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19/MHS01/307

MEDICINE AND SURGERY (MBBS)

INTRA- RELIGIOUS AND INTER RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS

An inter-religious conflict is a religious war primarily caused or justified by differences in religion, its ways and its doctrines. An intra religious conflict is the circumstances where a society or religion commands their own members belonging to a similar group. From the definition of intra and inter religious conflict, it is not a new subject for any Nigerian citizen as to the several occasions where we have experienced the brutality of this subject. Subsequently, the history, causes, facts and solutions on intra and inter religious conflict will be adequately explained.

the discrimination of the Yoruba Muslims in the Islamic community is a proper example of intra-religious conflict. The Hausa Muslims have always had the opinion of the Yoruba Muslims which states that they are not true Muslims. The Yoruba Muslims had their earliest contact with Islam through the itinerant Arab Muslim scholar who visited the Yoruba in the 15th century. Some Yoruba people adopted Islam as early as the 14th century, with the advent of Christianity and western education in the 19th century. The Muslims who adopted the western education also imbibed the western culture. As such, a typical Yoruba western educated Muslim has multiple identities by being Yoruba, Islamic and western. Some people usually express it as triple identities which in turn could lead to misunderstanding, as they might be put in many situation of mislead identities. From several study, the attitude of Islam towards non-Islamic culture is that of accommodation and rejection. Islam accommodates a local culture is compatible with the Islamic tenets. It rejects the indigenous culture if it undermines the belief system of Islam.

At Zaria in the year of 2011, an example of the discrimination among the Hausa and Yoruba Muslim surfaced as it occurred as post-election crisis. It happened to be an inter-religious conflict, the Muslims against the Christian. In the heat of conflict, a full Yoruba Muslims woman was killed by her fellow Muslims because she was not considered a fellow religious member. These occurrences are just as result of misconception and rivalry between the Muslims and Christians.

Today, Africa is laced with some of the most obstinate conflict, most of them constructed from differences in religious and ethnic identities. Religious and ethnic nationalism has led to conflicts about control about control of state power, unequal allocation of resource, citizenship issues, state collapse, economic decline and ethno-religious clashes. Nigerian has pushed hither and thither by recurrent crises of ethno religious violence. Religious violence in Nigerian refers Christian-Muslim strife in modern Nigeria, which can be traced back to 1953.

The Religious crisis occurring between Muslims and Christians has erupted several times since 2000 for various reasons, often causing riot with several thousands of victims on both sides. Nigeria has the largest Muslim population in the sub Saharan Africa. Islam dominates the north and has a number of supporters in the south-western region of Nigeria, Yoruba part of the country. While for the Christians, they are dominant in the south-western (south-east/south-south/south west and central region in Nigeria. According to several researches, Nigeria has the largest Christian population of any country in Africa, with more than 80million persons in Nigeria belonging to various churches with different denominations. These facts making Nigerian the most religiously populated country, which justify the reasons for Nigeria being a constant view for both ethno and inter or intra religious conflicts.

Religious fundamentalism among Christian and Muslims noticeably emerged in Nigeria during the 1970s, between the 1980s and the mid-2000s, roughly 48 cases of religious riots were reported. Nigeria is not the only country experiencing the critical of issue of communal inter-religious conflicts. Within the last decade, Indonesia has experienced numerous incidents of communal violence between conservative Muslims, who are the religious majority in the country and the Christian minority. Traditionalist Muslims are those who blend to be moderate in their theological outlook and are generally more tolerant toward religious minorities such as Christian. Indonesia is as just one of the several countries who are experiencing similar situation.

There are several causes of inter-religious violence they often begin from poor communication, misconception and ignorance. As in the aspect of ignorance, the first ever major inter religious violence to occur happened broke out in Kafanchan on the 6th of March 1987. The riot was as a result misrepresentation of Islam by one Revd Abubakar Bako. Many factors are responsible for religious violence in Nigeria. However, in the case of intra-religious violence, two major reasons can be identified. Firstly, there is ignorance or half knowledge of the true teaching of the very religion that the people involved claim to be defending. As for inter-religious violence, factors influencing the situation are: the lack of recognition of one another, campaigns of hatred and blackmail, the lack of genuine desire to understand each other’s belief and culture, extremism. The intra- and inter- religious have exhibited some inevitable effects on the community all over the world. On several occasions religious conflicts has resulted in generational feud, discrimination, war, and riot. In 2000, Miss 2000 Peagent competition meant to be held in Abuja and Jos was then relocated to London as a result inter- religious crisis.

At some point, the solution to intra and inter religious crisis could be achieved from the involvement of the government. To put an end to religious violence in Nigeria, the government, groups, and individuals have very important roles to play in their respective capacities. Government should set up a religious committee made up of religious leaders and intellectuals from the major religious groups in the country with representation from all the federal states. This committee should serve as a regulatory body for all religious activities in the country. Government, through the religious advisory committee should ban any kind of preaching that involve criticism, condemnation and abuse of other religions. When set up, the religious advisory committee should embark on genuine dialogue and reconciliation aimed at bringing about the spirit of peaceful coexistence.

Furthermore, examining the causes, effects and solutions of intra- and inter-religious conflicts in Nigeria, a number of facts have emerged. Provocation by religious leader, intra- and inter religious violence in Nigeria is neither incited by laymen nor does it occurred naturally. These representatives prevent normal people from seeing negative implications of preaching or provoking violence as means of advancing their religion. Such dialogue should focus attention on identifying areas of disagreement so they can be resolved.

In conclusion, exposure of the history, causes, facts and solution to this problem discloses the ideas as why Nigeria has so much intra and inter religious conflicts and the notion that this subject cannot be nonexistent or annihilated but could be avoided and curbed, which it should be looked into more frequently and taken up with great interest.