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The Challenge of Peace Building among Christians and Muslims in Plateau State: A Theological Response

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Abstract

Plateau state in Nigeria wrestles with recurrent crises that have different nomenclature titles such as religious crises, Fulani herdsmen-farmer clash and bandit attack. The players of the crises, the victims and perpetrators have always been linked to a religious group either Christians or Muslims. The challenge calls for pragmatic contribution in any way that addresses and promotes peaceful co-existence among Christians and Muslims in the state. The issue of peace-building is very critical for the survival and advancement of any given society. When there are challenges the goal is to surmount the challenges and to proffer solutions to the challenges. On the recurs of retrospection as to what the issue of peace has been on the Plateau and what it ought to be, the paper first attempted to take a critical analysis of the factors and components of the crises and the challenge of peace building in addressing it. A simple historical analysis of crises from archived records was use as somewhat methodology for this work. The historical analysis of the crises on the Plateau shows the emergence of the Indigene-settlers issue as the bone of contention along with many other issues. The conclusion is for truth to prevail and for key players in the enterprise of peace on the Plateau to be actively awaken to the clarion call for the restoration of peaceful co-existence.

Keywords: Peace-Building, Co-existence, Christians, Muslims, Indigenes, Settlers

Introduction

The paper is built on the premise that Peace is an absolute essential component in every sane, organized and civil society. What is even more needed is the ability to build the peace in the advent that is 'broken.' The paper instinctively takes a critical and analytical look at peace between Christians and Muslims who are living in Plateau State of Nigeria. The idea of peace on the Plateau over the last 30 years has been quite an elusive quest considering the record of clashes and casualties incurred over the period. A prominent media outlet the Premium Times online newspaper published that over 4, 000 people have been killed in recurrent violence in Plateau State since 1994. The article written by Yakubu Mohammed on February 5, 2024 states that, "At least 4,486 have been killed in the endless violence between different ethnic groups in Plateau State since 1994" (Mohammed 2024) With this kind of data floating around, peace on the Plateau between Christians and Muslims is likely to be a mirage if something is not done about it. It is worthy to note that this paper carries the weight of conflict resolution or management. The intent is to somewhat clinically dissect the challenges as to why Christians and Muslims are not getting along on the Plateau and what a theological response can do in sufficing the work of peace building. The pragmatic concern in the paper is to explore and situate a credible and sound conceptualization of peace and peace-building that will address the existential relationship quagmire between the Christians and Muslims in Plateau state. The paper will further address the challenges of Christian-Muslim relationships in the state.

A Brief Background to Christian-Muslim Relations in Plateau State

Plateau state with a slogan "Home of Peace and Tourism" has indeed demonstrated such a sloganic claim in the past for many years with the presence of people from within and outside the country comfortably enjoying their abode in the state. **However, as argued by the** International centre for investigative reporting (2021), neither the peace nor the tourism can tell the true story of the Plateau today as many people have been forced out of their homes, and tourists are afraid to ply roads in the state. In view of what plateau use to be in the very past, the

relationship between Christians and Muslims, as well as other ethnic nationalities and the indigene of Plateau had never had cause to fight over an issue let alone to shed blood for decades. The thinking of the average Plateau indigene then could be captured in the words of Laso (2014 cf. Bin Mohammad 2010):

> God did not make a mistake of creating and allowing humans to belong to different religious persuasions and affiliations. Rather, it is the perfect will, plan and desire of Almighty God that all people should co-exist peacefully and mutually with one another despite differences. Right from the beginning of time, if God had wanted all people in the world to be either Christians, Muslims, traditionalists, Hindus, Buddhists, or Atheists, He would have done it because He alone has the power at His disposal to do so but He did not for reasons best known to Him.

The quotation implies that the average Plateau persons were all about peaceful coexistence and harmonious living. That is why the present clashes and civil unrest has not been heard in the past of the early years with the three (Anagutas, Afizeres (Jarawa) and Beroms) major tribes in the state living together including other ethnic nationalities such as Hausa, Fulani, Yoruba, Uhrobo, Igbo, Itsekiri, Igala, Idoma, Tiv, et cetera who came to the Jos area for commercial purposes (Laso, 2014 cf. Higazi 2011).

History of the Plateau Polities

To buttress the thought that the Plateau people were peaceful, a brief historical background will be imperative. According to Laso (2014):

> The Plateau polities have existed in their present abode since time immemorial. From the pre-historic age to the historic period through the pre-colonial times, these indigenous ethnic groups had continued to maintain their identities and destinies. Issues concerning the pre-history of these indigenous Plateau polities have been well elaborated and articulated by renowned archaeologist like Thurstan Shaw R.C. Soper and Bernard Fagg who linked these peoples to the famous Nok civilization, the oldest Iron – using civilization in West Africa which thrived between 200BC to 1000A.D. Investigations in three important

> archaeological sites of Mai Idon Toro, Ropp Rock shelter and Dutsen Kongba all in Plateau State have proved beyond reasonable doubt that the ancestors of the present indigenous populations of Jos and other parts of the state are directly linked with pre-historic inhabitants of Nok culture complex.

He argues that, the Anaguta, Afizere and Berom who constitute the major tribes particularly in Jos and environs have a link to each other and therefore, had no reason to fight each other. The Anagutas, "belong to the Benue-Congo language family but defer slightly as they belong to the Western – Plateau sub-branch. According to Laso, an inferential study of the Jos Plateau languages by J.A. Ballard has showed that there is a close language relationship between Anaguta, Bache, Berom, Afizere and Irigwe". He stresses that, "The Anaguta tribe are confined to the village of Naraguta and the small Town of Gowsh which lies in the Bauchi emirate. Their origin is uncertain, though they came from beyond the Jarawa hills."

The Afizere (Jarawa) on the other hand had "land which stretches from Jos Metropolis to its northern limit a little beyond Rinjin Gani village which lies on the Jos Bauchi Road. Afizere is a derivative from 'Izere', which is a yellow flowered high scented edible herb that grows round households usually around the month of September" (Leso 2014). They have affiliation with other tribes too; Laso opines that,

> The use of archaeological and botanical evidence to restructure Afizere history will be veritable tool. While it is sufficiently safe to establish a kinship relationship between the Afizere and the Bantus through linguistic affiliation, it is necessary to explore other areas of commonality between the groups (Archaeological, cultural, and Botanical) before establishing a definite common descent of these two groups.

Thus, the Afizere can be said to be a well-known indigenous tribe on the Plateau with affiliation to others whom they relate well with.

The Beroms according to Laso, also "belong to the Benue – Congo language family whose origin is traced to a long distance migration". He points out that, "against the backdrop of the long and short distance and south and north ward migration of the Berom people, Prof. B.T. Bingel argues that one of the fundamental proofs of early settlement on the Jos Plateau can be found in the artifacts of the Nok culture, which

goes back as far as five hundred (500) B.C." Laso goes further to reiterate that "because the Berom have been identified as the first group to settle on the Jos Plateau, and the fact that clear evidence exist to show that Jos North had both late stone age populations and those who were in the transition to the Iron age represented by the Rop Rock Shelter and Nok culture respectively", it can be said that the trio: Anaguta, Afizere and Beroms have a common heritage. Now if these three major tribes on the Jos Plateau have a common heritage, what then has brought about the existential threat that has cumulated into the recurrent crisis in the Jos Plateau area that is now a challenge?

Documentation shows that the clashes that have been happening on the Plateau have been centred on the major Plateau indigenous tribes and the Muslim Hausa/Fulani communities. To buttress this point, it is on record that the Plateau Peace Building Agency (PPBA) archived some of the violent incidents from 1994 to 2021 and some data provided (Mohammed, 2024) for the subsequent years gathered and presented as follows:

Table 1.

S/N	Year	Date of Crisis	Reported Causes of violence	Number of Casualties
1.	1994	April 12th	Ethnic violence broke out in Jos after the appointment of one Alhaji Mato, Hausa-Fulani man as sole administrator for Jos North LGA. The indigenous people of Berom, Anaguta and Afizere rejected the appointment which resulted in a violent crisis.	Claimed 5 Lives
2.	1995	-	A prolonged land dispute turned into a full-blown conflict between Mwaghavuls in Mangu and Ron people in Bokkos communities.	Many houses and properties were lost to the crisis

3.	1997	-	The killing of a Berom man who allegedly picked a garden egg from the farm of a Hausa-Fulani dry season farmer.	6 locals were reported dead in the incident.
4.	2001	September	Outbreak of hostility and mass killing in Jos. Crisis reported to be ignited by political tension after the controversial appointment of a Poverty Eradication Coordinator in Jos North a few weeks before the crisis. Indigenous people reportedly rejected the appointment. However, the main trigger of the crisis occurred when a young woman tried to pass through a roadblock by a Muslim congregation observing Juma'at prayer.	Apart from the destruction of properties including Worship places, about 1,000 lives were estimated lost to the violence.
5.	2002	May & June	A series of violence claimed lives. In May, political violence broke out between the indigenous people and Hausa-Fulani "mercenaries" who invaded a People's Democratic Party's (PDP) ward congress in the Eto-Baba community in Jos North LGA. The violence would later escalate to Angwan Rukuba and Nasarawa Gwom. The following month, another crisis rocked Yelwa, Shendam LGA, over a relationship	600 People killed in political crisis. 100people were reportedly killed in the Ward congress violence of PDP. A man killed in Angwan Pandam over the relationship embargo in Yelwa Shendam which led to about 500 people were reportedly killed; houses and properties were

			embargo that Christians placed between their women and Muslim men. This led to a fight on the night of 26 June, resulting in the death of a Christian man. Also, the Wase LGA crisis which started in 2002 rolled into 2004. The violence started as a result of the killing of four prominent Taroh people who were invited to a peace meeting. They were alleged to have been killed in the center of the city on their way back from the peace meeting.	destroyed including churches and mosques. 4 Taroh men. The death toll from the violence could not be ascertained.
6.	2004	May	Retaliation for the killings and sacking of Christians from the community earlier in February	About 700 people, mostly, Muslims were murdered in coordinated attacks on Yelwa in Shendam LGA and other communities in Langtang North, Langtang South and Wase area councils allegedly by "Christian militias."
7.	2008	-	A crisis broke out over a local government election in Jos North and spread to other parts of the state. The crisis was	More than 1,000 lives were claimed.

			between indigenous people and Hausa-Fulani's.	
8.	2010	March	A dispute between Christians and Muslims in the Nasarawa Gwom area of Jos South LGA. Also people were killed in March in a cycle of attacks between indigenous people and members of the Fulani ethnic group.	400 people dead as a result of the Nasarawa Gwom violence; while over 300 people were killed in the cycle of attacks in March.
9.	2011		A post-election violence pitted Muslims and non-Muslims against each other in 2011, leading to loss of lives. The violence occurred after former President Muhammadu Buhari, who contested under Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), lost to the ruling PDP.	Casualties not ascertain
10.	2016	February, July and September	There were clashes between farmers and herders in February, July and September in some parts of the state.	Estimates of loss of life and property from the conflicts are not available.
11.	2017	14th September	A clash broke out between the Hausa and Igbo communities. The tension started brewing after a rumour of an impending attack on Igbo residents following a reported attack on the Hausa community in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. Barely a month after, the doused farmers-herders crisis in the state resurfaced in Riyom LGA	-

12.	2018	September	Among the major crises experienced in the state that year was a reprisal attack around Dura Du, a Jos South village where a high-ranking military officer, Idris Alkali, was mysteriously murdered in September. Before and after that, there were many resource-based conflicts in some parts of the state. The violence continued into the following year	57 lives were claimed plus that of the high-ranking military officer, Idris Alkali.
13.	2020	March	A conflict between farmers and herders resurged in March in Riyom LGA and lingered through the year	-
14.	2021	-	A series of crises unsettled the state in 2021. Among them were attacks and reprisals among Fulani herders and indigenous Irigwe locals in Bassa LGA;	The crises led to 30 deaths, cattle rustling and loss of properties. Over 80 people reportedly lost their lives in recurrent clashes between Berom, other local tribes and Fulani militias in Barkin Ladi, Jos North and Riyom local councils.
15.	2022	Between January and June	Seven violent attacks between January and June; and counter attacks between farmers and herders in Bassa, Jos North and Shendam local councils,	At least 58 people were killed.

			according to facts obtained from the Nextier Violent Conflict Database	
16.	2023	-	People killed in violent attacks and reprisals in Barkin Ladi, Bokkos and Mangu LGAs	Over 400 people were killed (Mohammed 2024)

Summary of Report

The aforementioned report by Premium Times News Paper summarized in this tubular form is to give a concise, yet explicit up to 2023 record on the Plateau peace-building challenge which has spun for over 3 decades now. The question that needs clarity is why then are there violent clashes mainly between the indigenous people of Plateau State i.e. the Beroms, Anagutas, Afizeres, Irigwes, Tarohs, etc and the Hausa and Fulani Muslim communities? (Note that there is emphasis made on the words 'Hausa-Fulani' or 'Muslim(s)' in the table above to buttress its associate occurrence with conflicts and violence on the Plateau). Understanding this background will help critical thinkers to see the complexities of the challenges in peace-building and to appreciate the historical roots of the problem on the Plateau.

Brief History of the Hausa and Fulani Ethnic Group on the Plateau

It is worthy to note with regards to the Hausa and Fulani Ethnic group that, "traditionally speaking, the Plateau polities do not have any cognate historical and cultural backgrounds let alone a contiguous ethnic boundary with the Hausa immigrants of Jos" (PIDAN 2010). Emmanuel Audu Laso while citing Usmanu in his work *Bringing People Together*, stated that, "Fulani ethnic group came to their present locations in Nigeria with different aims, these aims are: to trade, find green field for their cattle, spread the message of Islam and above all change or eliminate the corrupt and 'Pagan' practice of the Hausa people who occupied the then Habe Kingdom" (Laso 2014 cf. Bavier 2011). Laso goes further to say that, "according to another source, the influx of the Hausa and Fulani to the Jos Plateau is as a result of mining activities. It was thus tin mining that made the presence of the Hausa and Fulani in Jos North to be felt and surely when they came, it was not possible for them to have found an entirely new settlement of their own." So, was it the lack of finding a settlement by the Hausa and Fulani Muslim community that resulted to the occasional Plateau crisis?

Laso opines that, “The indigene-settler problem is one of the historical roots that has been responsible for the numerous violent ethno-religious crises and conflicts that have occurred not only in Jos Plateau but by extension in Nigeria as a nation.” Is it now tenable to state that it is the coming of the Hausa and Fulani Muslims to the Plateau whether to trade or find quality pasture for their flocks, spread Islam or engage in tin mining that has resulted to the incessant clashes between mainly the locals and themselves? The Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network (PIDAN) seems to think in that line. PIDAN while in attempt to demystify the ‘Misconceptions about the Recurrent Jos Conflicts’ pointed out that,

> In recent times, Plateau State has been placed on the threshold of a phenomenal scale of unceasing ethno-religious conflicts involving wanton destruction of lives and properties. The hitherto peaceful and serene atmosphere of the state has unfortunately been smashed into smithereens. Many communities have been displaced and the previous harmonious inter-ethnic and inter-religious relationships have been severely strained and battered. The unrelenting pressures of these ugly episodes on our collective psyche and sensibility are quite tremendous, much as they portend (may God forbid) a huge potential for unmitigated national disaster. It is sad to note that the bitter experiences of the past, beginning from 1994, have continued to linger on in Plateau State with no lasting solution yet in sight. This is despite all efforts made by Government and the people of the State to put the cycle of trauma behind them.

PIDAN continues by elucidating what they felt Jos ought to be as against what it is turning out to be. They stated that,

> It would be recalled that Plateau State, since its creation in 1976, was erected on sound historical and socio-cultural values as envisioned by the founding fathers. The aim was to build a truly accommodative and integrative environment on the ethos of peace and stability where every Nigerian, irrespective of creed or ethnic inclination, would reside and conduct his or her affairs without let or hindrance. This noble vision had been mustered and sustained until the state earned its unique position as the un-disputable “HOME OF PEACE AND TOURISM” in Nigeria, an affectionate

> sobriquet which became the hall-mark of the people's warm hospitality and receptivity. Quite apart from emerging as a bastion of peace and stability, Plateau State began to blossom and flourish as a strategic melting-pot of diverse ethnic nationalities and cultures in the country. Indeed the proclamation of the Islamic Sharia personal law in 1999 by some Northern States, amongst other factors, caused mass exodus of some Nigerian citizens to Plateau State where, it was hoped, the needed peace would be guaranteed. This was apparently a re-enactment of history as the outbreak of the 1952 Kano riots had caused a similar phenomenal exodus of Nigerians mostly of Southern extraction to Jos.

The whole background to the conflict to which PIDAN gives is pointing to the entrance of something or someone alien to the Plateau way of life. They believe, certain factors, and behaviours are responsible to the lack of peace on the Plateau. They seem to be pointing to an "entrenched love-hate syndrome especially between the indigenous ethnic groups and the Hausa in the state." But how and why has this defy peace-building in the State. The next subject matter should elaborate more.

The Concept of Peace Building

Merriam – Webster Dictionary defines Peace as "a state of tranquillity or quiet; a state of security or order within a community provided for by law or custom." The definition of 'Peace-Building' on the other hand from Oxford Languages says it is, "the implementation of measures intended to create or sustain peace, especially in an area affected by conflict." Peace and or Peace-Building is a necessity in every organized and civil society. Where there is the absence of peace in the society one would be looking at insecurity, disorderliness and a general breakdown of law and order (see Mahmoud and Makoond 2018 cf. Best, 2016).

Peace whether it pertains to churches for Christians or Mosques for Muslims is an essential component for harmonious co-existence. Yunusa Sabo Madu, the immediate past General Secretary of ECWA in his book, *Conflict Management: Role of the Church* states that, "whether or not church should actively participate in the peace building process is no longer a matter for debate. The challenge is how it should respond to the various conflicts in our country, especially northern Nigeria" (Madu 2018). Also, why would peace – building be an essential component? Because as

Bauta D. Motty writes, "The ultimate goal of peacemaking tasks is to restructure relationships to produce just and peaceful relations" (Motty 2016 cf. CSW 2014). Muslims also want a peaceful society. In a Premium Times newspaper article written by Qosim Suleiman with the caption *Plateau Attack: JNI calls for peace, justice for victims*, it stated that, "While praying for peace and security to return to Plateau State and Nigeria, the JNI said: 'We cannot be humans without humanity. Life is sacrosanct and must be seen to be so in Nigeria, and for sustainable peace to reign, there must be retributive justice for all, regardless of whatever considerations" (Suleiman 2023 cf. Tutu 1999). This response and many others show that Muslims also want peace in the community; the question however is "what kind of peace?" Secondly, can we say that the concept of peace-building is the same amongst the two prominent religions on the Plateau? This will inform the next aspect of this paper.

Concept of Peace Building amongst Christians

Christians have a concept on peace-building. Many of their perception can be similar to what Yunusa Madu asserts to that, "Peace does not mean the absence of conflict. Conflict is an intrinsic part of human relationships and does not have to be, and is usually not violent. The challenge before peace makers is to find ways in which communities can resolve differences without physical violence." Overall peace building amongst Christians can be said to have its roots in the Bible. First, the Bible enjoins its entire adherence to "if it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone (Rom. 12:18)." So, peace involves personal effort. Secondly, the Christian's concept of peace from the Bible is that God himself is the source of real peace (see 2 Thess. 3:16, John 14:27; Isa. 26:3; 1Pet. 5:7; Ps. 4:8; Rom. 5:1; Ps. 119:165; John 16:33; Col. 3:15; Ps. 34:14; Rom. 15:13). Thirdly, peace-building among Christians is expected to be a way of life. Jesus himself said: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God (Matt. 5:9)." Another portion of scriptures states that, "Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy, without holiness no one will see the Lord (Heb. 12:14)." Thus, it is safe to say that peace building in Christianity is expected to virtually be a way of life since the "God of the Christians" is considered to be the source of peace Himself (Isa. 9:6).

Concept of Peace Building amongst Muslims

For Muslims the difference is not much as the Quran points to "Allah" being peace Himself. Qur'an 59:23 says about God that, "He is God, other than whom there is no

god. The King, the Holy, the Peace, the Defender, the Guardian, the Mighty, the Omnipotent, the Supreme." Another issue that points to the peace in Islam is what the Muslims consider as peace fundamentals which are:

> Islam literally means two basic concepts: First, Islam from the Arabic verb salima/yaslemu means to consider or submit to God. And second, from the Arabic noun salam – from letters seen, lam, means (s, I, m) – it means peace or to acquire peace. A daily example of this is provided by Muslims in their greetings of Asslamu Alaykum, meaning peace be with you. According to the Qur'an, Islam is what all prophets and messengers of God, from Adam to Muhammad and others in between (peace and God's Blessings on them all), preached and practiced. And that is what they asked from their people: That is to submit to one God and to work for peace. This was the message of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Ishmael, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (peace and God's Blessings on them all). Therefore, Islam advocates living in peace with God – the Creator and Lord of all that exists. As well as, seeking peace within our own selves, and living in peace with other human beings, and in peace with our surroundings and environment in its entirety. All conflicts – whether they are interpersonal, or within the family and community, or national and international disturb this relationship of peace. The Islamic principles of peace – building enunciated in the Qur'an also affirm that all of human beings have a common origin ("nafsin wahidatin"). In fact, this basic concept is enshrined in the very first words that a Muslim says when he / she is born or on accepting Islam, commonly known as Shahada. Along with this commonality, Islam confers 'dignity' and respect on a human simply by virtue of being a human. This, as the Qur'an says "We have conferred dignity on the progeny of Adam" (Al Isra 17:70). This dignity is bestowed by God on all humans regardless of their ethnicity, religion, tribe, or nationality (Siraj Islam Mufti cf. Mohamed-Saleem 2016).

So, from the above quote, it can be said that Islam claims peace right from the meaning of its name, its greetings, adherence of humanity i.e. with all sons of Adam the first

being, its prophets and even with their God! Thus, Islam from this thesis cannot be seen to be against peace-building.

The Challenge of Peace Building

Since both Christians and Muslims on the Plateau claim to be people of peace and even in their concepts of peace-building as stated above; then what makes living in peace on the Plateau an elusive desire or mere wishful thinking in light of the violence it has witnessed over the years? In fact, Oholiabs Tuduks in the introduction of his second chapter of his dissertation captures the mood of what Christians and Muslims on Plateau feels like when he made reference to understanding the context of dysfunctional relationship among Christians and Muslims in Northern Nigeria. Tuduks asserts that, "Because of the fear of each other (Muslims and Christians) and interests in nurturing an exclusive relationship, Christians and Muslims live in segregated areas in Northern Nigeria" (Tuduks 2019). This is very true even to this day. Why then are there challenges in the peace building effort?

The Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network (PIDAN) raised a lot of issues as pertaining to why they believe the Plateau clashes or better still the recurrent Jos crises has refused to be resolved thereby posing as challenges to the peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians. They stated the following in elaborate terms: The formation of the Jasawa Development Association; Creation of Jos North Local Government Area; Indigene-Settler Syndrome; The manipulation of Religion; Media Propaganda; and other contemporary issues (PIDAN 2010). So, as long as these issues are not properly addressed, diverse peace-building efforts on the Plateau shall continue to be work in futility. Justice, storytelling, reframing the narratives, etc. must all be done around the issues that PIDAN has identified otherwise the peace-building effort on the Plateau shall continue to be a vicious circle leading to nowhere thereby posing as a challenge.

A Theological Response to the Challenges of Peace Building

The proper response therefore to give to the peace building challenge on the Plateau is a "Theological" one. This means that the approach must be seen through the eyes of God. Many have presented their approaches in diverse fora. The one that will be presented here is from a concept of the growth pattern of Jesus Christ in Luke 2:52. The Scripture says "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man (NIV)." What this invariably implies is that Jesus grew: intellectually

(wisdom), physically (stature), spiritually (in favour with God) and Socio-economically – in favour with man (Galadima 2010). What this means is that if all men were to grow properly, there must be intellectual increase, physical increase, spiritual increase and most definitely socio-economic increase. Thus, this same concept can apply in peace-building amongst the two major religious adherents on the Plateau – Christians and Muslims. Indeed, it must apply also to all indigenous ethnic groups on the Plateau for peaceful co-existence to be obtainable. The issue of peace must be approached intellectually, physically, spiritually and socio-economically. Here's what it will look like:

Intellectual Approach to Peace-Building: This obviously will mean through sound logic, reasoning and understanding. The way this can best be presented is in the manner put forward by Bauta Motty in his book, *Transformational Conflict Management and Resolution*. He brings two concepts as regards intellectualism: Emotional Intelligence and Cultural Intelligence, asserting that "Emotional intelligence is a skill or ability or a self-perceived ability to identify, assess, and control the emotions of oneself, of others, and of groups" (Motty 2016). What this portends is simply "being concerned with effectively understanding oneself and others, relating well to people, and adapting to and coping with the immediate surroundings to be more successful in dealing with environmental demands" (Motty 2016). What is meant here intellectually is being able to take time for Christians to study the emotions of their people and vice-versa with the Muslim community. If that can be done an understanding towards peace can be properly brokered. He continued, "Cultural intelligence refers to the cognitive, motivational, and behavioural capacities to understand and effectively respond to the beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviours of individuals and groups under complex and changing circumstances in order to effect a desired change." Motty asserts that cultural knowledge and warfare are bound together as cultural intelligence that is essential for ensuring successful conflict management of diverse cultural situations. He believes that culture is composed of factors including language, society, economy, customs, history, and religion." So, intellectual approach by both Muslims and Christians in a conflict situation that requires peaceful co-existence needs some form of intelligence and it is the way to go: and so here the proposition is both religions should consider the option of building emotional and cultural intelligence.

Physical Approach to Peace-Building: This is not a new concept as many of the approaches to peaceful co-existence have been physically handled almost all the time.

Here it would imply dialoguing, relating, etc. Quite a number of "physical activities" follow many conflicts or tense situation of peaceful co-existence. Yunusa Sabo Madu in his book *Conflict Management: Role of the Church*, again opines that "Building Enduring Structures" is the way to go. Madu proposes that, "the church must therefore seek to build permanent structures and programs that are proactive and enduring, especially in the face of incessant violence against it by people from other religions" (Madu 2018). He advocates for a physical approach to peace-building listing what he refers to as 'enduring structure.' According to Madu, "such structures may include, but not limited to the following: sponsor and support legal reforms, ministering to victims, rehabilitation of victims and specialized ministries." Everything listed here is pointing to the need for physically confronting the cause, effect and implication of conflict and the absence of peace on the Plateau. This theological response is simply advocating for taking concrete, tangible and or visible steps or action to mitigating conflict or ensuring peace-building is achieved – "*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone (Rom. 12:18)*."

Spiritual Approach to Peace-Building: Another theological approach to peace-building is the use of 'prayers.' This can be considered as a spiritual approach to peace-building. Encouraging both groups of the diverse faith (Muslims & Christians) to pray for peace; whether collectively or in their respective groups is the way to go. The Christians are commonly enjoined to pray for the peace of their abode as Psalms 122:6-9 advocates for such. And this is equally true for Muslims (see Surah Al-Baqarah 2:45 and Surah Al-Ankabut 29:62). Hence, there is no wonder why after every conflict there is usually a cry for prayers. Both religions (Muslims and Christians) on the Plateau believe in the spiritual approach to peace-building. Prayer is a spiritual means to approach matters and it may be the reason why after every crisis between Christians and Muslims there is always a call for prayer. In January 2024 the Punch Newspaper records the caption: "CAN urges prayers for Plateau Attacks," and reads "The Christian Association of Nigeria has called for prayers for victims of the Plateau State attacks, resulting in the death of over 190 persons and the razing of about 221 houses, rendering over 10, 000 displaced from their homes" (Shaibu 2024). Similarly, a Vanguard Newspaper stated that, "Ramadan: Mutfwang urges Muslims to pray for peace in Plateau." The tabloid goes ahead to give the news that, "As Muslims commence the Ramadan fast, the Plateau State Governor, Caleb Mutfwang, has asked Muslims in the state to pray for political leaders so that they can provide good governance and also pray for a peaceful and prosperous Plateau State" (Nanlong

2024). All what these newspapers are showing is that for a peaceful co-existence to be established between Christians and Muslims on the Plateau, a spiritual approach cannot be overlooked for which it is prayer. In the Bible, Christians are enjoined to pray without ceasing (1Thessalonians 5:17). While for Muslims it is a known fact that prayer five times a day is a non-negotiable truth (Quran Chapter 29 [Soorah al-Ankaboot), verse 45). If Jesus grew in favour with God means he grew spiritually, then what that could portend is Jesus must have had a way with God. In scripture it points out that Jesus prayed regularly whether in solitude or in public to perform a miracle (Matt. 14:23; 26:26; 36-44; Mk. 1:35; 7:34-35; 8:6 Lk. 5:16; 6:12-13; 9:18; 22:39-41; 24:30; Jn. 6:11; 11:41-42; 12:27-30). All these passages proved that Jesus' spiritual approval by God was because he connected through or by prayer.

Socio-economic Approach to Peace-Building: Jesus found "favour with men" in Luke 2:52 as part of his growth pattern this implies that Jesus related with men on social and economic level. Merriam-Webster defines the term 'socioeconomic' as "of relating to, or involving a combination of social and economic factors." What this all means in terms of peace-building between Muslims and Christians is that there is need to consider the social relationship that exist between the two as well as the economic aspect of how the two interact. Socially, this refers to what the two religions have in common that allows them to relate and peacefully co-exist. For example common social issues that affect the Christians and Muslims are unemployment, unequal opportunities, racism, malnutrition, etc. (SAGE Publications 2024). Christians can find common ground on things they and their Muslim counterparts are struggling together with; thus, spend time trying to deal with it rather than killing each other. Economically, just looking at the economic landscape of the entire country is enough grounds for Christians and Muslims on the Plateau to come together and relate on how they can overcome the poverty facing the adherents of their faith in the land. The economic hardship is enough issue to dwell and relate on. On the basis of relating on economic issues, Christians and Muslims should be able to build peaceful co-existence and live together with one another.

Conclusion

The main thesis for this paper is to highlight the challenges faced by Muslims and Christians on the Plateau with regards to peace-building. It is to draw attention to the fact that these challenges exist and there should be a way out of them. The purpose of the paper was to elucidate a theological response on how these challenges against

peaceful co-existence can be navigated through. The paper in its findings traces the historical backgrounds of the residence of the land and buttress the issue of settler – indigene conflict which is a key factor in the quest for peaceful co-existence on the Plateau. Conclusively, the paper in its theological response raises issues of paramount importance that should be addressed by both adherences of the two major faiths on the Plateau; the need for majoring on the issues that are common to them. Peace-building on the Plateau is something that is possible, it only requires that the parties involved in this peaceful co-existence enterprise to tell each other the 'truth', and to accept that truth then they can work together. Just as the Bible says in Amos 3:3; "Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so? (NIV)" Settlers like the Hausa-Fulani must agree that they are settlers and the indigenes of Plateau (Anagutas, Afizeres, Beroms, etc) must agree that dealing with societal issues like unemployment, poverty, tribalism, etc cannot be overtaken unless they bring along the settlers to work together and to work out a formidable plan to overcome the societal ills together – until then, the issue of peace-building will continue to be elusive, a mere mirage.

Recommendation

This work has some recommendations to stakeholders in this quest for peace on the Plateau. From government to religious bodies; from traditional institutions to tribal organizations. The recommendations are as follows:

1. The Government must adhere to the rule of law; do what they are created to do by the constitution of the country – to secure life and property, ensure compliance with the law so that orderliness is maintained and above all else have it as their mandate to see that justice is done in the case of breech of peace. Where there is no justice, peace can never exist in such a community because someone will always feel cheated or hurt.
2. Religious bodies must ensure they work within the law of the land. Inciting, provocative teachings, seditious utterances, provocative and insidious claims to their adherences must stop. Their teaching must be productive and not counter-productive to societal demands and expectations. Adherents of Christianity or Islam must be taught on discipline, hard-work, creativity, peaceful co-existence, what true love is, etc. if possible the two major faiths should dogmatically inculcate tolerance for one another in spite of what they hold as their core beliefs.
3. Traditional Institutions must ensure that traditional values, ethos, tenants, etc. are propagated appropriately through the right traditional channels, especially the

traditional value of peaceful co-existence between indigenes and settlers. The Traditional institutions must be willing to also promote justice by refusing to take sides but revealing perpetrators of evil in their communities, towns, and villages. They should not only reveal the perpetrators, but also benefactors of communal and religious clashes in their domain.

4. Tribal groups or Organizations, each tribe, whether indigene or settler should be able to caution its people. They should be able to advance the course of its people on the pedestal of prosperity, charitable values or ethos, advancement and development. Let others seek them to partner with them and even allow them to lead them not on the basis of mere dominance, but on the basis of the aforementioned characteristics. No tribe or group would want to be ruled or overtaken by another group that has nothing to offer except for the fact that the group feels entitled or sees leadership as a right. Innovation, creativity, advancement and development is what people are yearning for in a twenty-first century.

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