

Kant's Categorical Imperative: A Panacea to Conflicts in Nigeria

Anifowose Oluwaseun Adeola, PhD.

Department of Philosophy

Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State

adeola.anifowose@oouagoiwoye.edu.ng

And

Oyelana Oluwabori Ayobami

Department of Philosophy

Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State

Oluwabori.oyelana@oouagoiwoye.edu.ng

Abstract

Religious conflicts have become a major challenge that threatens the unity of Nigeria. Religious conflicts have had devastating consequences on national, economic, social and human development in Nigeria; accounting for thousands of deaths, polarization of the society, lack of peace and unity among other effects. The wanton destruction of lives and property, lack of respect for the dignity of human lives, non-adherence to the duty to preserve human lives, disregard for humanity and other inhumane acts associated with religious conflicts can be argued to be consequent upon a debased rational and moral mind. It is on the grounds of the effects of religious conflicts that this essay will examine and discuss the viability of the categorical imperative which extols the ideals of humanism, mutual respect and love for others as a plausible framework that can be explored in combating the menace of religious conflicts in Nigeria. Using the analytic method, this essay argues that religious adherents across Nigeria should make the principles of the categorical imperative a yardstick to evaluate their religious devotion and actions generally. This article recommends the orientation of Nigerians towards the ideals of the categorical imperative as a moral compass. This will help foster a society that transcends religious boundaries, emphasizes shared humanity and principles that can contribute to a more harmonious and inclusive society.

Key Words: Ethics, Religious conflicts, Immanuel Kant, Categorical Imperative.

Introduction

Religious conflicts in Nigeria have deep historical roots, often involving tensions between Muslims and Christians. These disputes are influenced by factors such as

political issues, economic disparities, and regional differences. In recent years, incidents of violence and discrimination have escalated, raising concerns about the need for sustainable solutions to promote religious harmony and national unity. A literature review on religious crises in Nigeria reveals a complex interplay of historical, social, and economic factors contributing to tensions between religious communities. Scholars have explored the impact of colonialism on religious identity, the role of political manipulation, economic disparities, and the effects of globalization.

Conflicts are synonymous with initialization and aggregation of human interests. This implies that religious, ethnic or class conflict is inevitable unless there exists compatibility between different values, desires or needs of people that co-exist. It is important to note that the history of the two major received religions in Nigeria, Christianity and Islam is more or less stories of conflict.

The causes of religious conflicts in the country encompasses a complex interplay of historical grievances, socioeconomic disparities, political manipulation, and ideological differences. Socioeconomic factors such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of education contribute to the vulnerability of individuals to extremist ideologies. Moreover, political actors often exploit religious sentiments to gain power or divert attention from governance failures. In furtherance, ignorance and poor literacy enhance blind devotions to religious leaders and extremist religious ideologies. This underscores the dogmatism of uncritical and unanalytic followership of religious ideologies and leaders. It is not uncommon for some religious leaders to incite illiterate devotees to violence. This they do by telling them of "certain promises" attached to certain acts in the name of defending their religion. Moreover, the impoverished situations of some adherents make them readily available tools for conflicts and violence in the hands of biased religious leaders and political actors.

In addition, several other factors are responsible for religious violence in Nigeria

such as negligence of government oppression, domination, exploitation, victimisation, discrimination, marginalisation, nepotism and bigotry.¹ In his treatise, Kwaja identifies fragility of the institutions of the state in terms of their ability and capacity to manage diversity, corruption, rising inequality between the rich and poor, gross violation of human rights, environmental degradation, contestations over land, among others, as the underlying causes of violent conflicts in Nigeria since the enthronement of democratic rule in 1999.² Contributing to the debate, Omotosho opined that the wrong perception of other people's religion or faith, wrong religious orientation, the low literacy level of religious adherents, selfishness on the part of religious personalities, pervasive poverty, government involvement in religious matters, among others, are responsible for inter-religious conflicts in Nigeria.³

But is there any way out of this predicament? Is there a plausible solution to the menace of religious conflicts and crisis in Nigeria? It is against this backdrop that a viable solution in form of the categorical imperative shall be explored and thus, form the crux of discourse in this article.

Kant's moral philosophy is based on the claim that the only intrinsically good thing is a good will; an action can only be good if the principle behind it is duty to the moral law. Central to Kant's formulation of the moral law is the categorical imperative, which acts on all people, regardless of their interests or desires. The categorical imperative states that act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should become a universal law.⁴ Kant's principle of

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1. Blessing Salawu, "Ethno-religious Conflicts in Nigeria: Causal Analysis and Proposals for New Management Strategies" *European Journal of Social Sciences* 14, no. 3 (2014): 346.
 2. Chris Kwaja, "Strategies for Building State Capacity to Manage Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in Nigeria." *Journal of Pan-African Studies* 3, no. 3 (2003): 107-8.
 3. A.O. Omotosho, "Religious Violence in Nigeria- the Causes and Solutions: An Islamic Perspective." *Swedish Missiological Theme* (3003): 45
 4. Ayo Fadahunsi, "Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperative," In *Fundamental Theories and Issues in Ethics*, edited by Olaoluwa Mabol and Ebun Oduwole, 44-51 (Ibadan: Ben-El Books, 2010), 47

universalizability requires that, for an action to be permissible, it must be possible to apply it to all people without any contradiction. Thus, Kantian ethics can be said to be in agreement with the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would want to be done to you". More so, Kant's ethics sees humanity as a priceless universal. This formulation states that we should never act in such a way that we treat humanity, whether in ourselves or in others, as a means only but always as an end in itself. This is often seen as introducing the idea of "respect" for persons, for whatever it is that is essential to our humanity.

A look at Kant's ethical formulation vis-a-vis religious conflicts in Nigeria shows that with the application of our universal rational nature, we will discover that killing of adherents of other religions and destruction of their properties are inconsistent with universality, drive for preservation of the human race and the dignity attached to human life.

This research is integral to the discourse on religious conflicts as it engages in an expository analysis of the root causes of religious conflicts; exposing the debased moral configuration of fanatics and extremists, the uncritical attitude of religious adherents, dogmatic religious followership, ignorance, poverty, use of humans as means to an end, government negligence amongst other factors. In addition, the research seeks to proffer viable ways to combat the menace- that is a re-orientation of our moral sensibilities and the inculcation of the formulation of the Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative which can be restated as the Golden Rule in our dealings with others. This will help extol the ideals of mutual respect, tolerance, hospitality, dignity, love and above all human rational nature.

In conclusion, the essay recommends that the principle of the categorical imperative be used to orientate Nigerians on our rational nature, and teach Nigerians to embrace respect, tolerance, treat fellow Nigerians with dignity and as means not ends in themselves. With the adoption and implementation of the aforementioned, there will be a lasting solution to the challenge of religious conflicts in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarifications

Religion is a very complex phenomenon that has no univocal definition because of the subjective nature and the complexities surrounding it. Etymologically, religion is derived from three Latin words, "ligare" which means bind, "relegere" which means to unite and "religio" which means relationship.⁵ Furthermore, Akintona defined religion as essentially a relationship between two persons, that is, a human person and a deity.⁶ It therefore means a link or a relationship between man and a being that exists which is greater than man. Man and religion are inseparable in all human cultures. However, according to *Webster's Dictionary of English Language*, religion refers to man's expression of his acknowledgement of the divine or a system of belief and practices relating to the sacred and uniting its adherents in communities. This shows that religion focuses on what is ultimate or absolute and taught of worship. Therefore, relationships between the transcendent and men demands total submission and an absolute obedience.⁷

Religion also, is the consciousness of one's dependence on transcendent being and the tendency to worship Him. It is a body of truths, laws and rites by which man is subordinated to the transcendent Being.⁸ Religion can be seen as any cultural system of worship, including designated behaviors and practices, world views, texts, places, ethics, or organizations that relate humanity to the supernatural or transcendental. There are an estimated 10,000 distinct religions worldwide. About 84% of the world's population is affiliated with one of the five largest religions, namely Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism or forms of folk religion.⁹

5. Emmanuel Ola Akintona, "Religious Crisis and the Clash of Absolutes: A Note on Religious Tolerance," In *Readings in Philosophy: Problems and Issues*, edited by Samuel Ade-Ali and Emmanuel Akintona, 13-28 (Lagos: Triumph Publishers, 2015), 14.
6. Akintona, "Religious Crisis and the Clash of Absolutes", 15.
7. Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (California: University of California Press, 2004), 56.
8. Micheal Adeniyi, "Religion and Politics: A Bird-eye's View of Development in Nigeria," In *Religion and politics in Nigeria*, edited by R. A. Akanmidu et. al., 15-32 (Ilorin: NASR, 1993), 21.
9. Peter Harrison, *The Territories of Science and Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 76.

Religious conflict is, specifically, conflict that is motivated by or in reaction to religious precepts, texts, or doctrines. This includes violence against religious institutions, people, objects, or when the violence is motivated to some degree by some religious aspect of the target or precept of the attacker. Religious violence does not refer exclusively to acts committed by religious groups, but also includes acts committed by secular groups against religious groups. From the foregoing, religious conflict can be regarded as a precursor to religious crisis. Religious crisis can be described as the threat or actual implementation of acts which have potential capacity to inflict physical, emotional or psychological injury on a person or a group of persons for religious ends.

The categorical Imperative, formulated by philosopher Immanuel Kant, is a fundamental principle in his ethical philosophy. It consists of the idea that one should act according to maxims (personal principles or rules) that could universally be applied without contradiction. In other words, an action is morally permissible if its underlying principle could be a universal law applicable to everyone.

Kant presented different formulations of the categorical Imperative, one being the Principle of Universal Law, which emphasizes the idea of treating others as ends in themselves rather than as means to an end. Another formulation is the Formula of Humanity, emphasizing the importance of respecting and promoting the inherent value and dignity of each individual. The categorical Imperative serves as a guide for moral reasoning, encouraging individuals to consider the moral worth of their actions beyond personal inclinations or desires, and to uphold principles that could be universally embraced.

Religious Conflicts in Nigeria

Religious conflicts in Nigeria have deep historical roots, often involving tensions between Muslims and Christians. The conflicts are sometimes so intense that they have turned into wars in different parts of the country, and they range from the Kano revolt (1980), Bulunktu Bizarre (1982), Kastina crises (1999), Samfara conflict,

Kaduna revolt, Bauchi crises and Sokoto (1999). More recent examples are the Jos crises and the current conflict by Boko Haram against Christians and moderate Muslims. These disputes are influenced by factors such as political issues, economic disparities, and regional differences. In recent years, incidents of violence and discrimination have escalated, raising concerns about the need for sustainable solutions to promote religious harmony and national unity. A literature review on religious crises in Nigeria reveals a complex interplay of historical, social, and economic factors contributing to tensions between religious communities.

Religious conflict is a disagreement or disunity between two groups or one religion and or different religious group that militate against coherent existence or practice within or without themselves. In another vein, religious conflict as a process of social interaction involving a struggle over claim its resources, power and status, beliefs and other preference and desire. Similarly, religious conflict is the disagreement, dispute or controversy in ideas or viewpoints held by two or more individuals, communities or religious groups.¹⁰ A religious crisis becomes violent if physical or emotional force is used to hurt or kill people. Ayandele also postulates that religious conflict is a universal phenomenon and it becomes problematic, open, confrontation and violent if appropriate measures are not taken to curtail it.¹¹ Of all the definitions above, it can be reasonably argued that conflict is disagreement that arises from different beliefs that is inevitable in organizations and groups in a society. This assertion is explicitly seen in the definition of Obodoechina that religious crisis can be defined as a great difficulty or danger which arises as a result of different beliefs in the existence of God or gods.¹² Thus, a religious conflict

10. Julius Adekunle, "Beyond Secularism: The Shadow of Religion on Nigerian Democracy," In *Religion in Politics: Secularism and Integration in Modern Nigeria*, edited by Julius Adekunle, 81-98 (New Jersey: Africa World Press. 2009), 87.
11. Emmanuel Ayandele, *External Influence on African Society: Africans in their 19th and 20th Centuries* (Ibadan: University Press, 1996), 53.
12. Uchechukwu Obodoechina, *The Lukewarm Attitude of Government encourages Religious Conflicts*, <http://www.unn.edu.ng/publications/files/28>.

is a conflict primarily caused or justified by differences in religious beliefs.

Several causes of religious violence in Nigeria have been identified by various scholars. An examination of various literature on the remote socio-political, economic and governance factors that drive religious violence in Nigeria does show, however, that negligence on the part of the government, oppression, domination, exploitation, victimisation, discrimination, marginalisation, nepotism and bigotry are some of the predisposing factors.¹³ In his treatise, Kwaja also identifies fragility of the institutions of the state in terms of their ability and capacity to manage diversity, corruption, rising inequality between the rich and poor, gross violation of human rights, environmental degradation, contestations over land, among others, as the underlying causes of violent conflicts in Nigeria since the enthronement of democratic rule in 1999.¹⁴

In his view, Dantibo believes the failure of governance is responsible for the recurring sectarian violence in Nigeria¹⁵ while Omotosho recognizes disparaging literature/publications by both Christian and Muslim elites as the major cause of religious violence in the country.¹⁶ Contributing to the debate, Achunike opined that "the wrong perception of other people's religion or faith, wrong religious orientation, the low literacy level of religious adherents, selfishness on the part of religious personalities, pervasive poverty, government involvement in religious matters, among others, are responsible for inter-religious conflicts in Nigeria."¹⁷ Nonetheless, it suffices to state that he identified poverty, corruption, non-

13. Salawu, "Ethno-religious Conflicts in Nigeria", 351.

14. Kwaja, "Strategies for Building State Capacity to Manage Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in Nigeria" 108.

15. Nathaniel Danjibo, *Islamic Fundamentalism and Sectarian Violence: The Maitatsine and Boko Haram Crisis in Northern Nigeria* (Ibadan: University of Ibadan Printing Press, 2017). <http://www.ifra-nigeria.org>

16. Omotosho, "Religious Violence in Nigeria- the causes and solutions", 54.

17. Hilary Achunike, "Religious Practices in Nigeria as Source of Social Conflict," *Journal of Liberal Studies* 12, no. 1 and 2 (2008): 286.

implementation of previous probe panel reports, impunity of past perpetrators of the violence, proliferation of preachers and worship "centres", provocative and inciting utterances, sensational journalism, political manipulation of religion, incitement in the social media and mobile telephony, among others, as key causes of religious violence in northern Nigeria.

Religious intolerance, fundamentalism and extremism are further drivers of religious violence in Nigeria because they form the base upon which other sources of religious violence rest. Religious intolerance has been defined as hostility towards other religions, as well as the inability of religious adherents to harmonize between the theories and the practical aspect of religion. It encompasses bigotry, which is the obstinate and intolerant devotion to one's opinions and prejudices, especially the exhibition of intolerance and animosity toward persons of differing beliefs.¹⁸ Furthermore, Gofwen asserts that religious intolerance has been identified as the major source of religious conflict/violence in all societies existing as long as the history of mankind, and permeating all forms of human civilizations, with attendant destructive tendencies.¹⁹

Religious intolerance and fundamentalism may not necessarily entail violence; however, it is the extreme manifestation of intolerance and fundamentalist ideals that embraces violence. Religious extremists are therefore religious fundamentalists, who take religious conservatism and intolerance to an unreasonable extent, by manifesting violence against those who hold contrary religious views. Religious extremists take the position that if others do not follow their ways, they will be damned. They abhor the preaching of other faiths and resort to violence to stop it. They insist that their religious doctrines must be universally entrenched by brute force, while the political, social and economic systems must

18. Robert Baird and Stuart Rosenbaum, Stuart. *Hatred, Bigotry, and Prejudice: Definitions, Causes and Solutions* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1999), 65

19. Rotgak Gofwen, *Religious Conflicts in Northern Nigeria and Nation Building: The Throes of Two Decades, 1980–2000* (Kaduna: Human Rights Monitor, 2004), 44.

conform to their religious tenets. Religious extremism does not admit of any compromise with social change, particularly that which contradicts religious orthodoxy.

Kant's Moral Theory

The compendium of Kant's moral philosophy is found in his famous works such as *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, and *Critique of Practical Reason*. *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) can be regarded as the *prima facie* of his moral philosophy where he laid bare the core concepts and principles of his moral theory. *The Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) shows how we can think in the way in the appropriate manner while *The Metaphysics of Morals* (1797) highlights specific rules of reasoning.

According to Kant, everyone possesses the faculty of reason which gives a common-sense morality. Thus, he argues from common-sense morality to the supreme principle of morality will yield the supreme principle of morality which he calls the categorical imperative. The categorical imperative thus invariably becomes a yardstick for the evaluation of actions. This becomes incredibly vital to the discourse in this research as the actions undertaken by extremists during conflicts comes under the scrutiny of moral law, the good will, action from the sense of duty, the formula of humanity and other crucial concepts of Kant's moral philosophy. While this discussion will be undertaken in the next section, this section will nonetheless explore Kant's views on the faculty of reason, the good will, notion of duty, his conception of human freedom and his categorization of the imperatives in a bid to have a grasp of Kant's ethical formulation.

At the heart of Kant's moral philosophy is a conception of reason. The faculty that allows us to select our actions on the basis of principles, and that allows us to act from a sense of duty is reason. According to him, we need reason in order to have a

good will.²⁰ This implies that reason is the bedrock for the possession of the good will. According to Kant, reason is a preserve of all rational beings and as a result, every individual has a common-sense morality. Moreover, according to him reason is practical, is independent of any empirical conditions lying in the senses and feeling and is capable of motivating our actions.

In Kant's terms, a good will is a will whose decisions are wholly determined by moral demands or, as he often refers to this, by the moral law.²¹ Kant's analysis of morality began with the thought that the only thing good without qualification is a "good will". The idea of a good will is an important commonsense touchstone to which Kant returns throughout his works. The basic idea, as Kant describes it is that what makes a good person good is his possession of a will that is in a certain way determined by, or makes its decisions on the basis of the moral law. The value of a good will thus cannot be that it secures certain valuable ends, whether of our own or of others. Indeed, since a good will is good under any condition, its goodness must not depend on any 'condition' that may be obtained. Not qualities like courage, resolution or perseverance: these can be harmful if the will is not good. Not wealth, health or the like, because these could lead to pride unless a good will checked that tendency. But a good will has a clear value in itself, regardless of circumstances.²²

Thus, the good will is esteemed higher than any form of inclination, intuition or, even instincts. The good will is good in every situation and from all perspectives and its goodness is not defined by its relations to any end or persons or object neither is the good will good by virtue of what it accomplishes. It is necessarily good, is an embodiment of goodness and is always good through its act of willing alone.

20. Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, edited and translated by Christopher Bennet, Joe Saunders and Robert Stern (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 395.

21. Henry Allison, *Kant's Theory of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1990), 44.

22. Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 395.

Hypothetical and Categorical Imperatives

An imperative can be defined in simple terms as a command. It is a statement that expresses instructions on what should be done. Kant went further to classify imperatives into hypothetical and categorical imperatives. A hypothetical imperative is a command that also applies to us in virtue of our having a rational will, but not simply in virtue of this. It requires us to exercise our wills in a certain way given we have antecedently willed an end. A hypothetical imperative is thus a command in a conditional form. The hypothetical imperative is a rule which is conditional.²³

Unlike the hypothetical imperative, the categorical imperative is not conditional. Kant holds that the fundamental principle of our moral duties is a categorical imperative. It is an imperative because it is a command addressed to agents who could follow it but might decide against. It is categorical in virtue of applying to us unconditionally, or simply because we possess rational wills, without reference to any ends that we might or might not have. It does not, in other words, apply to us on the condition that we have antecedently adopted some goal for ourselves. A categorical imperative, on the other hand, unconditionally demands performance of an action for its own sake. Constrained by the principle of universalizability, the practical reason of any rational being understands the categorical imperative to be binding on all rational agents. Kant defines the categorical imperative as the following: I ought never to act except in such a way that I could also will that my maxim should become a universal law.²⁴

Kant proposed three formulations of the categorical imperative. The first formulation states that an action is only morally permissible if every agent could

23. Ayo Fadahunsi, "Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperative," In *Fundamental Theories and Issues in Ethics*, edited by Olaoluwa Mabola and Ebun Oduwole, 44-51 (Ibadan: Ben-El Books, 2010), 47

24. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, Translated by Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 402

adopt the same principle of action. This is called the Formula for the Universal Law of Nature, which states that one should, “act as if the maxim of your action were to become by your will a universal law of nature.”²⁵ That is, each individual agent regards itself as determining, by its decision to act in a certain way that everyone (including himself/herself) will always act according to the same general rule in the future. The second formulation of the categorical imperative is the Formula of Humanity, which Kant arrives at by considering the motivating ground of the categorical imperative. Because the moral law is necessary and universal, its motivating ground must have absolute worth.²⁶ The third formulation of the categorical imperative is the principle of autonomy. The Principle of Autonomy is, “the principle of every human will as a will universally legislating through all its maxims.”²⁷

Kant's Categorical Imperative as a Panacea to Religious Crisis in Nigeria

Immanuel Kant had argued that the supreme principle of morality is a standard of rationality that he called the categorical imperative. He felt it as an objective, rationally necessary and unconditional principle that we must always follow despite any natural desires or inclinations we may have to the contrary. This argument was based on his striking doctrine that a rational will must be regarded as autonomous, or free, in the sense of being the author of the law that binds it. Kant presented different formulations of the categorical imperative, one being the Formula of Universal Law, which emphasizes the idea of treating others as ends in themselves rather than as means to an end. Another formulation is the Formula of Humanity, emphasizing the importance of respecting and promoting the inherent value and dignity of each individual while the third formulation of the categorical imperative is the Idea of the will of every rational being as a will that legislates universal law. But what is the

25. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 421.

26. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 429

27. Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 432.

relevance of Kantian ethics in addressing religious turbulence in Nigeria?

A critical analysis of Kantian ethics reveals that it can be a framework to adopt in stemming the tide of religious crises in Nigeria. With the tenet of the categorical imperative which emphasizes universality of actions, it follows that before religious adherents embark on killing spree in the name of fanaticism, they should think if they would want such to be a universal phenomenon. Also, they should decide if they would want their friends, relatives and family members to be killed in the name of religion. If not, they should not turn violent and begin to kill fellow humans in the name of religion. In similar vein, Kant's ethics talks about the good will which he says is good in itself and at all times and every religion talks about being good to others and invariably loving everyone. This is a point of correlation between Kant's ethical formulation and religion, that is possessing the good will and being always good towards others. If this is the case, it means that adoption of the formulations of Kantian ethics will help us adopt good will and be good to others always.

Kant's ethical formulation talks about the cruse of humanity that is, being humane. Being humane is to grasp the essence of humanity and treat every human well. Violent religious conflicts break the code of humanity as humans are killed, tortured, displaced from their homes and suffer emotional, psychological pains. Thus, religious crises that results from religious conflicts have negative effects on humanity but the adoption of the principles of Kant's moral philosophy is a way to curb the excesses of religious violence against humanity. More so, Kantian ethics talks about treating humans with respect. Kant's ethics can be a solution to incessant crises because if adopted as a framework for evaluating our actions and activities, we will discover that everyone irrespective of religion deserves respect as a human and their choice of religion should be respected. With this in mind, quarrels over choice of religion will be minimized and eventually fizzle out in the country. Vital to this discourse is the notion of duty which summarily holds that an action done out of duty is one done out of respect for the moral law. An important moral law is the

preservation of lives. Every rational being is obligated to preserve human lives, thus any action undertaken against this preserve is one that contradicts the moral law and one not done out of duty. This cogently suggests that directives/commandments/instructions issued by 'certain' religious leaders, irrational political actors and any other individual to followers to kill, main or destroy opposing religions adherents are not of duty, lack virtue and a negation of the moral law.

Another dimension to this discourse is that respect for everyone will also translate to respect for the religious dogmas and creed of all religions in the country. Thus, Muslims will respect Christian doctrines and vice-versa as well as both religions respecting the beliefs of indigenous, traditional religion. And if every religion and its adherents respect the doctrine of other religions, religious conflicts and by extension, religious crises will be eliminated and issues relating to which religion is better, superior and with more followers will no longer occur in the country.

Ultimately, respect for beliefs of other religions will lead to tolerance among various religious groups and among Christians, Muslims, traditionalists and adherents of other religions. The religious faithful in Nigeria should, therefore, realize the fact that religious tolerance and harmony are both legally sanctioned and socially inevitable, as the world can never be composed of one religion or culture. Accordingly, whereas every religious group has the right to uninhibited religious practice, this must be done with commensurate or reciprocal respect for the rights of other faithful to practise their own religious traditions; provided that such does not constitute any derogation to the right of others to observe their own faith.

Another way Kant's ethics can be a solution to the challenge of religious crisis in Nigeria is through its concept of freewill. According to Kant, man is an autonomous being with the rational ability to make choices. In fact, it is the possession of this rational, autonomous will that makes him a moral agent. Freedom to make choices is one of the philosophical attributes of man, thence everyone has the liberty to choose

whatever to believe in without infringing on others' choice. Moreover, as Akintona puts it, every religion has the right to worship the kind of God it believes provided it does not infringe other people's rights.²⁸ As a result, each individual should be tolerant of the choice of religion made by others and also tolerate the conception of God by other religions. This is because everyone is a free agent with the power to make choices deemed fit as long as they don't affect humanity negatively.

Conclusion

An examination of the implications of various religious crises in Nigeria will reveal what the nation has lost. Hundreds of thousands of lives have been lost, properties worth billions of Naira destroyed, homes destroyed, several thousands of people have been displaced and so many other devastating effects. In places where religious violence erupts, fears of reprisal attacks loom leading to further fear and insecurity. Also, the economies of such states or communities are affected as people are unable to go about their economic activities and so on and so forth. Feelings of mistrust, suspicions and revenge also reign in such situations. Economic development and societal well-being can only be achieved in an environment where multi-culturalism and multi-religiosity are tolerated and guaranteed. Religious diversity should not constitute a barrier to human relations and development; rather it should be a tool or resource for national development. The religious faithful in Nigeria should, therefore, realize that religious tolerance and harmony is not only rationally sanctioned but socially acceptable, as the world can never be composed of one religion or culture. Accordingly, whereas every religious group has the right to uninhibited religious practice, this must be done with commensurate or reciprocal respect for the rights of other individuals to practise their own religious traditions; provided that such does not constitute any derogation to the right of others to observe their own faith.

28. Emmanuel Ola Akintona, "Religious Crisis and the Clash of Absolutes: A Note on Religious Tolerance," In *Readings in Philosophy: Problems and Issues*, edited by Samuel Ade-Ali and Emmanuel Akintona, 13-28. (Lagos: Triumph Publishers, 2015), 23.

One viable means of achieving this development and curbing religious violence in Nigeria is by adopting Kant's ethics as a moral compass to guide our activities and make it a template to evaluate actions, especially on religious matters. If Nigerians adopt the moral philosophy of Kant as a moral guide and evaluator, Nigerians will adopt the formula of humanity, be tolerant, be duty-bound to the moral law, attach dignity to human lives, respect fellow countrymen, treat them with respect and treat them as ends and not means to an end. Moreover, the good will which is good in itself will be a beacon unto everyone and illuminate our actions such that each individual will be concerned only about doing good to others.

More importantly is the fact that religion ought to be a tool of social harmony and cohesion; a platform for achieving development in various strata of the society. When used in the right context, it engenders moral development, societal growth and national development but if used to the contrary, retrogressive destruction is inevitable. More so, religious growth can only flourish in a society in a space where love, tolerance and mutual respect for all religions and is sacrosanct.

In essence, imbibing the formulations of the categorical Imperative to the religious crisis in Nigeria will help foster a moral framework that transcends religious boundaries, emphasizing shared humanity and principles that can contribute to a more harmonious and inclusive society.

Conclusively, Kant's ethical formulation proffers a plausible way of curbing the ills of religious conflicts and creating an atmosphere of love, respect, dignity and tolerance among religious groups and adherents in Nigeria. The principles aforementioned are components of Kantian ethics, hence the argument that Kant's ethical formulation is a viable solution to religious conflicts in Nigeria.

Recommendations

From the discussions in this research, this essay suggests the following recommendations as plausible mechanisms that can drive the entrenchment of the

formulations of the categorical imperative as a framework to help combat the challenge of religious conflict in Nigeria.

1. An orientation scheme be set-up in educational, religious, political, social institutions and organizations to teach the formulations of the categorical imperative.
2. Religious leaders and followers must be critical, analytical and unassuming in their interpretations of religious beliefs, creeds, dogmas etc.
3. The veil of dogmatic devotion and followership should be subjected to ethical evaluations via the Kantian philosophical model.
4. The formulations of the categorical imperative be conspicuously displayed in public places, educational, religious social 'centres'.
5. The media should consistently echo the formulations of the categorical imperative as this will create a repeated consciousness in the minds of Nigerians.
6. Every Nigerian should be taught the dictates of the moral law and the obligation to act only maxims that preserve the sanctity of human lives, respect for all, preservation of human lives and love for humanity.

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