funtua, Zaria, Kankia, Daura and Kaduna. In the process, hundreds of people were killed, many Churches and Mosques were set ablaze, and hotels were destroyed, altogether resulting in massive destruction of people and properties.

Again, the April 1991 violence in Tafawa Balewa was also precipitated by a quarrel in the market between a Christian butcher and some Hausa/Fulani people. In the ensuing impasse, many Muslims were killed. On carrying the corpse from Tafawa Balewa to Bauchi town, a reprisal was launched on the Christians in the town and this led to the massacre of many Christian settlers in the town. The invitation of the army to restore order only worsened the situation as a result of series of massacres in which thousands of people were alleged to have been killed. Aside the Kafanchan College of Education crisis of 1987 and that of Tafawa Balewa/Bauchi township animosity of 1991, there were several other rancor ignited by religious intolerance in the wake of the 80s and early 90s, in fact, the list is inexhaustible. Some of the other prominent examples include those of the Kasuwan Magani in 1980, Zango Kataf and Gure-Kahugu in 1987, Ilorin and Jerein 1989 as well as that of Zango Kataf in 1992 among others (Kamal-deen, 2016).

In 1991, the German evangelist Reinhard Bonnke attempted a crusade in Kano; this caused a religious riot that led to the deaths of about a dozen people. With the restoration of democracy in 1999, Christian government dominated the country at the federal level, while the Muslims dominated Northern Nigerian states implemented strict Sharia law but the Christian minority was not happy about this development. Religious conflict between Muslims and Christians has erupted several times since 2000 for various reasons, often causing riots with several
thousands of victims on both sides. Since 2009, the Islamist movement Boko Haram has fought an armed rebellion against the Nigerian military, sacking villages and towns and taking thousands of lives in battles and massacre against Christians, students and others deemed enemies of Islam (https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/religious_violence).

Aside the interreligious impasse between Christianity and Islam, there is also the experience of intra religious or inter denominational or inter sectarian resentments within Christian faith and within Islamic faith. So, wherever religious crises occurred, it comes about either in the form of inter-religious violence, intra-religious violence or any possible combination of these 2 major categories. For instance, one aspect of violence involving the Maitatsine in Northern Nigeria was primarily of an intra-religious dimension. For the Maitatsine group, the boundary between ‘fidel’ and ‘infidel’ became so thin that it was so easy for them to incriminate fellow Muslims on account of their own preferred (individual) interpretations of the Islamic scriptures, and religious practices.

Among Christians in Nigeria, fundamentalism has no doubt bred conflict but perhaps with a much more reduced degree of violence, both of the ‘intra’ and ‘inter’-religious types. Even though the kind of large scale violence that characterized the Northern Nigeria has not been observed among the Christians in Southern Nigeria, intra religious violence still exist among them to some degree. For instance, the case in Enugu in 2002 of the intra-religious conflict involving a fundamental Catholic religious preacher and some elements in the local Anglican Church at some stage involved violence and loss of lives. Elsewhere, Christian fundamentalist activities in Nigeria chiefly involves the activities of a new generation of mainly American-trained Pentecostalist preachers whose proselytizing activities are particularly virulent to independent rational scientific thinking. Apart from being opposed to scientific thinking, it would also appear quiet ironically these later-day American religious imports exhibit a high dose of hostility towards the much-talked-about ‘Protestant ethic’ (Arukwe, 2004: pp.179-180).

Again, doctrinal fanaticism has resulted to another dimension of intra-religious intolerance among diverse Christian denominations in Southern Nigeria. In this circumstance, many Christians in Southern Nigeria now see fellow Christians who belong to other denominations other than theirs as unbelievers. Such particularity mentality makes some Christian denominations lay claim to monopoly of scriptural truth, to an extent that these Christian denominations classify themselves as the “Bible believing church”, “praying or prayer church”, “deeper Christian life church” among other divisive claims and titles. With this type of mentality, they attribute falsity to other denominations other than theirs and thus cause a sort of social seclusion among believers of diverse denominations and religious traditions. In this connection, a Deeper-life-Bible-church member sees a Catholic Christian as a blasphemer, an Anglican-church member considers a Christ-Apostolic-Church member as a nonbeliever and vice versa. This doctrinal fanatical mentality now influences the daily social interaction of the adherents of these diverse Christian denominations in a negative sense such that a young member of C&S church cannot be introduced by a young RCCG member to his or her parents as a prospective suitor, and when situations like this arises, from experience, the next question from such fanatical parents is “is he/she a believer” Which means “is he/she a member of our church/denomination”, if the answer is no- (that is he/she is not a member of our church/denomination), the next instruction from such parents most often is “you cannot
be unequally yoked with unbelievers”. What makes such an aspiring suitor in that contest “an unbeliever” is the fact that even though he/she is a Christian, he/she does not belong to the same denomination/church with that of his/her desired prospective suitor. The implication of this is that Christians in Southern Nigeria are now socially separated from one another, and are now observing social distancing because denominational doctrinal differences now pitched them against one another

So, the attitude of doctrinal supremacy claims and counterclaims of Christianity and Islam as portrayed above has created an atmosphere of hatred, enmity and attitude of intolerance among the adherents of these two religious faiths in Nigeria. And this has in no small measure, impacted negatively on sustainable development in the country.

The Implications of the Interfaith Tensions Occasioned by Doctrinal Supremacy Counterclaims of Christianity and Islam on Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Sustainable peace is not only one of the pertinent projections of sustainable development, it is also an important ingredient for the attainment of agenda 2030 i.e. sustainable development. This is sufficed to say that peaceful environment is an indispensable requirement for the achievement of sustainable development. This invariably implies that socio-economic progress, including natural environment, suffer in a society like Nigeria where recurrent religious violence is the order of the day.

Incessant religious violence is akin to having a society in a state of war. The war zone situation engendered by incessant religious violence is particularly debilitating to social-economic development as no meaningful development projects could really thrive under such circumstances. Religious violence discourages economic growth in the sense of industrialization and modernization as it causes foreign capital flight since no businessman or industrialist want to invest where the safety of their investment is not guaranteed. What is more, by local businessmen always fleeing from areas of high religious violent, like Northern Nigeria for instance, a corresponding local flight or dispersal of capital would occur, denying the region, and indeed, the entire country, the economic development that is sure to kick-off from concentrated economic activities in an area (Arukwe, 2004: pp. 180-181)

Eradication of poverty is a specifically pinpointed projection of the agenda 2030. But It is however unfortunate that with just a decade to the projected deadline for the attainment of the agenda 2030, many Nigerians are still living in abject poverty as a result of the impact of religious tension occasioned by doctrinal fanaticism on economic activities in the country. The primary source of economic life of most rural dwellers in Nigeria is agriculture, and it is these rural populations that produce the bulk of the foods that the entire country feed from, including industrial raw materials. Meanwhile, the agrarian activities of rural dwellers, especially in the Northeastern parts of the country that is mostly ravaged by the activities of the Boko Haram fanatics since 2009, for instance, have been put on hold, with many of the farmers being killed, maimed, and in the worst case, kidnapped. The survivors are being chased away from their ancestral homes. Many of these people now live outside their ancestral villages/homes as IDPs in uninhabitable environments without requisite life supporting amenities. Little wonders Adegoke (2006: p.209), submitted that in Nigeria, widespread and severe poverty is a reality. It is a reality that depicts a lack of food, clothe, education and other basic amenities. Severely poor people lack the most basic necessities of life to a degree that it
can be wondered how they are managing to survive. There are several effects and deficiencies associated with poverty in Nigeria. One of the main effects of poverty is poor health, as is reflected in Nigeria’s high infant mortality and low life expectancy. Most children do not have the opportunity of being immunized and this leads to certain physical defects in some of the children. Their health has become low priority as they have little or no choices, they depend on whatever they are provided with, whether healthy or not.

Idika-Kalu (2020: pp.14-15) found that in the Lake Chad Basing, the inhabitants live with relatively high poverty rate and population pressure, with about 50 people per km². The human population in the area is expected to grow annually by estimated 2.5-3.0%. The area is also prone to intense water scarcity with access to less than 550 m³ water per year. Their challenges include poor medical facilities, human literacy and inadequate water supply. According to him, and as indicated here earlier, the critical factor to the economy of the region is the level of displacement resulting from the conflict and the consequent unemployment and deprivation. As Boko Haram continues its attack in the area, thousands are forced to flee across the borders between the countries around the LCB, and within the states. It is on record thousands of refugee flee Nigeria to Cameroon when insurgents ransacked any of the border towns. The same was the case with over 5000 inhabitants of Baga, another city on the border of Chad, fleeing across the Lake into Ngouboua village in Chad. This new demographic is dependent on aid and accounts for a swelling vulnerable population and fragile economy in the LCB.

The main points for trade and access to local markets for inhabitants, which are the borders, are mostly closed for security. Some livestock farmers move their herds through longer routes passing Niger, from Chad to sell at higher prices at the border markets. The commercial activities from fishing and agriculture have become restricted. Counter-terrorism endeavor by joint task force has been recorded to involve “clearing out” areas around the border, surrounding forests, and the lake shores. This military style operation targeted at flushing out insurgents has the side effect of destabilizing the lives of local fishermen and farmers. Maiduguri, in Borno State, Nigeria, has an ancient history of serving not only as a cultural and religious hub, but as the commercial heartbeat of the LCB region. Going back to thousands of years culturally, the Kanem-Bornu Empire and Kanembu of Chad are akin to the Kanuri in Nigeria in the way of life and language. The threat of constant Boko Haram activities over the last few years in the area has negatively affected business in the region and the rest of Northern Nigeria.

The violent activities of Boko Haram have brought a serious paralysis to business, the banking sector, markets, tourism, the transport system, hospitality, internal and external investment, companies and other economic activities. Okereocha (2012, cited in Aduku& Benjamin 2019: p.22), submitted that because of attacks on banks, markets, parks and government departments in Northern Nigeria, human capitals and investors have collapsed and people have migrated to other parts of the country. Economic backwardness, poverty, unemployment, insecurity and failure in sustainable human development have increased, not only in the northern parts, but in the entire country as well as neighboring countries like Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Benin.
Another dimension of the implications of the rivalry between Christianity and Islam on sustainable development in Nigeria is the shattering of public spaces in the country as a result of the proselytizing efforts of the two religions. The attitude of contestation for space that emanated from the rivalry between Christianity and Islam has also led to the desecration of the public spaces as evident in the indiscriminate sitting of Churches and Mosques on every Nigerian streets and residential areas. This act ultimately violates town planning protocols and destroys the aesthetics of the environment through littering of public spaces like banks, post offices, motor parks with religious billboards and posters. This singular fact raises the issue of social and moral responsibility on the part of the religious organizations that teach the duty towards environmental sustainability. Abuse of the environment is also evident in the use of drum-sized loud speakers, during morning, afternoon and evening religious services taking place in the public spaces. This often results in air pollution and social noise, which negatively affects the neighborhoods of the culpable religious centers, including the infants and the sick on admission in hospitals that ordinarily might be expected to be on bed rest. On the menace of noise pollution in Nigeria, Sony-Ehi (1984, quoted in Ayantayo 2018: pp.16-17) observed that:

Residents of big cities are increasingly going through partial deafness. Their sensitive eardrums are daily being bombarded by a continuous barrage of environmental noise overflowing from ear shattering drum-sized speakers of markets, mosques and churches.

The implication of this is that most public spaces, including residential environments in Nigeria have become uninhabitable due to the activities of religious organizations, stemming from their squabble for membership, and as a result of the mentality of doctrinal supremacy by the two proselytizing religions i.e. Christianity and Islam. Whereas, the projected deadline for the attainment of agenda 2030 in which the imperative of sustainable environment is emphasized, is remaining just a decade. It is very unfortunate.

Finally, the financial implication of the various religious violence in which economic properties are destroyed or burnt down in Nigeria cannot be overestimated. The resources that governments ordinarily would have invested on industrial and infrastructural development of the country is most of the time diverted to rebuilding or reconstruction of the damaged properties and this partly accounts for the infrastructural deficit in the country today. Both government and NGOs expend lots of money on the rehabilitation and resettlement of the victims of religious insurgent activities in Nigeria. All these account for the socio-economic including natural environment’s sustainability retrogression in Nigeria even while the projected deadline for the agenda 2030 remains just a decade. It is very unfortunate.

Conclusion
The attitude of doctrinal supremacy claims and counterclaims of Christianity and Islam is an undeniable factor of the poor and unhealthy inter- and intra-religious relation in Nigeria. This attitude of doctrinal supremacy claim and counterclaim between the two proselytizing religions transmutes into the attitude of doctrinal fanaticism, which leads to inter-religious intolerance among the adherents of the two religions, and the resultant inter-religious tensions impacts negatively on sustainable development in Nigeria. Thus, in just a decade to the
projected deadline for the attainment of the global agenda 2030 (sustainable development),
Nigeria seem not to be serious with the trivial manner in which the country handles the
pertinent projections of the lofty and very noble global agenda. Hence, insecurity, poverty,
hunger, poor health, unemployment, lack of access to consumable water and other important
life supporting amenities are lacking in the country today.

In the light of the above observation, this study therefore recommends that:
Adherents of different religious faiths, denominations and sects, especially Christianity and
Islam in Nigeria should eschew the proclivities of doctrinal fanaticism in order to give room
for peaceful inter- and intra-religious relation, so as to create an environment where
meaningful and sustainable developments can be achieved in the country.

Also, in alignment with Ayantayo (2018: pp.37-39)’s recommendation on how to facilitate
inter and intra-religious peace and harmony, this study prescribes the promotion of objective
religious education/studies in public and private spaces in Nigeria. By religious education, we
mean holistic education of the mind, intelligence, intellect, position and attitude of religious
practitioners regarding their understanding and, expected attitude and disposition to
religions different from the ones they practise. The Departments of Religious Studies in
Nigerian universities should take the lead in the effort geared towards religious
understanding. This should be done theoretically and practically. Theoretically, the courses
should appropriate the following issues: basic tenets of the world religions, comparative
religion, religious rights and freedom, religious secularism, and respect and mutual respect in
religions.

Acceptance of the limitations of religious scriptures and traditions is also very pertinent. There
is need for religious practitioners to understand that their religious scriptures and traditions
have some limitations in terms of their intents, contents and context especially when they are
considered in the light of the contemporary social, environmental, political and technological
issues. According to Ayantayo, (2018: p.39), several researches have indicated that despite the
fact that religious scriptures are inspired, they were documented by man. Besides, the
scriptures have historical backgrounds as they technically manifest the environments from
which they evolved. Mostly, the targeted readers and audiences of the scriptures were people
of homogenous community. Now that we are living in heterogeneous communities, most of
the teachings of the scriptures do not envisage the moral and social problems.

Finally, adherents of different religions, denominations or sects in Nigeria should come to
term with the fact that despite the noticeable differences that exist among the religions, there
are still certain areas of convergence among them. For instance, all the religions teach morality,
good neighborliness, interpersonal relation, good attitude to profitable works, among other
virtues. They should therefore leverage on the positive similarities among them to build a
peaceful society where better human race will continue to thrive.
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