


## Religion as a Panacea in the Pursuits of World Peace: Christianity as a Case Study

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## Abstract

Religion and peace are two concepts that are generic in nature. This is obvious, that religion is conspicuously seen or cuts across all the facets of humanity viz: Spiritual, social, economic, psychological and physical. Sequel to this, the primary objective of this paper is to do a critical evaluation or presentation of the significant roles that religion plays in the plantation of peace in the world today. Still on this, we are to limit the scope of our discussions, by using Christianity as a case study in the pursuits of global peace. Religion now serves as a panacea, as a capacity building, as a vehicle, as a place of cross-pollination of ideas, principles, and ideologies that produces peace in the world, that brings respite and repositioning to the shattered and dislocated nature of man and even the society at large. Not only peace, religion especially Christianity is also the vehicle that champions the growth and development of western civilization, education, good governance and the likes; infact, it plays a significant roles in the wholistic development of man. Thus in this paper the writers adopted the following instrumentum laboris – working tools that they armed with in the execution of this write-up namely: in the area of methodology, the writers adopted the aspect of descriptive method. Then, to chisel out the beauty of this work, the authors anchors the nature (that is in the length and breadth), of our deliberations on the patronage of descriptive method as a research design that suits this work. And other ancillary tools like secondary sources and did not make use of oral interviews or primary sources.

**Key words:** Religion, peace, building capacity, religious sects (or bodies), world, Christianity.

## Introduction

Onyeidu (2004), avers that religion is primordial as it grew out in the society. It is a concept that is generic in nature in the sense that it can be described as a good or bad servant. Religion is a bad servant in the sense that ninety-five percent of crises, conflicts, terrorism, racial discrimination, division, riots, inter-tribal conflicts, hatred, national and global insecurity, defamation and outright blackmail of one's integrity and the likes. Are the noticeable negativities that are imbedded in contemporary religious bodies. All these vices serves as factors or indicators that weakened the strength of religion in the world today, to the extent that religion is notoriously seen as a masquerading phenomenon that has failed to give hope to humanity. Thus among the adherents of different religious sects we witness some pockets of division in their major religious bodies. To recap, religion can be succinctly described as a replica of Tower of Babel, that tries to destroy the social, economic, political, spiritual and psychological dispositions of those living in our present contemporary society.

The above propositions held by some scholars will not blindfold us in our mission to showcase that religion is a good servant which was synthesized in our topic-religion as a panacea in the pursuit of world peace: Christianity as a case study. We should not forget that most religions in the world evolved from the cultures of the people which sprouted from their natural and social environments.

This is a pointer that human beings in which ever place they are situated always desire to worship God. This supports the fact that there is no human society without one form of religion or the other. This in a nutshell describes man as “Homo Religiosus” – Religious Being which depicts man as a being that is tirelessly, systematically and cautiously desiring always to communicate or to commune (i.e. has the ability) with his creator (i.e. God).

Still on this let us not forget that a comparative analysis of the doctrinal positions of most religious sects in the world elevated religion as a panacea, that champions the crusade for the realization of peace in the world today. Thus, every religious sects be it Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Shintoism, Judaism and the likes, preaches the need for men to embrace peace, that opens the doors for progress, growth and development in the society.

Historically, we should not pretend to have forgotten the beautiful roles that Christian religion aided by its early missionaries played in the early plantation of Christianity in Africa. And it becomes a vehicle for the transplantation of civilization, education, good health care, morality, and good governance in the whole of African continent. Religion (especially Christianity and Islam) are the only living movements that brought light to the darkened face of the African continent. Not only in Africa alone but in the whole world. All the above propositions posits as a sure bet that religion or the efforts of religious sects to instill or to attract peace in the world in resolving the hydra headed forms of conflicts rearing its ugly head, which failure to do so the whole human ecological habitat-(the cosmos, the earth, the world) will be blacklisted or engulfed in the total infestation of these vices of chaos, anarchy, and lawlessness. Thus, religion is the only living social structure that is pivotal in the pursuance of world peace. Despite that Christianity is also seen, always, or at times seen as an extension of colonial project in Africa. Thus, all these boils down that the research problem that the paper tries to showcase or to solve is to establish that religion (more especially Christianity) plays a significant role in the pursuits of world peace, inspite, of all its inadequacies.

In spite of, all these praises that the authors harp on the significant roles of religion, Christianity inclusive. Our attention are drawn to the wicked activities that the church of God Christianity involve herself during era of slave trade. How they carted away human beings from Africa like goods in faraway European countries, especially during the discovering of new world by the great explorer- Christopher Columbus. With reckless abandon that is devoid of true

Christian conscience. And the abysmal denial of fundamental human rights that featured prominently during the dark ages or medieval ages as was seen in the killing of famous scientists, inventors and explorers, because of ignorant or lack of knowledge that was in vogue at that time. Many of these gifted personalities lost their lives in the hands of the church leaders.

### **Explication of terms**

It is not an easy task to embark on the onerous responsibility of describing the conceptual meaning of the two terms – religion and peace. Because of this there are series of varied definitions and description of these concepts, generated from the divergent views or world views of some acclaimed scholars. Each defines them from this own worldview, thereby making them difficult to have an agreeable definition (or working definition) of these our operational concepts of religion and peace to be attainable.

### **Religion**

In this our work the first scholar that gives us the initial intellectual succour or illumination on whose lime light we depend on the definition of religion is McBrien (1994) which he describes as whole complexus of attitudes, convictions, emotions, gestures, rituals, beliefs, and institutions, by which we come to terms with and express our most fundamental relationship with reality (p.364). Also, Parente cited in Arinze (1970) made an explicit effort in the definition of religion that come in two ways – objectively and subjectively. Subjectively, religion is the consciousness of one’s dependence on a transcendent being and the tendency to worship him. Objectively, religion is the body of truths, laws and rites by which man is subordinated to the transcendent Being (p.8).

Then, James (1960), defines religion as the feeling, acts and experiences of individuals in solitude in so far as they apprehend to stand in relation to whatever they consider the divine. Commenting on this Ibenwa et al (2017) sees religion as human actions or feeling of relationship in private towards whatever they consider divine or a being superior to humans. This feeling is one of intimate union with the source of one’s being or existence, it expresses reliance, trust and dependency. The divine can be Almighty God, spirit being, African ancestors and nature spirits (p.42). Sequal to this, Bouquet (1941) sees religion as a fixed relationship between the human self and some non-human entity, the sacred, the supernatural, the self-existent, the absolute or simply God (p.41).

Freud (1955) cited in Ibenwa et al (2017), opines that religion is the continuation into adulthood of a child’s attributes towards his father. He asserted that the child realizes his weakness and thus makes him to run to his father for safety

and protection. Freud likened this child on his father to what we seek in religion. To him, God is an imaginary father which the childhood mentality leads man to (p.44). To support this though not psychologically, rather philosophically, the views of Hegel (1965) comes to mind immediately that the object of religion as well as of philosophy is eternal truths in its objectivity, God and nothing but God, and the explication of God (pp.103-104). Even, sociologists generally sees religion as a social phenomenon and as a matter of belief or faith. This prompted, Russel (1975) to affirm that “religion is primarily a social phenomenon” (p.27).

Then, to pull together these our definitions or descriptions of religion from the world views of various scholars, a working definition of religion is of a necessity. The concept religion can be briefly describes as a belief or worship of God or gods, or even simply a believe system of faith, tenets, creed, and religious convictions that connect one to the Supreme Being or to the realm of divine realities

### Peace

Khemanando (1995), as cited in the Dictionary of word origins, said that the word peace is etymologically derived from the original Latin word “Pax, which means a pact, a control or an agreement to end war or any dispute and conflict between two people, two nations or two antagonistic groups of people (p.387). Then Vesilind (2005), said that in Albert Einstein’s view, peace is not only an absence of war, but it means or includes the presence of justice, law, order or government in the society as he said “peace is not merely the absence of war but the presence of justice, of law, or of order .... – in short of government (p.43).

Still on this, Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2006) defines peace as follows:

1. No war; a situation in which there is no war or fighting.
2. No noise interruptions: a very quiet and pleasant situation in which you are not interrupted.
3. Calm/not worried: a feeling of being calm, happy, and not worried (p. 1281).

Then, explicating more on this, the Online Merriam Webster Dictionary gives us a deeper meaning towards having a clear comprehension of the concept of peace which it develops as follows:

- a. a state of tranquility or quiet; as a freedom from civil disturbance
- b. a state of security or order within a community provided for by law or custom.

freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions. harmony in personal relations.

- a. a state or period of mutual concord between governments.
- b. a pact or agreement to end hostilities between those who have been at war.

All these collaborates with the thought of His Holiness, the 14th Dalai lama, said “peace in the sense of the absence of war is of little value ... peace can only last where human rights are respected, where people are fed, and where individuals and nations are free”.

The above statements of His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama depicts him as a strong advocate of the observance of the rule of law and that the fundamental human rights, that is the inalienable human rights – right to life, freedom of worship, freedom of speech, freedom of association, and the likes are to be enshrined in the constitutions of the various countries in the world and to be respected or regarded as sacrosanct in every part of the world.

To sum up, peace is a phenomenon that is conspicuous in the society where there is strong upholding of justice, fairness and equity and when there is a total eradication of war, strife, chaos, tension in the form of tribal and inter-tribal conflicts in the society.

### The Presence of Peace in Most religious sects

It is a well-known fact that the presence of the ideologies and principles of peace as a concept is what is pragmatically been communicated in the basic doctrines of most religious bodies in the world today.

#### Hinduism

Hinduism is the most ancient of all living religion of the world. It was not founded by any individual prophet. Though Hinduism preserves an exhaustive list of sacred scriptures; mainly the Vedas, upnishads, Bhugvad-cita and six Darshamas form the fundamental scriptures, they are great as the storehouses of Hindu theological and philosophical thought. Peace is an essential part of Hinduism; as was shown in A vedic prayer: “May there be peace in the heavens, peace in the atmosphere, peace on earth, let there be coolness in water, healing in the herbs, and peace radiating from trees, let there be harmony in the planets, and in the stars, and perfection in eternal knowledge! May everything in the universe be at peace! I let peace pervade everywhere at all times! May I experience that peace within my heart” (Yarjurved, 36:17).

Ahimsa (a very important belief in Hinduism) means trying to fight injustice and evil but without using any physical force. Mahatma Gandhi was a great advocate of Ahimsa who, through his “satyagraha” based on peaceful non-violent

project led India to freedom. He was the first to interpret Ahimsa positively and in the sense of a social obligation. He also believed that non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the inequity of man. Note that the word Hinduism derives from the word Hindu, which means Indian. This it is the religion as well as the philosophy of the Indian people (Omeregbe, p.141).

### **Buddhism**

Like all major world religions, Buddhism at its core is a religion of peace, Buddhism one of the Aryan religions founded by Gautama Buddha (b.567.B.C) is regarded as a godless religion (agnostic not atheistic) for unlike other religions, it doesn't entertain belief in God as a central concept.

The basis of Buddhism is essentially a moral philosophy or an ethical way of life aimed at personal reform. One of the principles laid down by Buddha makes it abundantly clear. "One must renounce all thought of lust, bitterness and cruelty. One must harm no living creature, one must abstain from all killing. One must work in an occupation that benefits others and harms none". According to Buddha, the true path of salvation is attainable not by worshipping God but by doing good.

Then the five commandments of Buddha or panchishila are as follows:

- ❖ Do not kill any living being.
- ❖ Do not take what is not given to you.
- ❖ Do not speak untruth.
- ❖ Do not take intoxicating drinks.
- ❖ Do not commit adultery.

He went on to say that hatred is never appeased by hatred. Hatred is only appeased by love (or non-enmity). This is an eternal law (Dehmmepada – the way of virtue, verse 5/423).

### **Judaism**

Peace is a concept that is central in Judaism, armed with truth and justice is one of the three key of Jewish values. The Hebrew word for peace is shalom which is derived from one of the names of God, meaning "complete" or "whole". The history of Judaism goes back more than four thousand years ago, note it that Judaism as a religion pre-existed before the existence of Christianity which had near resemblance with Judaism. Thus Judaism is the type of religion practiced by the Jews or Jewish people.

According to the Jewish traditions when the Israelites left Egypt and reached the Sinai desert, God gave them the Ten Commandments that were to govern their social existence.

These laws and commandments are in fact meant to serve as guides in fostering a good relationship between God and His people. The ten commandments/Decalogue of Judaism among others, include (1 – 10): (Deuteronomy 5:-21 and Exodus 20:13).

Then, while commenting on the verse, "you shall not kill" from Torah a Jewish scholar observes; "it is not enough merely to keep in mind the negative admonition not to kill, but to transmute human energy and efforts into peaceful and constructive actions. Another injunction in the words of Torah is as follows: "What is hateful to (or hurtful) to you, don't do to any other man." Referring to this verse of Torah, one Jewish scholar has rightly observed: "that is the whole of Torah, the rest is but commentary". Peace, according to the Jewish sages is the ultimate purpose of the whole Torah, "All that is written in the Torah was written for the sake of peace (Tanhumashoftim 18).

### **Islam**

Islam is the youngest revealed religion of the world. It is in fact not a new religion, but a revised and enlarged edition of eternal religion based on unity of God (Tauheed), medium of prophets (Risala), and the concepts of After-life (Akhirah). Islam shares these three fundamentals with the other living Abrahamic faiths i.e. Judaism and Christianity. This is explicit from the Quranic text itself: The same religion has established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah – that we have sent by inspiration to thee – and that which we enjoined on Abraham, Moses and Jesus (Al-Quran 42:13).

The very word Islam (from the Arabic Silm) connotes peace. One of the attributes of Allah described in the Quran is "As salaam", which means peace and security. In the Quran divine guidance is likened to the path of peace (Al-Quran, 5:16). According to Islam, paradise is the ideal human abode, and is thus called "home of peace". It is also mentioned that the people of paradise will greet each other with the word, "Salaam" (Peace).

### **Christianity**

Christianity is the religion founded by our Lord Jesus Christ, which Rahner (2004) describes as follows: Christianity is an integral religion. Established by the creation of all realities, Christianity has a doctrine and a summons valid for all domains of human life, but does not on that account seek to deprive human being of their own responsibilities and historical nature in the perspectives which open out onto an



unknown world future. It speaks equally to person and society and with equal independence of each (p.195).

- i. Attaching great importance to peace Christ observed: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God (Mtt. 5:9).
- ii. Love your enemy: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so they become the sons of your father in heaven (Mtt. 5:44-46).
- iii. To him who strikes you on the one cheek offer the other cheek also ... (Mtt. 6:29-30).

Thus, the above statement of Lord Jesus Christ places Christian religion at the centre of playing significant roles in the pursuance of world peace. And such statements of Jesus even influenced some prominent religious leaders in other religious sects which Mahatma Gandhi – a Hindu was not exempted. This implies that Jesus through His words and actions influenced many people that accepted to be his adherents, that are today known as Christians. That is those who were baptized and accepted to follow the ways, the teachings, and principles of our Lord Jesus Christ. (See: <https://www.economicsandpeace.org/cop-content/uploads/2015/06/peace-and-Religion-Report.pdf>.)

The above reflections about the nature and content of Christianity, a monotheistic religion will not deceive us to tick it as a doyen, a pacesetter in the pursuance of peace, and concord in the world more than other religious bodies. To clarify more on this, the case of Alice Lekwena and her Holy Spirit Movement in Uganda and Joseph Kony’s Lord’s Resistance Army are all good examples of people who are erroneously fighting in the name of Christianity as a religion. These nefarious fanatical activities as engineered by some Christians were seen in the case of abortion clinic bombings by Eric Rudolf for example that claimed a lot of lives in the US in the 1990s. This shows that some adherents in Christianity can use it as a platform or safe ground to ferment crisis, mayhem, chaos, anarchy and the likes in the world today.

Thus, having seen the place of peace in our different religious bodies occupied by peace in our different religions sects. Then, we are to ask ourselves, why is it that we witness some religious bodies championing or sponsoring the cause of terrorism, banditry, religious politics, racial discrimination, war, division, and hatred? In response to this, we affirm that it is because of the inability of the adherents to imitate the impeccable characters of their founders. In spite of all these anomalies, religion still plays or is a veritable variable in

pursuance of world peace which the writers are going to explore as a next topic in our discussion.

### **Religion a constant variable in pursuance of peace in human society**

Nottingham (1968), as cited in Onyeidu (2004) avers that religion itself “is a product of culture, an outgrowth of man’s activity as a culture-bearing creature (p.3). Explicating more on this premise, Onyeidu (2004) especially on the powerful influence religion shows in our human societies and cultures that led to the birth of some religions through the culture of the people said that African Traditional Religion is an integral part of African culture. The same is true of Islam (Arab culture), Judaism (Jewish culture) and Shintoism (Japanese culture). In the case of Christianity, the influence of Greek – Roman and European cultural elements are discernable. While some religions are culture bound, others cut across international frontiers. Most of these are monotheistic religions, which make universal appeal to man, such as Christianity and Islam (p.2).

Going further, Onyeidu (2004), said that there is no human society without one form of religion or the other. Wherever we go we find him with his religious beliefs and practices. This shows that religion occurs in a social context. Then, establishing more on this proposition, Vernon (1962), said that religion does not exist in isolation nor does man’s religious behaviour occur in social isolation. In any form of social organization religion is one of the important variables to be considered (p.77).

Still on the constancy of religion as a variable, it plays a recognizable roles in the process of socialization; in the sense that it builds cohesion, joins, unite, and binds the people in the process of integration and cordial relationships in human communities. Then giving credence to this, McGuire (1991) cited in Onyeidu “Religion is one of the most powerful, deeply felt and influential, forces in human society; it has shaped people’s relationships with each other, influencing family, community, economic and political life. Religious beliefs and values motivate human action ...” (p.3).

Then, the crux of the matter, the authors are trying to establish here is that religion (inspite of its weaknesses) and the society are two entities that are living in symbiotic relationship. Because in the words of Onyeidu (2004) a religious society is always the product of religious individuals. This symbiotic romance between religion and society was made explicit in the remarks of Stewart (1941), a society cannot continue to be religious when the individuals that compose it are irreligious.

In other words, a community of atheists is bound to give birth to an “immoral society”.

### **The roles of Christianity in the life of society down the ages that enables peace to flourish**

Toyin (2019) summarizes the significant roles that Christianity played in the life of man and the unconquerable nature of Christian religion in the following beautiful dramatic descriptions of it. Christianity established as a monotheistic faith, has existed for over two thousand years, out-lasting many civilizations, ideological movements, wars discoveries and the interjections of other faiths within neighbouring areas.

Then, following the same link of thought, Coolman (2014) as cited in Toyin (2019) opines that Christianity continues to display its relevance throughout the years, beginning with the concept of time of time itself. The current measures of time using the “B.C./A.D” system, was a remnant function of the Christian influence on the Roman Empire. The B.C. (Before Christ) and A. D (anno domini) – present events within time line of reality in subject measures to the existence of Christ, positioning him as a central marker of faith and origin within the context of the world. The markers were implemented by Emperor Charlemagne who used the terms to determine the timeline of government actions.

Then, one of the indelible effects of this is that the spread of this system not only invokes the influence of Christianity upon the Roman Empire but the exchange of religion and the culture across Europe where the system was further adopted and shared to the rest of the world. Moreover, the continued use of these terms demonstrates the position of Christianity as a dominant presence both in terms of its introduction as well as its continuity (p.43).

This language of Coolman in a simplified propositions posits that Jesus Christ is the founder of Christian religion, and this automatically makes it to be the first and the only authentic revealed religion, seconded by Islamic religion. And this coming of Jesus Christ into the world greatly revolutionized the time frame of the historical events that happened in the world in the binary forms of B.C. – Before Christ and A. D-anno domini – that is the year of the Lord or (After the death of Christ). Christianity as a religion is a religion that started after the crucifixion of its founder – our Lord Jesus Christ and the great expectation of the Pentecost experience (i.e. the outpouring of the Holy Spirit) started with a poor demographic statistics or a limited number of adherents of one hundred and twenty, three thousand, and two thousand adherents respectively. Thus, Christian religion, is a replica of the biblical mustard seeds that stands as the smallest of all the

grains that Jesus referred to, that have grown to tall and mighty tree that birds of the air-built nests on its branches and gives shelter to everybody.

The church of Christ stands to be a replica or a resemblance of this analogy of Jesus. Because the sporadic growth of the proportional increase (or growth) in population of the number of adherents makes Christian religion to be a thing of joy to Jesus Christ the planter or the founder of Christianity. This was evidenced as reported in 2016, the few research center estimated that two point two (i.e. 2:2) billion people in the world are Christians making Christianity the largest religious group in the world. The Pew-Research center also found that Christians are much more widespread geographically than those from other religious groups. In total, around the world, Christians make up more than one fourth (28:6%) of the population of about seven point seven (7:7) billion people.

As 2018, as cited in Toyin (2019), Bada opines that Catholics make up the largest group of Christians (about one point three (1:3) billion people), followed by protestants (about nine hundred and twenty million people) and others (about eighty-five million people). The next most common denominations are Eastern orthodox, oriental orthodox, restorationist, and Nontrinitarian, independent catholic and other minor branches (p.100).

To sum up in the words of Park (2004), as cited in Toyin (2019), describes the valueability and importance of Christianity in the following words: that Christianity is the dominant religion in the matrix of universal religions. The continuance of this religion has been imperative to its followers and has brought much change to the structure of states as well as individual beliefs. Christianity’s dispersion has followed many routes, leading the religion to penetrate varying regions and nations to become the most popular religion in the world (p. 27). To give a pause, a religion with such a staggering number of adherents and influences suppose to play significant roles in the life of man in the following spheres of life like in education, abolition of slave trade and social nefarious cultural practices in science, in Art and literature and the likes. All these serves as sparks or reflections of the sustainable roles that religion especially Christianity plays in the realization of world peace.

### **Education**

Encyclopedia Britannica as cited in Toyin (2019) informs us that the early church supported education efforts and intellectualism. The early church leaders felt that because human beings are endowed with rationality by god, they will naturally feel compelled to explore their faith and the wonders

of God's nature through intellectual means. St. Justine Martyr was an early example of Christian intellectualism at work, for he was a Christian apologist and philosopher by trade, contemplated God's revelation to human kind and perceived it to be the utmost "fulfillment" of philosophical discovery that human beings would ever receive. St. Anselm of Canterbury in the eleventh century articulated the ideas behind the Christian pursuit of knowledge quite aptly when he said: *Fides quaerens intellectum* - "faith seeking understanding" (p.100).

The effects of the adoption of the policy of the pursuits of education as bequeathed by our forebears (i.e. our fathers in faith) to all and sundry went across Europe and the Middle East where Christian monks constructed libraries that held important works in Latin, Arabic, and Greek. Many of these monasteries evolved into universities (Pew-Research Centre, 2016). In support of this Toyin (2019) made a concise statement: "without these facilities, much of our knowledge as we have it today would be lost (p.104).

The positive consequence of this, according to Shalev's (2002) One hundred years of Nobel prizes between the years 1901 to 2000, the majority (65.4%) of Nobel Prize laureates were identified as Christians. This means that a total of four hundred and twenty three prizes between these years had been awarded to Christians. Thus, accounting for 49.5% of all Noble Prizes in literature, 54% of all Noble Prizes in Economics, 62% of all Noble Prizes in Medicine, 65.3% of all Nobel Prizes in Physics, 72.5% of all Noble Prizes in Chemistry, and 77.3% of all Nobel Prizes in Peace during this period (pp. 57-59). In another version, the researchers find out in one academic source entitled - "The impact of Christianity" cited in Toyin (2019) that indeed, many modern scientists were Christians - Pascal, Newton, Pasteur, Boyce, and Kepler. Just to mention a few (p.105).

Then, in historical nostalgia, we should not forget in a short while, that the early missionaries that evangelize the darkened territories of the African continent used the weapon, adopted the policy or the instrument of education in the eventual civilization and the subsequent Christianization of the African natives: commenting on this, Alago (1999), said that western education had been identified as probably the most important motive for the acceptance of Christian missions (p.84). The implication of this is that most African communities accepted Christianity because of the probable gains that they are going to realize due to the fruits of education, of being empowered to speak the Whiteman's language.

The discovery of this secret made western education to serve as the engine that disperse the Christian faiths of Catholics, Anglicans Presbyterians to every nooks and crannies of the host communities, and even beyond the confines or territories of Igboland. Secondly, western education made use of both the churches and schools to spread like wild fire, because whenever there is a church then know it that the same school buildings also serve as a church (i.e. the building serves double purposes in promoting education and as well as propagating religion which is one of the fundamental reason of why they came to Africa).

To collaborate this objective, Uruakpa (1996), is of the opinion it is quite clear that these missionary bodies had common aims and especially shared in the philosophy of using education as a sharpest instrument for effective and result oriented evangelism. Still on this, beware that the efforts of the early missionaries are not in vain because the pioneer nationalists that struggled tirelessly for the political independence of most African countries like Nigeria namely: Nnamdi Azikiwe, Awolowo, Francis Akanu Ibiam, M. I. Okpara Mbonu Ojike and the likes are the shining products of pre and post educational orientations and programmes of the early missionaries.

### **Abolition of slave trade and other social cultural evils or ills in Africa**

Oguejiofor (2001), describes the major variables in this our discussion in the following propositions: "that slavery was a universal institution and consequently slave trade was almost a universal practice in earlier periods of human history (p.26). Still working on the same mode of thought, Kirchshlaeger (2016), remarks that institutionalized racism and slavery have, throughout history, been both justified and projected by Christians around the world. Slavery was to widespread in the Greco-Roman world and the Biblical descriptions of slavery were that of a common component of a household and not generally criticized (p.66).

But to maintain a balance, Toyin (2019) still insists that Christianity played a key role in the abolition of slavery centuries later, particularly in Africa. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, debates across the Western world used Biblical passages to support both the institution and the abolition of it (p.90).

He went on (i.e. Toyin) to educate us on the powerful roles that Christianity played in the rooting out slavery by informing us that the horrors of slavery were so extreme that even slave traders like John Newton ended up supporting Wilberforce (a Christian) not only to evangelize Africa, but to oppose the

slave trade, since slaves were also created in the image of God. The missionary's commitment to root out slavery was one of their positive effects on African societies (p.137).

In the same spirit of missionary exploits we should not forget the indelible and zealous roles that the early missionaries played in the rooting out some nefarious and evil social cultural practices of the African natives. Then, giving an instance, Toyin (2019) gave us an instance, that in Malawi, the Christian missionary – Lawrence (a medical doctor) spent more than five decades performing missionary work, leading its society to abolish evil practices such as trial by poisoning (Ibidi).

And we should not forget in a hurry, the great strides or fight that the great Presbyterian missionary – Mary Slessor and other great missionaries put in to fight the evil of the killing of twins (ejima), and human sacrifices in Igboland and other African communities where such negative practices are in vogue.

### Science

Toyin (2019), remarks that religion and science are at odds with each other, historically the quest for scientific discovery in the west had connection to Christian values most notably Protestantism (p.91). Then, explicating more on this, Merton et al (2003), stated in his thesis that there is a positive correlation between the rise of Protestantism and early experimental science. Focusing on English Puritanism and German Pietism, he argued that these protestant movements were responsible for the development of the scientific revolution of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Protestant values encourages scientific discovery and research as it allowed people to study God's impact on earth (p.13).

Historically, in the second instance, Encyclopedia Britannica (2018) as cited in Toyin (2019), informs us that the catholic church supported the study of astronomy, particularly regarding the astronomical basis of the calendar and how religious days are determined, such as Easter weekend. In the sixteenth century, Pope Gregory XII introduced the Gregorian Calendar, which is still used today. It replaced the Julian calendar and functioned so that the celebration of Easter was tied to the spring equinox each calendar year. Most of the world continues to use the Gregorian Calendar, including countries considered outside of the Christian world such as China and Japan. The greatest exception are Islamic countries which tend to retain calendars based on Islam (p.91).

### Arts and Literature

Voss (2002) as cited in Toyin (2016), informs us that Western literature has also found inspiration from Christianity for

hundreds of years, with all sorts of writers, poets, and using all Christian themes and imagery in their various works. From Dante to Shakespeare, to Tolkien, the stories that have shaped western culture over the past one thousand years have often contained direct or indirect references to God, Satan, heaven and hell, Jesus Christ – Holy Spirit and so on (p.92).

Then, bringing it closer to our own African setting or context, Toyin (2019) and that while some literatures aim to inspire some sort of positive Christian message in their work, others are more critical of the church. For example, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* explores the complexities of Christianity and the roles of missionaries in colonized Africa. The white Christian, missionaries convince the women in Okonkwo's community that if they become Christians, that they will not have to sacrifice any twins they have, a normal custom for their people. While the women are happy that they can protect their children, the Christians gain greater control and power over them (Ibidi).

### An Exposé of the dark patches of the revealed religion – Christianity and Islam: A point of departure

In the previous phase (or page) of our reflections, we were able to sing praises or to showcase the positive natures or sides that are inherent in Christianity as a religion. Now in the present place of our reflections the researchers are going to briefly showcase the dark patches or the negative sides of Christianity from the time of Medieval ages to the present contemporary era.

One of the notorious evil that have shaken the very foundation of Christendom is the unguarded sexual exploits or escapades of some of our religious leaders that rears its ugly head and tries to tear down the Jericho wall of most Christian bodies. This can be pictured in the Medieval ages, we witness the randy sexual exploits of some of the unholy attitudinal behaviours of some of the revered vicars of Christ – the popes, in their unholy relationship with some of their mistresses or concubines in Rome. As we are coming out of this indelible scandals caused us and the whole Christendom by some of our Roman pontiffs, the Christendom was shaped on her face in the most recent times of the evil of pedophilia that cuts across the ranks of the catholic priesthood that brought shame to the sacredness by celibacy or celibate life that forms the kernel of the catholic priesthood.

Exposing us on these anomalies Sorensen (2010) informs us that the church had many several scandals down through the years, from the early Popes to the twentieth-centuries, preacher Jimmy Swaggert. The catholic church is struggling with the issue of pedophilia in the ranks of their priests, as the



bishops who protected them and moved them from one parish to another. Underlying this scandal are other systemic problems – the high percentage of homosexual priests due to the celibacy and the declining number of applicants to the priesthood (p.5).

Then, commenting on these unguarded sexual exploits of some of our revered vicars of Christ, Sorensen (2010) went on to inform us, two women, a mother and a daughter combination (Theodora and Marozia) who were mistresses to the popes became very influential in the appointments of the following popes – Sergius III (904 – 911), Anastasias III (911 – 913), Lando I (913 – 914), John X (914 – 928), John XI (931- 936), when Marozia was fifteen years old she became the mistress of Sorigius III , who was forty-five years at the time, and who had murdered the previous Pope Leo V. Their son became pope John XI and Marozia’s grandson became Pope John XII. She also had great and great-great grandsons who ascended the papal throne. Anastasus III, Lando I, and John X were all selected through the influence of Thoedora. John X was the bastard son of Lando I (who was a notorious womanizer) and became Theodoras lover. After Lando’s death, Theodora used her influence to have John X become Pope so that they could continue their affair with greater ease (p.11).

These unnecessary sexual scandals and aberration that brews its unwholesome effects in the catholic finds its way in the hallowed Anglican church, that formed the major cause of division in this church of Christ. This was caused or geared towards the acceptance of the gay marriage proposal (i.e. homosexuals cohabitation as “husbands” and “wife”) that automatically shattered the harmonious relationship that formerly exist between the European Anglican communion and their African counterparts (i.e. African Anglican Communion), commenting on this nastly development, Toyin (2019) remarks, this Afro awareness, confidence of place, and the ability to interpret the Bible on their own are reasons that led the Nigerian communion of the Anglican church along with some other African communions to break communion from the Episcopal church of the United States, the church of England, and the Anglican church of Canada over the positions on gay marriage and gay priests. The Nigerian communion of the Anglican church spoke out against growing literalism within the Anglican communion; holding that it deviates from Biblical principles, they insist that the Anglican communions in the global West has misinterpret biblical views on homosexuality (p.150).

In another development, the revealed religious – Christianity and Islam, both religious are at each other’s neck or they tries to outsmart one another to the extent that the famous wars

fought in the distant past was ably champion or engineered by the adherents of both religious sects to the consternation of those who were not staunch believers of the tenets of these religious bodies.

This malady was graphically pictured by Sorensen (2010) who gave a historical narrative of their nefarious activities on how they planned to outsmart one another in the following melodrama or sequence: the Muslims themselves set the pattern for holy war in the years after the death of Mohammed in 632 A. D. for the next four hundred years they attacked many countries, conquering and then ruling over them. These include Iran (Persia), Iraq, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, all of North Africa, Armenia, the Balkan territories, Spain, Sicily and Southern Italy. Many Christian areas such as Hippo the Home of Augustine in North Africa (in what is now the country of Libya) were wiped out by Islamic forces. The Muslims in Spain attempted an invasion of France in 732 A. D. but were repulsed by Charles Martel at the battle of Tours. They also took Sicily in the 820s and 846 they attacked Rome and desecrated the tombs of St Peter and St. Paul. For the Castilian and Basque peoples of Spain revolted against their Muslim over Lords, and finally were victorious in 1492, the year that Columbus set sail for America (pp.3-4).

Now to counteract the domineering tendencies or unruly influences of the Muslims, Sorensen (2010), informs us that the Roman pontiff, Urban II (1088-1099) was the Pope who was instrumental in promoting and organizing the first crusade. Urban travelled across Europe preaching the crusade and drew a tremendous response. Because the atrocities that the Muslims committed against humanity made them to be passionately hated and despised, and the call of Urban II to liberate Jerusalem from the infidel stirred passions (i.e. sympathy) all over Europe. The efforts of the Roman pontiff inspired the churches in Burgundy and Aquitaine to start movements known as the Peace of God and the Truce of God in an attempt to halt and moderate the violence of the aristocracy (pp.14-15).

### **The role Christians play in actualization of world peace**

This serves as the climax of our discussion. Because, it is necessary for us to brainstorm in order to find out ways for the eventual actualization of peace in the world and in our respective religious groups. The steps are as follows:

- i) Adopting the spirit of inter-religious dialogue among different religious bodies

Based on this, explicating on the meaning of dialogue, Anasiudu (2015) describes it as follows: Dialogue is a method in comparative study of religious which requires that the

student seeks to increase and deepen his or her knowledge of the religious being studied as they are in themselves and in their contexts. It is an encounter of people of different religious and faiths in an atmosphere of freedom and openness devoid of pre-judgment as to rightness or wrongness of a particular religion. When religions are studied that way a lot of deep similarities are discovered. Sometimes conflict occasioned by religion come from ignorance, misjudgments, inherited historical prejudices, manipulation of religion to gain political advantage and extremist interpretation of what actually a particular religion teaches or requires of its adherents (p.5).

- ii) Man as a Social Animal Lives in the Human Society, and as a Religious Being should try to eschew all forms of racial discrimination, tribalism, ethnicity, sectionalism and prejudices in the world today.
- iii) The leaders of religious bodies or sects are advised to convince their members on the need to stop these bloody acts of terrorism, wars, kidnapping, killing, maiming and raping of our young girls (or our youths).
- iv) They will inculcate in the mind or in the psychological disposition of their adherents that is only one God that created all of us; and this makes us to be children of one God irrespective of our different religious affiliations.

## Conclusion

To sum up, in a simple language, the authors strongly affirms that the denial of the significant roles of religion or the concept of religion, makes the attainment or the realization of peace in the world impossible. Thus, from the above deliberations, the writers, in this paper have secured a point that religion which serves as the writer's major variable (or a concept) is very vital because it plays significant roles as a vehicle, a panacea and a capacity building in the advancement of peace in the world today. That is despite the "Achilles Heels" (i.e. weaknesses or dark patches) that are inherent in the religious outlook of most religious sects in the world today; depicts" religion as an agent of division, communal hatred, intolerance, and wars and terrorism in the contemporary society that makes people to switch off from any good tidings that religion has to offer to man. As this may be, religion still holds the key that opens the doors for the advancement of peace, love, unity, understanding, oneness, concord, tolerant and accommodation in our human society.

Religion is like two sides of the same coin, in the sense that it can be seen as an agent or vehicle of peace, understanding, social integration and cohesion, concord, oneness, in our society. This is in the aspect of positive nature of religion. While in the other hand of the negative nature of religion, deduced from above narrative contents of our presentations.

The authors can deduced that religion negatively can be used as a veritable tool for the Wanton destruction of properties, championing of terrorism, wars, riots, chaos, anarchy, abysmal denial of one's fundamental human rights, division and hatred in the world today. All these vices that are associated with religion, has contributed greatly to the apathy or indifference that the modern contemporary humanity shows towards religion in general. In spite of all these anomalies that are inherent in religion, religion still hold the key that plays significant roles in the pursuits or realization of the coveted price of world peace.

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