

## RELIGIOUS GROUPS AND THE POLITICS OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Pat Williams

### Introduction

A general misconception is that religion and development do not mix; that religion (must) have a negative repercussion on development.<sup>1</sup> This paper argues that religion and development can, and do go together. It submits that Nigeria's development had had the assistance of religion and still does; that without the close collaboration of religion and development in the past, Nigeria would have charted and therefore taken a different course, and maybe have a slower rate of development. The thesis here therefore is that religion through religious groups plays a vital role in the national development of Nigeria. Currently, Nigeria harbours many religions but the prominent ones are the indigenous religion otherwise known as the African Traditional Religion (ATR), Christianity and Islam.

The paper concentrates on the impact of religion on Nigeria's development. It highlights this politico-religious involvement with particular emphasis on the functional as well as the dysfunctional aspects of this interaction. This is done within the matrix of power, interest group, and pluralism<sup>2</sup> Suffices it therefore the restatement that Nigeria is heterogeneous and harbours within it several nationalities and groups whose interests are often at variance and consequently seek ways and means of attracting benefits to themselves. However, indulging these three typologies is power. Power is that instrument which propels activities in the public realm be it secular or spiritual. It is the desire to obtain, retain and wield power which compels individual(s) and groups to sometimes employ extra-political means, such as religion, in politics. Such unbridled desire, if successful, could be perceived as progressive to the recipient(s) but retrogressive to non-recipient(s) and thus detrimental to development in a pluralistic society as Nigeria. It is also pertinent to explain that the focus in this paper is on religious groups rather than on religion per se because it is through the former that the politics of national development would be better demonstrated and understood.

The paper based on library and archival findings as well as unstructured interviews, focuses on the post colonial period. Similarly, the paper takes into consideration those events which either enhanced or were detrimental to national development, hence, some interplay of politics and religion and the attendant consequences on national development. The point of departure however is the brief restatement of some important concepts employed in the paper. They are religion, groups, religious groups, politics and development. Of all this, only development necessitates a more extensive conceptualisation. Elsewhere<sup>3</sup> we have dwelt at length on the others. Therefore, for this paper we shall see religion as *any system relating man to ultimate values, epitomized in God or the Supreme Being and embodying a creed, code and a mode of worship and communion.*<sup>4</sup> Group is a number of persons or things gathered, placed together or associated<sup>5</sup> Therefore, a religious group could be perceived as adherents of a particular belief or system of practices followed

by persons living in a community since every group has its interest(s), a religious group must have its own peculiar interest and therefore form a solidarity with its likes.<sup>6</sup> Politics is that which

*has to do with the forces, institutions and organisational reforms in any society, that are recognised as having the most inclusive and final authority existing in that society for the establishment and maintenance of order, the effectuation of other conjoint purposes of its members and reconciliation of their differences.*<sup>7</sup>

Development is the act, process or result of developing. It is a fact or circumstance bringing about a new situation either through growth, evolution or/and expansion.<sup>8</sup> The term *development* has been variously conceptualised from economic, political, social and national perspectives. All societies do experience development though it has always been uneven and different from one place to the other. The reason for the diversity lies in the ecology within which the people developed and the *super structure* of the society.<sup>9</sup> For Rodney, development is *an increasing capacity to regulate both internal and external relationships*. Similarly, it means the ability to guard the independence of the social group and indeed to infringe upon the freedom of others...<sup>10</sup>

Development perceived from economic perspective means growth on per capita basis, the Gross National Product (GNP) and the simultaneous reduction in infant mortality rate, increased life expectancy, complex network of roads, gigantic buildings, etc. In short, there is an increase of the *good life* generally. This manner of thinking has generated controversy as to the method or path that had been taken and/or should have been taken: the capitalist and/or socialist paths.<sup>11</sup> Protagonists of both paths delineate succinctly the consequences of toeing one path rather than the other. According to Professor Nnoli, both paths promised *the good life*. However for the capitalist path,

*its central determining feature is the transformation of labour power of man into a commodity to be bought and sold in the market for gain.*<sup>12</sup>

In addition, the actual producers of products are separated from their means of production which is controlled by a few people.

For the socialist path, there is no separation of the actual producers (of products) from their means of production. This is concentrated in a social collectivity as a whole (i.e. the state). Values, when produced, are not commodities to be exchanged in the market but to meet the basic needs of the people. Nnoli stresses, that

*the interest of labour is superior to, and dominant over those of capital in deciding what is produced, how it is produced and how the products are distributed.*<sup>13</sup>

However, an over-concentration on economic development gives an erroneous impression that it constitutes the totality of development. There are also political,<sup>14</sup> social and national developments.

Nigeria, at flag independence, accepted liberal democracy and had at different times attempted to practise both Westminster/Cabinet and Presidential Systems and all their paraphernalia without necessarily accepting the attendant tools. This has invariably led to the incessant political instability in the country. Social and national development could be gleaned from the state of both economic and political development. Both, for instance, impacted on the system of education, the health care delivery or the sensibilities of people to the nationality question in Nigeria. Walter Rodney however, explicates the situation aptly when he observes that development is not a purely economic affair but *an overall social process which is dependent upon the outcome of man's effort to deal with his natural environment.*<sup>15</sup>

In spite of the multi-faceted nature of development, our interest in this paper is centred on national development, and thus the role of religion and religious groups in the politics of national development is examined. The paper is structured thus: Introduction, Religious groups and the politics of education in national development in colonial and post-colonial period; Religious groups and health and social welfare development, and conclusion.

### **Religious Groups and the Politics of Education in National Development**

It has been established that politics and education relate to each other in a *circular fashion*<sup>16</sup> and hence religious groups are active participants. Prior to the advent of Christianity and Islam, there was African Traditional Religion (ATR). It existed in the numerous nationalities which are the collectivities which later made up the Nigerian state. The ATR had close collaborative relationship with virtually every aspect of communal living; economic, political and social. Thus, as Rodney observes, both the material base and the super-structure contributed to the development of a nation. It is the extent that the belief system interacted with the other elements of the superstructure that the society develops. Thus, socio-political and religious patterns affected each other and were often intertwined.<sup>17</sup>

It is in this light that it is recognized that prior to the contribution of Islam and Christianity, practitioners of ATR ensured the proper transmission of their religious tenets and traditions through the medium of informal education of their members from one generation to the other. However, an objective evaluation of this contribution of the ATR shows that despite the fact that it could be said that the ATR permeated every facet of the life of its adherents, it could only be considered limited - limited in terms of its area of jurisdiction and its varied nature, prior to the advent of the influence of the two other religions and since their introduction. The ATR ensures that their facilities were reserved only for or benefited its *bona fide* adherents or members within the narrow confinement of its communities.

Similarly, Islam has strong influence on its adherents and therefore controls their way of life. Thus, it assumes the role of impacting proper Islamic education and culture to its adherents. *The umma* (Islamic community) particularly if it is *Bilad al - Islam* (Land of Islam), must be based strictly on the *Quran, Hadith and Sharia*. Hence in such an *umma*, Islamic education is a must. In the *umma*, both rudimentary and advanced Islamic education are given. Millions of both levels of quranic schools are spread all over the areas where Islam has its influence in Nigeria. With modernisation, some of these schools have been combining western education with Islamic ones.<sup>18</sup> It is therefore noteworthy that the education given includes science subjects such as Mathematics, Technology and Astronomy. These, according to an Islamic scholar, could be regarded as scientific contribution of Islam to development in Nigeria.<sup>19</sup> For instance, a good knowledge of these subjects assists Muslims to know why and how to share or distribute equitably according to the Islamic tenets. Similarly the giving of zakat (alms) is better done with the proper knowledge of mathematics. Also, Astronomy, remains useful in terms of keeping strictly to the Islamic calendar which relies very strongly on the movement/position of moon and stars.

Though some Islamic scholars would like to point to these scientific aspects of Islamic education as developmental, there is no denying the fact that these are recent deviations from the usual concentration on purely Islamic and Arabic studies in Nigeria. Though, there are more Muslim owned schools currently than it was the case in the past, their concentration is still on Islamic and Arabic knowledge rather than putting an emphasis on Western education. Their existence could be seen more simply as expedient actions to bridge the gap between them and their Christian counterparts. Nonetheless, just as it was noted in the case

of the ATR, all the services given were for the benefit of Muslims as members of the *umma* and not necessarily for the development of Nigerians generally and thus made these contributions limited and myopic.

The *Gemeinschaft* situation observed in the case of ATR and Islam above was not absolutely the case with Christianity. Initially, when the Christian schools were established they were for the converts only. However, expediency forced the situation and they became opened to everyone within their reach and regardless of their faith. Of course, there is no denying the fact that proselytization was foremost in their minds. But harsh climate and diseases wrought such havoc among the early missionaries and depleted their numbers so rapidly that to replenish their numbers, the protestant missions accepted the suggestion that manpower for the missions should be raised autochthonously from the indigenes of the area in which they worked. Hence there was a rapid transformation from *Gemeinschaft* situation to a *Gesellschaft* one. Rudimentary or narrow education was no longer adequate. To meet the needs of catechists, interpreters, teachers, nurses and clerks, Teacher Training College and Secondary Schools were established from as far back as 1853. The existence of these higher institutions guaranteed for the missions a steady supply of personnel: teacher-evangelists or catechists as well as clerks for the various European/Government concerns which sprang up in the southern part of Nigeria.

With such concentration on educational services between 1842 and 1950, mission schools outnumbered government schools in southern Nigeria. Except for the case of the King's College, Lagos, founded in 1909 and Queen's College founded in 1927, Christian schools most often were better run than their government counterparts and parents scrambled to send their offspring to them regardless of their religious bias. Of course the mission schools were happy to have them since it would enable them to impact their faith on their pupils unmolested. However, a development of note was that these mission schools served as avenues where children from diverse places and background came to live, work and develop together first, as Nigerians and next, maybe, as Christians. To that extent, Christian educational institutions served as pivotal points where nationalistic tendencies developed.

### **Religious groups and politics of education in Colonial times**

The colonial government was protective of the Muslim north and Islam and therefore insisted that northern Muslims for as long as it was possible to do so, must be shielded from *polluted christianizing* influences. Thus it attempted to westernize the northern Muslims without christianizing them. Therefore there were more government schools than mission schools by 1926 in the North.

Similarly the colonial government made political but limited overtures to the Muslims of the south-west areas. For instance, the first government schools in Lagos were built for Muslims in 1900. However, unlike the situation in the core Muslim north, the bulk of the educated Muslims in Western Nigeria could not escape the christianizing influence because the Christian educational institutions were more and readily available than government ones. Nonetheless, Islamic fervours were not lost sight of in the search for western education. This was clearly demonstrated when, in the period of Diarchy of the 1950s, enlightened Muslims demanded and obtained from the Western Regional Government the right to establish a number of Muslim schools where the Teaching of Islamic Knowledge and Arabic was guaranteed. It was politically expedient for the Action Group (AG) Government to make such concession since it claimed that region was secular and that religious groups had the right to own and run schools once they met the standards laid down

by government. It also insisted that in all non-denominational local government schools, western education was to be given without any Christian proselytizing influence. Thus, Muslims were further shielded from any Christian proselytization. Muslim groups were allocated part of the 40 percent given to the voluntary agencies and up to 10 percent of the 60 percent allocated to Native Authorities<sup>20</sup> Some of the Muslim organisations which took advantage of this dispensation and competed favourably with Christian ones were The *Ahmadiyya Movement*, the *Ansar-Ud-Deen* and the *Isabatudeen Society*.

Also in the 1950s, nationalists who came into position of partial power recognised the need to retain the missions involvement in the educational services of Nigeria. Generally this was much easier to achieve in this period as Nigerian Churchmen had come into position of authority in both churches and schools where hitherto white missionaries had dominated.<sup>21</sup> In spite of this understanding, however, there was disparity in the way this cooperation between the State and Church was effected in the three regions. For instance, while Nigerian Churchmen as opinion leaders worked closely and successfully with the Western Regional Government, there were open rivalry and dissatisfaction between Eastern Regional Government and religious groups.<sup>22</sup> In the Northern Region, there was a cautious though expedient cooperation between the government and the missions. The government accepted the assistance of the missions but with the provision that they would not use the opportunity to proselytize Muslim children. This disparity in educational services did not make for coordinated and even national development.

### **Politics and educational development in the Independent period**

Perhaps it was this variety in the educational services as a result of the religious politics of 1950s and 1960s which hastened the government take-over of schools in the 1970s. Presumably, the take-over was precipitated by the infamous activities of the Christian groups particularly Catholics in the 30 month Civil War. Their lack of remorse for their activities in support of the *Biafran* cause, made the Federal Military Government (FMG) to take a number of actions that curtailed the free entry of aliens and their involvement in national matters. There was Decree No. 33 of 1969 on Immigration (Special Provisions) which ensured that all non-citizens must obtain Entry Permit to come into Nigeria. This decree was used to gradually depopulate the foreign missionary elements. One of the hardest hit missions was the Catholic Church which heavily depended on foreign missionaries. 75 Catholic priests and religious found in the Biafran enclave were arrested, tried and deported under this decree. In addition, government assumed ownership of all Christian schools in the former Biafran enclave. Later, the take-over of these institutions was extended to the whole country with the understanding that the religious groups (that is, the former owners) retained the right to decide who was posted as staff to these schools. This compromise was shortlived however. There were allegations, particularly by minority groups, that this right was denied them. In the Western states, Muslims complained that the public schools failed to give Islamic religious instruction to their children, while in some northern states, Christians complained that their children were denied Christian religious instructions in the state schools.<sup>23</sup>

In the Eastern states where there were no sectarian complaints of the type mentioned above, voluntary agencies decried the injustice involved over their inability to use their former school premises for the development of religious teaching of their offspring.<sup>24</sup> Thus, despite the oil boom and the noises made by government about the secularization of education which guaranteed the freedom of religion in schools, no religious group was completely satisfied with the arrangement that the state should be totally responsible for

education and therefore, the state failed to get the necessary cooperation from them. This inevitably had adverse effects on educational development.

Yet, the charade of state responsibility for education and the secularity of activities in this avenue were loudly mouthed. For instance, within a space of three years, (1976 - 1979) government had devoted huge sums of money towards education and by 1979 they had fizzled away.

Very early in the life of the Second Republic, most of the schemes on education was no more viable because government either could not fund them or lacked political will to ensure its success. Thus, government involvement in educational services became even more politicized and therefore irregular. While at the Federal level, government rescinded the commitment to fund education at all levels as accepted by the previous administration, at the state level, five Unity Party of Nigeria states embarked on a free education programme at all levels within the precinct of their control.

These discrepancies in the state's delivery of educational services led to further discontentment among Nigerians. With the return to civilian rule in 1979, some people were hopeful that schools seized in the 1970s would be returned to their owners. There were people who believed that if schools were returned to their owners, the quality of education would be improved and that, the indiscipline which had pervaded the educational system would be controlled. Besides, since the military government did not compensate these voluntary agencies for taking over their institutions, they remained legitimately theirs.

Of course, there were also people who did not approve of these demands for various reasons among which included economic, sectarian and secular ones. Christians in Imo and Lagos States spearheaded the political protests for the return of schools to the voluntary agencies. The Lagos State Government and the Lagos Christians served as the litmus test case which was to have decided the action to be taken by other Christian/religious groups in Nigeria. The Lagos Christian body took the Lagos State Government to court for taking over schools and for preventing it from establishing private schools for the children of its adherents. The case dragged on for several years until it was finally decided in favour of the plaintiff in 1986. Meanwhile, the Christian body's demand in Imo State for the return of schools, met with stiff opposition from the 45,000 members strong state Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT).

Fortunately, in the Second Republic, most governments of the Federation did not make the existence of private primary schools an issue. These private institutions met the aspirations of those who felt that the services of the government primary schools were inadequate. It was thus only at the nursery and primary level that pupils/parents could escape the sledgehammer of government which compelled all post-primary institutions to come under the control of government.

It was at this post-primary level that political agitations were rife almost nation-wide over the unjust curtailment or biased promotion of certain religions through the injudicious acts/policies of government or government officials. Such discontentments were openly displayed over such policies as the teaching of Christian/Islamic Religious Knowledge/Doctrine in schools, allotted periods for praying during school hours, religious/secular assemblies at the opening and closing of a school day, the existence of religious organisations such as Scripture Union (SU) or Muslim Students' Society (MSS) in secular schools, etc. These issues, among others, remained problematic particularly in Oyo and Lagos states and were not adequately settled to the satisfaction of all concerned during the Second Republic.

An objective examination of the perennial problems identified above shows that they

were more political than religious. They were methods of showing displeasure with the system. It is however noteworthy that during the period under review, the population in educational institutions had grown astronomically so that the easy solution proffered that a return of schools to their owners would ease tension, might not be the answer. It is arguable whether voluntary agencies have the wherewithal to maintain schools in their present sizes if returned to them. Hence, the incessant calls for the return of schools to their erstwhile owners could be perceived as a stratagem to cause minor scares and also to serve as a reminder to government of *an opponent who is not very powerful but who appears strong*.<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, some people had attributed the indiscipline among youngsters to the state control of educational institutions. The government, it was claimed, is not properly equipped to do this. These people opined that proper national development would take place only when those whose business is to instil discipline and mould good morals are involved.

With the military return to the political scene on December 31, 1983, came fees in educational institutions. There was the strong suggestion that since these services were no longer free, it was only fair that these institutions were returned to their owners. Cross River and Benue States had actually returned some of these institutions to their owners before the Federal Government gave a general dispensation in 1986 that private organizations could run primary schools. But the return of schools to their owners remains problematic in some states. It was simply politically expedient to not return them. For instance in Oyo State, it is said that Christians had more schools than any other religious groups,<sup>26</sup> while in Imo State, the powerful NUT was strongly against this move because it believed that the voluntary agencies would no longer be able to cope with the current population in schools.<sup>27</sup>

However, it is pertinent to note the milieu within which these changes were occurring: Nigeria is a secular state where various religious groups made it their business to watch out for any lapses in their interests or infringement of their rights. Governments, particularly since the 1970s, vigorously asserted the secularity of the Nigeria state. Unfortunately, there was great disparity between this pronouncement and actual actions of state officials that feelings of insecurity were rife. Thus, accusations of religious repression, oppression and discrimination were freely expressed. The teaching of Arabic in Nigeria's public schools was one instance over which religious groups disagreed.

From the colonial period, the teaching of Arabic in schools had been ambiguously viewed by both the authorities and religious groups. For instance, Lugard was sceptical of its use in Northern Nigerian schools while his successors as governors actively promoted its teaching in line with the British officials' desire not to offend the sensibilities of the ruling class. In the 1950s, some influential Muslims in the Western Region saw the non-teaching of Arabic in the region's public schools as an effective way of stifling the growth of the Islamic faith in Muslim children.<sup>28</sup> Similar accusations were made of the governments of Oyo State between the 1970s and the 1980s.<sup>29</sup> Some Christian groups viewed the teaching of Arabic in Nigeria's secular schools either as a subtle tool of transforming secular Nigerian state into an Islamic one or at least, the promotion of Islam over and above other religions.

The authorities of the Ministry of Education endeavoured to explain these perceptions as misconceptions. They said that Arabic occupies the same status that any other language occupies in the school curriculum.

If however Arabic could be explained away as not necessarily a means of promoting Islam, the introduction of dual uniforms (duoform) in some federal and northern states' public schools certainly smacked of religious bigotry. The former uniform worn by school girls was perceived as *Christian* and the second set of uniform later introduced, viewed as

better becoming of Islamic school girls. Duoform was introduced, it was claimed, to assuage the religiously oppressive situation whereby Muslim girls were compelled to adopt Christian mode of dressing.<sup>30</sup>

Another action of government which irked the sensibilities of Christian groups was the ban on prayers in all public institutions. The order was given in the wake of religious disturbances in Kaduna state in 1987. Christian groups perceived the order as attempts from high quarters to disorientate Christian youngsters about their faith and consequently stem the growth of Christianity in Nigeria. Investigations showed that government had made efforts to dereligionize public schools by deemphasizing religious ferventness. For instance, in one Federal College, assemblies were held only twice a week: Monday for Christians and Thursday for Muslims. The prayers said were devoid of *Offensive* names such as *Jesus and Mohamed*. In addition, religious activities were very severely monitored.<sup>31</sup>

Therefore, the Christian community made it a duty to ceaselessly decry the ban on religious activities in all educational institutions particularly at the primary and secondary school levels. They strongly insinuated that the prevalent laxity in the society, loose morals and general indiscipline among the youths were the result of government's ill prepared take-over of schools as well as the banning of the exposition of religious and moral instructions in schools. They insisted that the situation would worsen unless government immediately rescinded its unpopular action and promoted religious activities in schools.

Perhaps because of the pressure mounted by Christian groups or the fact that the crime rate has risen sharply recently with a high percentage of youngsters involved, government has graciously reintroduced the teaching of religious and moral instructions in all educational institutions. Government hoped this gesture would help to check crime, moral laxity and indiscipline among the youths.<sup>32</sup>

### **Religious Groups and the Politics of Health and Social Welfare Development**

Just as we attempted to show above, the ATR, prior to the advent of the other two religions, permeated the life of its adherents. Hence, it could be said that it took totally the control of their health and other social welfare services. Health, as an important phenomenon in the African context has to do with the preservation and restoration of human vitality in the community. The healing power depended on the right human relationships and harmony with the whole environment including the time-transcending spirit world.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, the practitioners of ATR practise magic and medicine in order to repair the damage to mind and body. In the same vein, chief priests as custodians of gods and goddesses were consulted in serious cases of misdemeanor and they decreed the actions to be taken to propitiate the gods and goddesses. Thus, under the control of ATR, the general well-being of the community was guaranteed.

Similarly, Islam took complete charge of the health and social welfare condition of its members in the *umma*. The Quran is a kind of armour against all evil influences and sickness. However in Nigeria, it was not unusual for unscrupulous *Alfas* and *Lemomus* to claim that certain passages of the Quran could be *written on scraps paper and wrapped up in leather and used as protective amulet*.<sup>34</sup> On social welfare services, Islam advocates how the community could take care of its less fortunate members through the system of ZAKAT (Almsgiving) and method of equitable sharing of inheritance. With modernisation and other influences, Muslims have established their own health institutions and social welfare centres for motherless babies and old people.

Christianity introduced orthodox methods of health care services in Nigeria. Early in

the life of the various Christian missions, health care services were given in cottage hospitals, maternity homes and dispensaries in very remote areas. They dispelled superstitious beliefs brought about through ignorance and taught simple hygiene. They were also involved in leprosy relief work and they built leprosaria. Their involvement in leprosy relief work throughout Nigeria helped to curtail the dreadful disease and earned several Christian missions financial support from the colonial authorities.<sup>35</sup> The collaborative attitude which existed between state and church in this area continued throughout the colonial period and well into the 1970s when government took control of health services. Even then, the government allowed mission workers to continue to give services in the health institutions.

In 1986, when President Babangida gave his dispensation of returning social welfare institutions to their erstwhile owners, some of the missions claimed back their hospitals. Meanwhile some Muslim individuals/organisations took the opportunity to establish their own hospitals. That way, their religious sensibilities would no longer be offended.

It is however noteworthy that while the two foreign religions had to some extent been able to go into competition with each other in social and health services, the ATR had remained remote and generally open only to their members. However, of the three, the Christian missions remain liberal as their services are open to everyone in the society regardless of his creed or religion.

Some other social services which the government got itself involved in are Pilgrimages and Religious Broadcasts.

Pilgrimage,<sup>36</sup> a purely religious matter, has become highly politicized as government sees itself as necessarily responsible for the welfare of pilgrims, hence it continued to commit huge public funds towards the up-keep of 21,460 pilgrims annually. In addition, during the period of pilgrimage, the economy comes to a stand still. There is no wild fluctuation of the Naira as against popular currencies, air fares are fixed and there could be unnecessary disruption of air time table, etc. Many Nigerians who have no religious compulsion to go on pilgrimage resent strongly this state involvement particularly as one religion seemed to benefit more than others. They therefore opined that since religion is a private affair, pilgrimage should assume private status. After all, pilgrims in other countries do not constitute such problems to their governments.

The competition between Christian and Muslim groups is strongly demonstrated by the amount of air time consumed by each of these religious groups in order to out-do each other in the display of their religiosity, fellowship and hence the subtle power they are able to wield in the society. Yet, the media they employ - radio and television - are government owned, set up with the tax payers' money. Government playing safe, usually ignored the overt torture to which they subjected viewers by the endless tirade of religious programmes, unless it felt it was politically unsafe. Then it suddenly intervenes, banning religious broadcasts and suddenly rescinds its decision when the danger is over. This *fire-brigade* action is very unsettling and fraught with danger. The 1990 ban, for instance, came when the Christian groups felt government deliberately imposed the ban during the Passion Week of Easter to scale down their activities while it lifted the ban just before the end of the Ramadan to energise the Muslims' activities. Certainly, government's intervention in this manner was ill-advised as it came at critical periods of the religious calendar of both religions. Government should either not have imposed the ban or lifted it when it did.

## Conclusion

This paper attempts to show that religion and development do mix and religion has impact on national development though in the process, politics has been at play. In the cursory survey of three areas, education, health and social welfare services in the period prior to colonial rule, through the colonial period and the post colonial period, the paper endeavours to highlight the contributions of each religion through its religious groups to national development. The paper shows how various governments attempted to stage a delicate balance between the various religious groups particularly the Muslim and Christian ones in the above identified areas without much success. From the issues raised in the paper, we have the following findings:

- i) that the three religions ATR, Islam and Christianity indeed influenced the educational, health and social welfare development in Nigeria and thus, they contributed to the current national development;
- ii) that of the three religious groups, however, the Christian groups were more functionally responsible for the framework of the current educational, health and some social welfare services in this country;
- iii) that the past contributions or positions of some religious groups necessarily propelled them into making impossible demands on the state;
- iv) that the government contributed to the current state of national development by firstly politicizing these educational, health and social welfare services and secondly, by taking full responsibility of these services without the necessary attendant planning, personnel and funding. The result is the poor services that are now prevalent in these institutions;
- v) that the inability of government to render efficient services had compelled it to appeal to voluntary agencies to set up similar institutions to complement the unsatisfactory efforts of government;
- vi) that government religious politicking would continue to offend the sensibilities of Nigerians particularly the unfavoured religious groups. Certain religio-political issues must be settled once and for all. Government should do away with fire-brigade gestures. Thus, Pilgrimages should be the responsibility of religious bodies and religious programmes should be stopped on the Radio and Television.

From the above findings, there is no gainsaying the fact that religion is intricately interwoven with politics in Nigeria. It is also a fact that for as long as religious groups are satisfied, they would positively have an impact on the Nigerian body politic. But when other factors such as favouritism, partiality, bigotry, creep in, negativity sets in. Contributions from the dissatisfied cannot be healthy, progressive, functional or positive.

Religion in itself is a good and useful tool for development because no ardent believer would be involved in any evil deed or actions which would be detrimental to healthy development of a state. Religion becomes dysfunctional in any political system when religious adherents as public officials misuse their exalted positions to ram down sectarian views on the general populace or to promote or assist fellow adherents at the expense of non-adherents. The consequence of such unpatriotic actions is usually unpleasant. Government should therefore not allow itself to be so negatively employed or perceived if it wants to enjoy the goodwill, support of every member of the society and to promote national development.

It is also important to point out the dysfunctional effect of religious over-zealousness on the cultural ethos of the Nigerian society. It is now usual to see religious women properly dressed in the puritan Christian or Muslim fundamentalistic fashion. Apart from the fact

that this is a blind adoption of another culture in the name of religion, it depicts a limited knowledge of the reason why those women from foreign cultures dress the way they do. It could be either because of the harsh Arabian weather or to meet the exigencies of their time. A blind adoption of Arabian culture, is detrimental to nation-building. Similarly, the uncritical adoption of any culture in all its totality stultifies psychological development since the mental psychic would be attuned to the pristine period rather than to Nigeria's present day needs. This inevitably would lead to a divergence in national development since the *ardent* Muslim fundamentalist or the *born again* Christian takes his cue only from the bible, quran, sharia, or hadith. Religion should not be accepted to the point that one's culture would be displaced. Overall however, religion, through the active participation of religious groups, has contributed tremendously to national development and will continue to do so.

## References

- 1) For examples of studies on religion and development, see Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism*, (New York, Charles Scribner, 1950); also on impact of religion and development, see Kenneth P. Jameson and Charles K. Wibner (ed.), *Religious Values and Development in World Development*, (Oxford), Vol. 8, No. 7/8, July/August, 1980 particularly the Introductory Paper; PAT Williams, *Religion and Development Process in Nigeria*. A report submitted to the Social Science Council of Nigeria and Ford Foundation on Research Projects on Contemporary Development Issues in Nigeria, July, 1990.
- 2) These concepts have been enunciated in the author's Ph.D. thesis; *The State Religion and Politics in Nigeria*, University of Ibadan, 1989.
- 3) *Ibid.*, p. 1.
- 4) P.R.A. Adegbesan, *Pragmatic Involvement in Religious matters: A Case Study of Nigeria in S.O.* Olugbemi (ed.), *Alternative Futures for Nigeria*, (Lagos, NPSA, 1987), p. 96.
- 5) A.S. Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English*, (London, University Press, 1980), p. 380; cf. P. Hanks, *Hamlyn Encyclopedic World Dictionary*, (London, The Hamlyn Publ. Group Ltd., 1979), p. 704; P.R.A. Adegbesan, *Religious Groups and the Transition to Civil Rule in Nigeria*, Zaria, NPSA, 1987, p. 3.
- 6) Michael Hechter, *Principles of Groups Solidarity*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1988), p. 9.
- 7) J.R. Pennock and D.G. Smith, *Political Science: An Introduction*. (London, Collier - Macmillan Ltd., 1964), p. 9.
- 8) See Patrick Hicks, *Hamlyn Encyclopedic World Dictionary*. (London, The Hamlyn Publishing Group Limited, 1979), p. 447.
- 9) See Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. (Washington, Howard University Press, 1974), pp. 8 - 9.
- 10) *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 5.
- 11) See O. Nnoli, *Path to Nigerian Development*. (Dakar, Codestria Books Series, 1983), pp. 1 - 2; Also, Andre Gunder Frank, *Sociology of Development and Underdevelopment of Sociology*. (Lagos, Afrografika Publishers, n.d.), pp. 1 - 2 and Mussa Abique, *The Development of African Economic Underdevelopment*. (Lagos, Afrografika Publishers, 1977), pp. 5 ff.

- 12) O. Nnoli, *op. cit.*, p. 2
- 13) *Ibid.*, p. 3
- 14) Protagonists of political development are also referred to as modernisation theorists. They lay down certain criteria for development. See Walt Whitman Rostow, **The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto**. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1961), Lucien Pye, **Aspects of Political Development**. (Boston, Little Brown and Co., 1966); B.F. Hoselitz, **Theories of Stages of Economic Growth**. (Glencoe, The Free Press, 1960). J.H. Kunkel, **Society and Economic Growth: Behavioural Perspective of Social Change**. (London, Oxford University Press, 1970).
- 15) Walter Rodney, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
- 16) P.R.A. Adegbesan, **Awo and the Politics of Education in Obafemi Awolowo: The End of An Era?** Olasope O. Oyelaran, et al (ed.), (Ile Ife, OAU, Press Ltd., 1988), p. 801.
- 17) Walter Rodney, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
- 18) See Abdurrahman I. Doi, **Islam In Nigeria**. (Zaria, Gaskiya Corporation Ltd., 1984), pp. 307 - 323. Also, A. Babs Fafunwa, **History of Education in Nigeria**. (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1980), pp. 208 - 209.
- 19) This explanation was given at an informal interview with Dr. Nasiru of the Department of Islamic and Arabic Studies, University of Ibadan, August 14 and 17, 1990.
- 20) For further elaboration of this, see PAT Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 693.
- 21) The protestant missions were better represented in this than Catholics, see David B. Abernethy, **The Political Dilemma of Popular Education**. (Stanford, Berkeley, University of Cal. Press, 1967), pp. 170 - 171. Also, PAT Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 639 - 690.
- 22) For further explanation, see J.H. Prize, **The Eastern Region of Nigeria: March 1957** in W.J.M. Mackenzie and Kenneth Robinson (ed.), **Five Elections in Africa**. (Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1960), pp. 111 - 129; David B. Abernethy, *op. cit.*, pp. 170 - 175; Colman M. Cooke, **Church, State and Education: The Eastern Nigerian Experience 1950 - 1967** in Edward Fashole-Luke et al., (ed.), **Christianity in Independent Africa**. (Ibadan, Ibadan University Press, 1978), pp. 193 - 206.
- 23) See E.P.T. Crampton, **Christianity in Northern Nigeria**. (London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1979), pp. 119 - 120; See also *New Nigerian*, (Kaduna), January 27, March 1, 1977.
- 24) A.F. Afigbo, **The Mission, The State and Education in South-Eastern Nigeria, 1956 - 1971** in Edward Fashole Luke, et al. (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 184.
- 25) Rev. Fr. William H. Ward, in *Daily Sketch* (Ibadan), October 4, 1981, p. 6.
- 26) PAT Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 755
- 27) *Daily Times*. (Lagos), June 27, 1986.
- 28) See Parliamentary Papers 1957 - 1958, IX, Report of the Commission to enquire into the fears of minorities and the means of allaying them. Cmnd. 505, London, H.M.S.O., 1958, pp. 26 - 28.
- 29) See PAT Williams, *op. cit.*, 741 ff.
- 30) See *Summit: Aminu, I Regret Nothing*, *Newswatch*. (Lagos), January 18, 1988, pp. 20 - 21.
- 31) See Rules and Regulations for Federal Government Girls College, Bakori.

- 32) **Independent.** (Ibadan), April 8, 1990, p. 1.
- 33) E. Bolaji Idowu, **African Traditional Religion: A Definition.** (London, S.C.M., Press Ltd., 1973), p. 202. N.S. Booth, *An Approach to African Religion* in N.S. Booth, **African Religions: A Symposium.** (New York, Nok Publishers Ltd., 1977), pp. 6 - 7.
- 34) See Sydney Phillipson, **Grants-in-aid of the Medical and Health Services Provided by Voluntary Agencies in Nigeria.** (Lagos, Government Printer, 1949), pp. 9 - 13.
- 35) For further discussion on Pilgrimages and its politics, see PAT Williams, *op. cit.* pp.243 - 257.