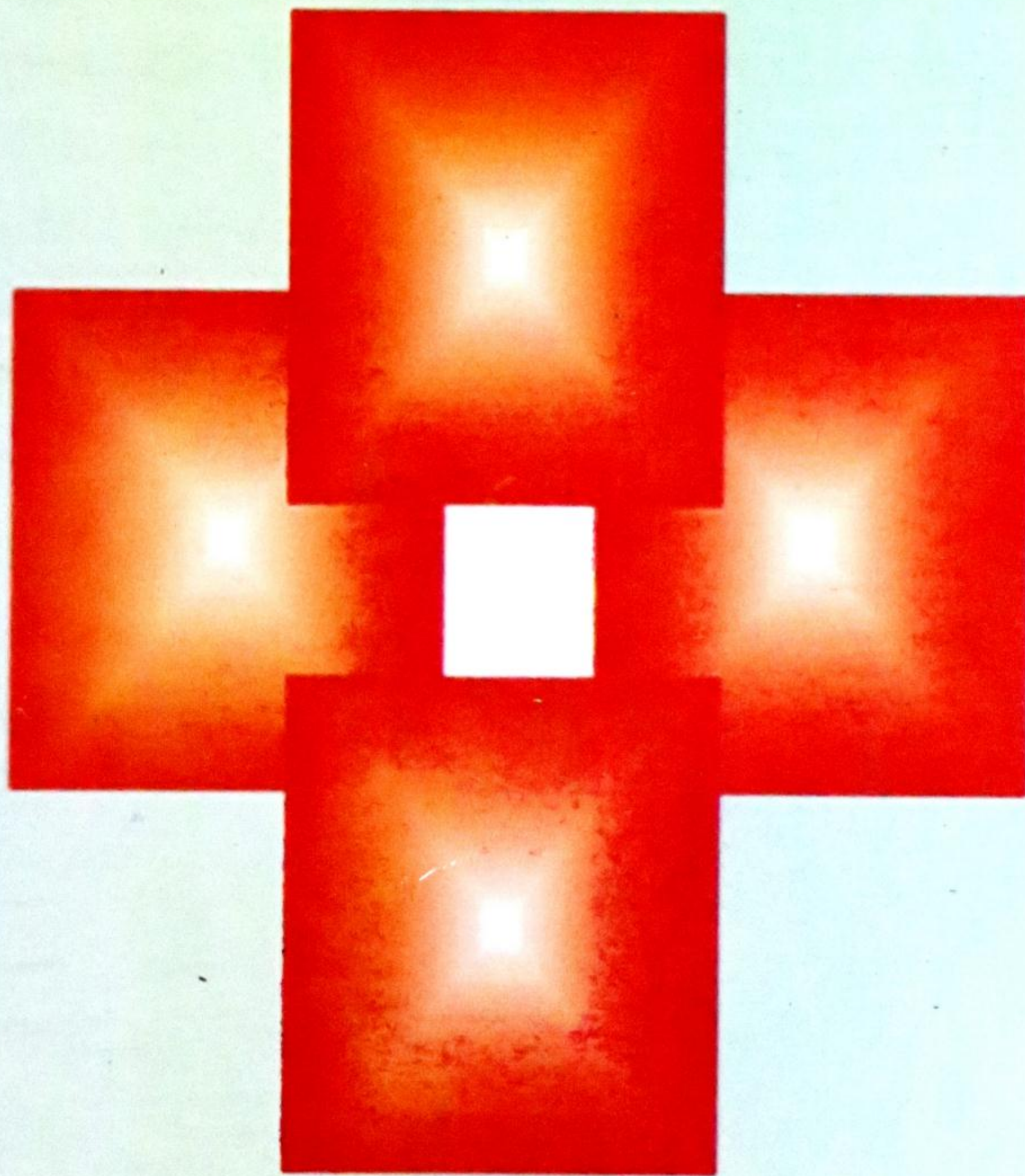


Human Views on God

Variety Not Monotony

(Essays in Honour of Ade P. Dopamu)



Adam K. arap Chepkwony, DPhil
Peter M.J. Hess, PhD

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CHAPTER NINETEEN

Peace Process in Africa: An Examination of Third Party Intervention in Religious Conflicts in Nigeria

Jowondo Ibrahim A.

Introduction

In human societies, peace is an essential ingredient for progress. Thus, whenever, peaceful co-existence is threatened (internally or externally) a number of peace moves are made to restore normalcy. One of such moves is the intervention of a Third Party. This includes the head of household, compound, quarters, section, clan, tribe and king of villages or town. It also includes opinion leaders (men or women), constituted authorities (traditional or modern) and a host of others. However, the handling of disputes by the Third Party, largely untrained has made and in some cases marred peace moves in Nigeria with particular reference to religious conflicts.

However, for proper understanding of the issues at hand, there is need to properly understand the major concepts of this paper – Religious conflict and Third Party intervention. Conflict which interchanged with crisis in some cases has been defined differently by authors like Kriesberg, Action Aid, Hoivik and Major, Friedrich and Albert.¹ However, the definitions (of the authors in spite their differing perspectives and socio-political backgrounds) complement one another. Thus, our concern here will be on the identifiable features of conflicts. But for the purpose of references let us consider one of the definitions. According to Friedrich,

conflict/crisis is a turning point often brought about by a convergence of events, which creates new circumstances threatening established goals and requiring action. It is further characterised by presumed tension and uncertainties.²

Thus, from the above definition the following are the identifiable features of religious conflict which occur within two periods - period of co-operation and animosity or lack of cooperation.

- a) Conflict occurs in human societies.
- b) Conflict involves two or more parties (internally or externally) who are related to one another.
- c) The Parties must have in one way or another cooperated.
- d) There must be exhibition of dishonesty, disloyalty and mistrust.
- e) Use of arms against one another.
- f) Destruction of lives and properties.
- g) Dislodgement of inhabitants.
- h) Human hostages, etc.

“Conflict is a generic human problem” that has varieties, which include political conflict, community conflict, ethnic conflict, religious conflict, students’ conflict, artisan conflict, etc. However, in some cases, conflict occurs overlapping one another or inseparably. So we sometimes have socio-political conflict, ethno-religious conflict and sometimes compounded to ethno-political and religious conflicts³. conflict is generally caused by cut throat competition for

inadequate resources, conflicting values/identities, psychological needs and ineffective information management.⁴ The area of concern in this chapter is religious conflict in Nigeria.

Another important concept is the Third Party intervention which simply refers to:

...a person or a body that is not directly connected with the conflict or that does not have any primary interest in the causes or courses of a conflict but came in between the conflicting parties for the purpose of settlement.⁵

A Third Party could among others include consultants, clergies, managers, councilors, mediators, group facilitators, attorneys, friends of the court or arbitrators.⁶

Religious conflict in Nigeria

Religion is an important factor in the formation of the Nigerian societies. Before the advent of colonialism, religion was the surest key for unity among Nigerians. The Muslim-North was united under Islam and the Christian-South was united under Christianity. There was no confrontation even though Islam and Christianity were expanding at the expense of the African Religion which pre-dated the two.

The two religions provided a good ground for the feeble resistance against colonial conquest and administration of Nigeria before and after 1900. With the establishment of colonial rule in Nigeria, Nigerians showed their resistance in many ways - workers resistance, newspaper attacks, we among the, but the most disturbing to colonialists were religious revolts which many a time were explained away by the colonialists by referring to them as civil unrest, ethnic crisis, among other names. In Northern Nigeria, the Satiru revolt of 1906 in Sokoto, Malam Njidda revolt of 1949 in Gombe, and Malam Hanafi revolt of 1958 in Gwandu were all directed against colonial administration.

However, with independence, religious revolts assumed a different dimension in Nigeria. The emerging nation though claims secular, gave priority to religion which had become an important element of the culture of the constituent parts of Nigeria. In an attempt to win people into the religions their evangelical methods became provocative and thus, occasional clashes occurred between Christians and Muslims and sometimes as a result of competition for government attention. As a result of these religious conflict became institutionalised in different ways; intra and inter.⁷ A good example was Tijaniyyah versus Qadiriyyah and Anglican versus Methodist, while kanfanchan, Ilorin and Izombe riots represent inter.

According to Imam, religious conflicts after independence occurred: "over the activities of the preachers, siting, and control of churches, mosques, schools and (on) matters with religious authorities and organisations."⁸ In 1980, the Maitatsine religious conflict led by Muhammed Marwa Maitatsine spread to Bullurn-Kuttu in Maiduguri by 1982, to Jimeta in Adamawa in 1984 and to Gombe in 1985 before it was finally quenched after hundreds of thousands of lives were lost and invaluable properties destroyed.⁹ Beside the major religious conflicts mentioned above, there were other minor conflicts in towns and cities of Nigeria. What then were the causes and consequences.

Causes and consequences

Causes of religious conflicts in Nigeria could be grouped into two - The general causes and the specific causes or better still the remote and immediate causes of religious conflicts. the general/remote causes have been discussed in other literature hence would just be mentioned here. They included competition for resources, conflicting values, psychological needs of the parties involved, mismanagement of information,¹⁰ inadequacy of Islamic knowledge, lack of piety, fanaticism, materialism, intolerance,¹¹ leadership tussle; foreign influence and a host of others. The chapter concentrate on immediate factors that triggered and escalated religious conflict in Nigeria, which most importantly inch on ineffectiveness of Third party.

Consequences of religious conflicts in Nigeria

Every time religious conflict occurs, it has a multiplying effect on its immediate environment and Nigeria in general. Religious conflicts usually create psychological stresses to Nigerians. Each state, local government, tribe, group and clan continues to think about the situation of their members living in the affected places. Most often, government activities are brought to a halt in order to calm down situations. Money meant for development is usually diverted for emergency

relief. Thus, conflicts usually slow down the pace of progress and development in Nigeria.

Apart from the psycho-political problems, it also inflicts irreparable socio-economic pains on both the society and the victims. Most often, public materials and buildings are destroyed, public, group and private property vandalised. Of significance to this discourse too, is the loss of lives of men and women who would have contributed their quota to the fast development of this nation. The table below shows statistics of losses incurred through religious conflicts in Northern Nigeria.

Table 1: Statistics of casualties incurred in religious conflicts

S/N	State	Incidents	Year	Causalities
1.	Adama wa	Dumoethno-religious conflict	2002	10 civilians, 8 policemen died
		Dumo Ethno-Religious Conflict	2003	Mosques, Churches, Private and Public buildings set ablaze
2.	Bauchi	Ethno-religious conflict	2001	No definite number killed.
		Sharia conflicts	2001	Many live and property lost
3.	Borno	Biu ethno-religious conflict	2000	N100 million worth of property destroyed. Ritual killing of a teenage girl.
4.	Gombe	Book launch and ethanol religious conflict	2001	Property of Christians destroyed
5.	Kaduna	Sharia crisis	2000	No less than 3000 lives lost. Property in building and vehicles destroyed
6.	Kano	Reprisal ethanol Religious conflict	2001	Lives and property lost
7.	Kebbi	Ethno-Religious conflict, Jega Town	2004	2 dead; several wounded; property worth millions destroyed.
8.	Plateau	Wase-Ethno-Religious Conflict	2001	No Clarity
		Jos Jumaat prayer conflict Jos-Ethno/religious reprisal attack	2001 & 2004	Lives and property lost
9.		Hausa Vs Taro ethno-Religious conflict		Their husbands and fathers killed brutally. Widows and orphans reproduced
10.		Jamaat Prayer conflict in Dilimi Barlom-Ado Ethnic crisis Wuse Ethnic Religious conflict 1 & 2	2002 & 2004	1,500 death toll; roasted or slaughtered
11.	Sokoto	Sharia Riot in Sokoto	2000	Police on red-alert. Few lives and property lost

Source: Shehu Sani, *The Killing Fieds: Religious Violence in Northern Nigeria*, Ibadan Spectrums limited, Abuja. Benin City, 2007 Chapters 4-7.

The role of the Third Party in religious conflicts

It is important to stress that most religious conflict that claimed lots of lives and properties in Nigeria would have been averted if not for the mal-administration of the Third Party. Religious conflict is a notorious conflict that hardly left anyone free from being connected directly or indirectly, overtly or covertly, verbally or gesturally. Hence, religious conflict spread like fire from one community or, one state to another. Let us examine the strategies and ineffectiveness of some stakeholders (third party) in curbing or resolving religious conflicts in Nigeria. Focus shall be on the following stakeholders.

- (1) Government
- (2) Masses
- (3) The Media
- (4) Traditional rulers
- (5) The Police
- (6) The fire fighting approaches and conflicting efforts of Non Governmental Organizations/Community Based Organizations

Albert noted that 'most governments the world over, rely on the coercive apparatus to intervene in conflicts' which of course have not been producing desired results in most cases. Experiences have shown that the intervention of police/soldiers in religious conflicts sometimes licensed them to unleash terror on the people through exploitation, subjugation, looting, sexual harassment and indiscriminate arrest. The law enforcement agents sometimes succumb to religious sentiments or the influence of who-is- who in the society thereby taking side with a section of the warring parties. Therefore instead of being solution they became part of the problems ¹².

Furthermore, the government as a Third Party has been failing in its duties. For instance, whenever meager relief package is organised for victims of religious conflicts, it is not usually properly monitored. Thus, some officials in-charge do away with some of the allocated resources. Since the victims are desperate and have no choice whatever is given to them are accepted in good faith. Sometimes victims of political leaning would determine what they would get if at all.

It is also noticed that recommendations of commissions of enquiry into religious conflicts as it affects forestalling future occurrence are usually not implemented either as a result of change of hands or deliberate subversion. Coupled with this is maltreatment of the arrested culprits and delay of judgment.

The masses, for ignorance, sometimes because of fear and/or untold and unnecessary embarrassment faced with the policy, conceal information which would have been useful to stakeholders to nip religious conflicts in the bud. In addition, the masses also, do disregard constitutional provisions on the practice of religions in Nigeria and legislation to curb religious conflicts. Some members of the public also manipulate religions for their selfish end, as well as over dependence on Newspaper information which is most time misleading.

The media in an attempt to beat one another, impress the public and make sales, reported uninvestigated issues as authentic and carried sensational News about events, individuals, communities and even government. They have failed to adhere strictly to ethics of journalism. Unfortunately, the unsuspecting public holds their views as gospel truth.

The traditional rulers are closer to the grassroots and they ought to know what happens in their domains. Unfortunately, perhaps because of inadequate recognition from government, most of them constitute non-challant attitude to what is happening in their areas. Some of them neglect information from the masses about impending danger until it is real. Some see such conflicts as the best way of making their presence felt by government which believes they are not essential in governance. However, when the conflict occurred and they try to mediate, they are usually not taken serious.

The NGO's and CBO'S have their share of the blame. Most of the NGO's/CBO's, perhaps because of inadequate funds or the dictate of donor agencies, delay advocacy works at crisis ridden areas until when crisis broke out. Thus such cases become more complex to handle and with heavy cost. It is also the attitude of the NGO's to dissipate energy and resources on an issue and at a certain place just because of the availability of funds for such project. The resultant effect of this is that, not much concrete decisions come out because of different and uncomplimentary approaches usually adopted.

How to make Third Party intervention effective in religious conflicts

The major stakeholders need to be sensitised about the importance of their role and be empowered to do it effectively. Here, foreign donors and corporate organisations need to finance such programme if Third Party intervention is to be more effective in our societies.

The owners of media houses, relevant government organs should make sure that media practitioners adhere strictly to the ethics of journalism by reporting objectively issues and events in the society in order to promote peaceful co-existence among Nigerians.

The government should not also relent in its efforts at sanitising the police and law enforcement agents in general. However, there is the need for continuous orientation of the police so as to bring about desired results in due course.

The government should also look for ways of making traditional rulers take active part in governance particularly in their areas so that it will not be during conflicts and crises that we make recourse back to them. By this, their power as Third Party will be meaningful and enhanced.

The government should recognize Nigeria's multi-religious status and religious rights and ensure that religious rights of all Nigerians are equally protected.¹³ Proper monitoring of committee saddled with the responsibility of disbursing funds or relief materials to victims should be done. Prompt implementation of reports will also assist to forestall future occurrence. The judiciary, the security agents and commissions of enquiries should be time conscious in the discharge of their duties because justice delayed is justice denied and of course could worsen the situation.

Conclusion

Religious conflicts in Nigeria have been a source of worry to all relevant stakeholders. This is because they continue to occur in different areas at different times and in different forms. And each time they occurred they left indelible marks on all the facets of the society. The causes of religious conflicts have been traced to so many negligible factors some internal and some external. However, religious conflicts have been triggered off and or escalated by mis-handling of the cases of religious conflicts by a Third Party intervention. Therefore, for reduction or possible eradication of religious conflicts in Nigeria, stakeholders must be properly educated and empowered through the support of relevant local, national and international organisations to enhance the activities of the Third Party interventionists.

Endnotes

- 1 Albert, I. O. *Introduction to Third-party Intervention in Community Conflicts*. Ibadan: John Archer, 2001.
- 2 Friedrich, D.O. *Legitimacy Crisis in the United State: A Conceptual Analysis*, *Social Problem* vol. 27 No. 5, 1998, 50.
- 3 Friedrich, 115.
4. Friedrich, 63.
5. Friedrich, 27.
6. Folger, 1997: 255
- 7 Ikengah-Metuh, 1994
- 8 Imam, Y.O., *Religious Crisis and Social Disruption in North-Eastern Nigeria*. Ibadan: Loud Books, 2004, 6.
- 9 Imam, 19-23.
- 10 Albert, 63.
11. Imam, 10-14.
- 12 Albert, 29.
- 13 Clifford Ndujihe "Groups list ways to curb ethno-religious crisis" *The Guardian*, Lagos, 2002, 7.