Religious Fundamentalism and Problem of Normlessness: Issues in Value System in Nigeria

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GJHSS-C Classification: *FOR Code: 220315, 220405, 220407*

RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM AND PROBLEM OF NORMLESSNESS ISSUES IN VALUE SYSTEM IN NIGERIA

Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:

Religious Fundamentalism and Problem of Normlessness: Issues in Value System in Nigeria

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I.   Introduction

The undercurrent of religious fundamentalism around the world has brought many countries on their knees. Nigeria, Africa's most populous, multi-ethnic Black Country around the world is trapped in the explosiveness of this new dynamism of religious fundamentalism. A decade after the United States experience of the 9/11, 2001 has demonstrated increasing transformation of nation-states into clash of civilizations. The crisis has informed widespread religious fundamentalism in post - Bin Laden's era. In Africa, particularly Nigeria, the situation present itself to be exacerbated by defect in or the inability of indigenous cultures, norms and values to guide our world view, most especially now that religious values are crisscrossing ethnic and racial boundaries with catastrophic implications on group relations world-wide.

It is no doubt that religious fundamentalism in Nigeria has assumed a destructive dimension creating problem of normlessness. The consequence of fundamentalist dynamism has created scepticism and insecurity among Nigerians, which does not only occur at the intra-group, but also at the inter-group level in the country. The increasing tide of religious fundamentalism present Nigeria as a country in dilemma of normlessness or in a state of anomie informed by the dominance of foreign cultures and civilizations, such as the Arab/Islamic and Western/Christian norms and traditions. This paper discusses within the context of value system, religious fundamentalism and the problems of normlessness in Nigeria.

II.   Definition of Terms

a)   What is Religion and Religious fundamentalism?

Conceptualizing religion makes an arduous task. There is no single definition that can adequately buttress the concept – religion. Otite and Ogionwo (2006) cited Emile Durkheim as defining religion as "…a unified system of beliefs and practices related to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unites into one single moral community." Wikipedia (2009) presents religion as a system of social coherence based on a common group of beliefs or attitudes concerning an object, person, unseen being, or system of thought considered to be supernatural, sacred, divine or highest truth, and traditions and rituals associated with such belief or system of thought.

Stephen (1999) cited Paul Gifford as pointing out to the role of religion from a more general perspective as thus:

> A religion provides definition, principles of judgment and criteria of perception. It offers reading of the world, of history, of justice and of ultimate truth. Religion limits or increases the conceptual tools available, or channels them, and withdraws certain issues from inquiry. It inculcates a particular way of perceiving, expressing and responding to reality. Religion can legitimize new aspirations, new relations and a new social order. Every religion involves struggles to conquer, monopolize or transform the systematic structures which order reality.

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From the foregoing, given religious dynamics, religious discourse is a very sensitive issue, such that at a slightest provocation, it becomes transformed into violence. The infallibility of religious conviction, Haynes (1999) argues that religion can generate potent danger because:

a) Religion is focused on the absolute and unconditional and as a result can adopt totalitarian characteristics.

b) The monotheistic religions – may have especially difficulty trying to distinguish between, on the one hand, claims of the absolutely divine and, on the other, the traditions and history of human existence.

c) When claiming both absolute and exclusive validity, religious conviction can lead to intolerance, over-zealous proselytisation and religious fragmentation. Religious exclusiveness may also be hostile to both pluralism and liberal democracy.

d) Religion can increase aggressiveness and the willingness to use violence. Added symbolic value can be an aspect of religious conviction, deriving from profane motivation and aims that become holy objectives.

e) Leaders within faith-based organizations may seek to legitimize abuses of power and violation of human rights in the name of religious zeal. Because such leaders are nearly always men, there can also in addition be specific gender issue and women's rights concerns.

Religion can therefore legitimize evil, especially when religious zealots take on the perception that their own religion or a particular religious sect is more spiritually superior to others. They could harp on some particular verses that appeal to them to galvanize support at both domestic and international level in order to assert their aspirations which often become masquerading in the spirit of violence directed at the state. This is central to the evocation of religious fundamentalism and extremism world-wide.

Religious fundamentalism is a reactionary or revolutionary approach to circumstances caused by forces of modernity which is the promoter of religious and cultural liberalism. It is a quest expressed for the return to norm. Central to religious fundamentalism is therefore the expression of resistance against deviation from pre-existing norms that governs a particular community. In modern times, fundamentalist movements have found expression in the use of religion as instrument of socio-political and economic assertion for change. Religious fundamentalism which is an aspect of expressed fundamentalism, Danjibo (n/d) while citing Komonchak, Collins and Lane (1993: 411) argues that fundamentalism from which the concept is associated with religion, is an eclectic word viewed from three perspectives. These perspectives are:

(i) from a cognitive understanding where the word is associated with a closed personality type that expresses exclusivity, particularity, literality and moral rigour; (ii) from a cultural theological framework where the word expresses opposition to religious and cultural liberalism in defence of orthodoxy and religious traditions; (iii) from a social movement perspective, fundamentalism denotes organizational and ideological uniqueness from other types of religious movements.

Fundamentalism which Alao (n/d) referred as 'radicalisation' emerges from a number of issues which he identified thus:

a) Radicalisation is a process, not an event, as it is the dynamics formed by the complex interaction of multiple events, actors, relationship, beliefs and institutions;

b) The "non-conventionality" of the process means the resort to alternative behaviour, attitude, values and moral standards that are diametrically opposed to the status-quo;

c) It is a phenomenon that operates at multiple levels – individual (micro), group (meso) and societal (macro).

d) It is a social reality that transcends different spheres of life, even though in the context of this study, we are limiting it to religion.

e) It is a process that emphasizes change, which means the transformation of socio-economic, cultural and political values, institutional practices and beliefs systems in a given context –individual, group or society; and

f) It is underlined by belief and value systems, which are the prime or active conviction about certain principles, world views and visions about human and societal existence.

Religious fundamentalists beacons their approach on the ultimate "authority of the scripture and the necessity of righteous living" and "on right doctrine and the necessity of organized warfare against the forces of modernism" (See, Danjibo Ibid), perceiving that societal changes caused by modernism is at the core of social disorder and deconstruction of required social solidarity and cooperation that are necessary for generating stability. Suffice to note is that religious fundamentalism as it is seen in Nigeria today, is a product of clash between cultural forces which are inherently antagonizing within an expressed pre-existing cultural space. Beyond its expression which turns out violently, the socio-economic and political realities in Nigeria are also aggravating the expression of religious fundamentalism and are central to the problem of normlessness in the Nigerian society.

b) *What is Normlessness?*

Normlessness is a concept which refers to *anomie* is attributed to Emile Durkheim as the founder of

the sociological concept (Deflem 1989:627). Anomie is a breakdown of social norms and it is a condition where norms no longer control the activities of members in the society. In other words, it is an environmental state where society fails to exercise adequate restrain over the goals and desires of societal membership (see Durkheim 1951: 241-276, Dunman 2003). From an individual standpoint, Balanchandran (2007:158) argues that anomie represents situation where "the individual feels that norms have lost their regulatory power." The individual cannot find clear rules that should regulate and direct his passion and as such cannot find their place in the society.

The changing condition that comes with the absence of norms performing regulatory function results to dissatisfaction, conflict and deviance, which are products of the "social facts" referred by Durkheim as environmental causation of different patterns of suicide rate (Durkheim 1938:110). This could be caused by social inequality, political marginality, the lack of integration among other factors. He contended that it is not the state of individual consciousness that causes anomie but factors that precedes it.

Merton (1957) cued from Durkheim to argue that the individual happiness and well-being depend on the ability of the society to impose external limits on the potentially limitless passion and appetites that characterizes human nature in general. Bernburg et-al (2002:729) posits that people behave based on shared definition and traditions that provides them with sensitive mental values and means of achieving them. The moment these values and sanctions are altered the result becomes anomie. Merton reiterates Durkheim's postulation that anomie is a product of the society even though it is not healthy to its survival. He mentioned that central to the problem of anomie is the poor social structures and organization of society.

Bernburg et-al (2002:733) corroborated that "in pre-modern societies, through the principles of reciprocity or redistribution, the economic system was a function of social organization. 'Custom and law, magic and religion co-operated in inducing the individual to comply with rules of behavior which, eventually, ensured his functioning in the economic system'." In a modern society, the situation is different, the economic system is not embedded or regulated by other social institutions, but centrally by other social institutions such as the market economy system, which society supposed to regulate. This is a major factor causing anomie in modern society with deep-seated religious-sectarian and ethnic diversities like Nigeria.

III. Theoretical Framework of Analysis

Religious politics and manipulation that has assumed global dimension, resulting to widespread fundamentalism in recent times is consistent with Karl Marx's (1818-1883) theory and philosophy on religion.

One pertinent view of Karl Marx on religion is that "religion is the opium of the masses." According to him, religion is an expression of material realities and economic injustice. Thus, problems associated with religion are ultimately problems in society. Religion is not the disease, but merely a symptom. It is used by oppressors to make people feel better about the distress they experience due to being poor and exploited. He contended that:

> Religious suffering is at one and the same time the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people. (Introduction: Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right).

Central to religious convolution are the elites, whom Karl Marx referred as "oppressors of the oppressed" and seeker of economic control that provides the social means of livelihood. One basic claim of Marxism is that the economy is a major and decisive factor that determines the movement of other factors in social means of productive relations, but again is being redirected by religion to meet new ends. Religion has the will power of rationalizing relationships at individual, group, national and international levels, to the extent that the hegemony of the ruling classes is sustained on the fringe of religious manipulation; a process which enhances social inequality. It is in this context that Jackreece and Nsirim-Worlu (2009:135) stated:

> …religion which is an element of the superstructure is influenced by the substructure. Religion on its own exerts tremendous pressure on the economy and political system as a weapon employed by the ruling class to construct an ideological expression of its outlook on life in order to maintain its hold unto power.

This is a reflex to Marx perception of religion as "a false consciousness; a product of men, the product of those in power, those who control productive process" (see Jeckreece and Nsirim-Worlu 2009). In the modern world, religion is central and in many situations, is the primary force that motivates and moves humans and, it is a characteristic for which many fight and die for.

From the foregoing, Karl Marx understood the efficacy of religion toward pacification and aggravation of one's identity both at individual and group level. Religion, which he considers man to be the creator, is again the victim of his creation. It is in this context that he called for the abolition of religion. The bases of which he identified as the justification of social inequality which places the poor at the gate of the rich while the rich is in his castles.

Although, Samuel Huntington (1993, 1996) cued from Marxism, he considered religion as an inescapable integral part of human cultures and civilizations as such it is a factor difficult to wish away in human society. He accept economic prominence as central in bipolarizing the world, but argue also that since the end of the cold war cultural identity formations would become the central factor – ethnicity and religion, but more to it is religion. This he said:

> It is my hypothesis that fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great division among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in the world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will be the battle lines of the future (Huntington 1993).

Huntington's assertion resembles the perspective of group theorist, which argues that the results of any form of conflict generates from groups constant search for political space and relevance. At this point, groups could be nation states which he identified as "powerful actors," sharing common civilization and acting against opposing civilization (for example, Arab world Vs the West), or groups with opposing civilizations in conflicting engagement, married together in a state formation. In Africa, Nigeria presents this mosaic experience.

What then informs a civilization? Huntington identified civilization to include common objective elements such as language, history, religion, customs, institutions and self-identification of people. The most central element to his discourse is religion which, he argues that it has the capacity for directing people's "…different views on the relationship between God and man, the individual and the group, the citizen and the state, parents and children, husband and wife, as well as deferring views of relative importance on rights and responsibilities, liberty and authority, equality and hierarchy" (Huntington 1993:25). According to him, "even more than ethnicity, religion discriminates shapely and exclusively among people" by creating a sharp identity of "us" against "them", especially in a multiethnic and religious society.

Historically, the history of human existence has been that of colonization and re-colonization. More than two-third of the countries in Africa which represents Huntington's classification as "African civilization," has suffered colonization of Arab/Islamic and Western/Christian type at different historical epochs. Evidence abound that at different period of attempt to conquer African nation states, were met with stiff resistance marking continues struggle to protect indigenous civilization from adulteration. This can be referred as an act of fundamentalism.

This clash of civilizations now places the continent in a "state of normlessness," for example, the intermixing civilizations in Nigeria informed historically by imperialism, colonization and now globalization, explains the constancy of religious manipulation and fundamentalism. The elites through the use of instruments of globalization, colonizes the mind of religious adherents to aggravate religious driven fundamentalist movements. This is because religion provides the means for justifying elitist struggle for power and primitive accumulation that goes on between the governing and the non governing elites, while the mass population becomes expendables to serve their interests. This informs the rationale for the choice of Marx's and Huntington's theories as framework for engaging religious fundamentalism and problem of normlessness in Nigeria within the context of values system.

IV. Religion: Defining Norms and Value System in Pre-Colonial Nigeria

Nigeria, as it was throughout Africa was not unreligious as it may be presumed, before the continent was brought into permanent intercourse with Arab/Islamic and Western/Christian cultures and civilizations. To buttress this fact, Ekoko and Amadi (1989:110) have argued that:

> Long before the coming of Islam and Christianity the people who occupied the area of the present day Nigeria were not unreligious: A typical traditional society in the Nigeria area evolved religious strategies which ensured the survival of the group. Religious observances were the cornerstones of social norms, hopes, expectations and existence.

Africa, because of the manifest religiosity exhibited by Africans, earned for herself the primus classification as "notoriously religious" or "incurably religious" (Quarcoopome, 1957:11). Religion was therefore in its primus a cultural formation developed by the people to understand themselves, interpret their world and to pursue societal collective goals. Religion was indeed a woven cultural fabric of life and a great moving force that guided people's behaviour, interaction and action both horizontally and vertically. Ajayi (1968:386-387) concurred that:

> Religion . . . was the cement of goodwill and fear that kept the family as a unit and the village as distinctive community. The welfare of the individual, the family, village or larger community was believed to depend on the members severally and collectively maintaining the right relationship with the ancestors. There were beliefs, of course, about philosophy of the community, the proper relationships between the gods, between them and

man, man and woman, the living and the death, beliefs about the mysteries of life, sickness and death, good and ill fortune, and so on. But there was really no theology in the sense of dogmatic tenets. The traditional religion was an attitude of mind, a way of explaining the world, a way of life. It was expressed in laws and customs hallowed by time and myth as being essential for the well-being not just the individual, but of the whole community.

To demonstrate the validity of the foregoing assertion, Kalu (1989:11) asserts in this context that:

The pre-colonial period from the mythical to historical times, was dominated by a religious world view. Little or no distinction existed between the profane sacred dimensions of life. Thus, all activities and instruments of governance and survival were clothed in religion and ritual, language and symbolism.

This goes to explain that political, economic and social activities in the Nigeria area located their definition in religion (see, Ekoko and Amadi 1989:110). Therefore, social means of production and productive relations were directed by religion to meet the biosocial needs of the society. Nnoli (1978:108) asserts:

…during the pre-colonial times, the extended family system, with its emphasis on welfare and social responsibility rather than individualism, and its ethic of an individual as his brother's keeper, is common to all Nigerian people… production was organized to satisfy definite biosocial needs rather than being dictated by the desire for expanded production of private capital.

Religion was cardinal to the formation of norms and value system in Nigeria; norms and values in Nigeria were founded on honesty, hard work, trust, good name, selfless services, and integrity among others. These value systems in pre-colonial Nigeria informed the social order, social solidarity and social control and cooperation enjoyed by the community. In fact, they were forces that brought the entire society into a state of equilibrium. Human social security was guaranteed and provided for, and the concept of 'do unto others what you would have them do to you' was highly observable. These illustrious virtues in the pre-colonial Nigeria were enhanced on the conceptual construct of the "supernatural being," therefore the concept of "God" in African traditional societies is not recent as other may claim. According to Fatokun (2005:132) the concept of "God" was understood and appreciated similar to those of Christianity and Islam before they arrived Nigeria.

In the Nigeria area "God" was variously admonished as *Alusi*, the invisible creation of the *Chukwu* and deities such as the *Mmuo, Uwa* and *Ike-*

Mmadu (Onwueyogwu, 1989) among the Igbo people. The Bini call him *Osanubua* (Creator of the world, sky and earth, and of life and death); The Yoruba call him *Odumare* (Almighty, Supreme), *Olurun* (Owner or Lord of Heaven) *Eleda* (the Creator) (see Fatokun 2005:132). The Hausa call him *Ubangiji* (the Supreme, Alpha and Omega); the Kuteb call him *Rimam* (God, the Supreme) and Kaka called him *Nwi* (Almighty God) (Lenshie, 2010). These given names were later adopted for the God(s) of newly found religions. Despite the differential identity given to God by these ethnic nationalities, the theological understanding of "God" was largely the same. There was the central belief that He is the most powerful in heaven and on earth and is capable of doing everything that men could require (see Idowu 1962:40-42). This informed why the worship of "God" in pre-colonial society was highly emotional unlike the stereotyped European form of worship (Fatokun, 2005).

Nzemwi (1985:72) systematically demonstrated that the traditional worship was accompanied by a psycho-cosmic drama, dance and ritual making carried out collectively to expunge evil and misfortune of each passing year, and to also call for good tidings to rain down blessing on the society. Some of the psycho-cosmic display was evident in northern and southern Nigeria, now dominated by Islam and Christianity. These spates of cultural tradition are still prevalent in some ethnic communities, though no longer in their strict form. The *Igber* festival among the Tiv; *Nkatso* festival among the Kaka; *Suwah* festival among the Mambilla; *Mihu* festival among the Jenjo and the *Kuchichep* festival among the Kuteb (see Lenshie 2010:32); the *Obatala* festival and *Agemo* cult in Ijebu, *Amunna* possession phenomenon in Ngwa, Igbo and *Bori* festival among the Hausa and the widely reported *Mbari* festival of southern Nigeria (Nzemwi 1985:72-74) were efficacious for ceremonious worship of "God" for the manifold blessings and fortune received and those yet to come.

As a central factor in African culture and tradition, religion was the bases for instructions and sanctions. Tradition provided the bases for developing categorical norms (norms that performed the function of command laws or guiding rules which must not be offended) and conditional norms (norms that provided sanctions that came to be enforced against violation of categorical norms). It suffices to note that violation was instantly punished using evocative tenuous process, and since "men felt over powered by a force greater than them" (Giddens 1971:110), they were consciously and unconsciously guided to keep to societal norms and values that govern them.

Some people may claim that this was an expression of religious fundamentalism, of course it was to some extent, but it was not confused by forces that were external from the society. The definition of behaviour, action and inaction and the solution to

society problems were expressed in laws and customs hallowed by time and myth that ensured the well-being of the entire community (Ajayi 1968:387). Therefore, the expression of religious fundamentalism and problem of normlessness as it is experienced in Nigeria today was to an extent absent in the traditional past. The function of culture and civilization contacts and clash rooted in colonial domination of hitherto pre-colonial societies and their pre-existing religion at different historical epochs provided the bases for the explosiveness of current fundamentalism.

V. Colonialism, Religious Fundamentalism and Problem of Normlessness in Nigeria

In most social science literature, colonialism has been associated with Western domination in Africa, but before Western colonialists arrive the continent there have existed a form of imperial or worst still, a form of colonialism led by Arabs and their accolades. Central to their quest was the need to expand territorial boundaries for Islamic religious dominance. Colonialism in Africa is not recent; most conquests that were aimed at territorial expansion, empire building or exploitation of human and material capital, whether directly or indirectly constituted colonial domination in any epoch (see Lenshie 2010a). One major attribute of colonialism in any society is the fostering of significant change in the cultural system of the society and their transformation to meet new aspirations. Colonialism changed significantly the way the people in the Nigeria area think and react to issues that affect them. This was achieved through a gradual piecemeal process to a masquerading-violent process.

The Arab/Islamic Fulani led form of colonial domination conquered most of northern parts of Nigeria. Before these areas were brought under domination there have existed various state formations. Barkindo et al (1989:1) noted that they were so numerous that it was impossible to enumerate all of them. The people of these communities had cultural norms and value that adequately guided their behaviour and actions. Their domination was not without intrigues. They adopted a gradual-piecemeal process; exerting influence on the ruling classes and later, adopted a masquerading-violent strategy to assert dominance over the pre-existing state formations in Nigeria.

The colonization was disguised in religious revolution. Ubah (1985:227) and Al-Masih (1991:36-40) posits that the Arabs and Barbers were said to be instrumental to the expansion of the religion. In Nigeria, the Fulani were the precursors of the crusade. Ubah (1985:228) citing example with the Hausa stated that:

…Hausa knew no Mulism until the second half of the fourteenth century when Islam was introduced by refugees from Mali. It has reached Kenem early because Chad region had commercial links with North Africa; it came to Hausaland late because until the fifteenth century this people did not participate in the trans-Saharan commerce, and it would appear that communication network between Kenem and Hausaland were late developing. From Kano and Katsina the new religion spread to other Hausa states, and it was further extended during the early nineteenth century revolution inspired largely by Fulani clerics and led by Uthman Danfodio.

Historians have offered different reasons for the Islamic domination, ranging from religious point of view to economic and political point of views. One basic fact about the revolution is that it expanded the frontiers of Islamic land and many states were brought into the community of believers through wars and exertion of influence by traders and missionaries (Ubah 1985:228, Barkindo et al 1989, Awu 2008:72-73). Other people who embraced Islam exploited social, political and economic grievances in their communities to wage war against their people, resulting not only to the purification of the faith, but also extended Islamic borders (see Ubah 1985:228, Burkhsh n/d).

Okafor (1986:69) argue in this context that "Islam started as a religion of the ruling classes with the kings as first converts. The chiefs and the civil administrators followed the kings in accepting Islam probably for the ease of wining his confidence and favour, and subsequently the religion was implemented as a state religion in the kingdom." Concurring to this assertion, Mohammed (1989:73) cited A.S. Balogun that "Islam began as a religion of aliens then became the religion of influential or ruling elites before it finally got accepted by the masses and become popular and later a militant religion."

According to Okwori (2003) the process saw development through which "people were raided and compelled to become Moslems apart from being decimated by the Jihadist for slave." For example, in the Hausaland the conquest marked the end of Hausa dynasties and brought about the emergence of the Sokoto Caliphate with the Fulani overlords taking the centre stage of the state administration. It suffices to note that the state formation was modelled after the early caliphate system of the Arabian Peninsula with Islam as the state religion (see Buah 1974, Lapidus 1990). International Crisis Group (2010) stressing the implication of the Fulani colonial domination, argues thus:

The Fulani rulers entrenched Islamic values and practices in most of the region. Although this was sometimes met with passive resistance from sections of the population, it was crucial to fostering a common culture that transcended ethnicity and held the caliphate together. Sharia was applied "more widely, and in some respects more rigidly … than anywhere else outside Saudi Arabia", and

indigenous religious practices, such as traditional Hausa ceremonies (Bori), were suppressed, or at least became less visible.

In the southern Nigeria, Western/Christian colonial dominance came with grave impact disarticulating people cultures and civilizations. The dominance was extended to the Middle Belt areas were Islam had no stronghold. Adebisi (1989:12-13) argued that Western colonialism denied the people cultural equality. They rejected and destroyed the socio-cultural fabric that cemented relationships in their respective society. In fact, their value system and traditional institutions were victims of colonial profligacy. This was ensured through the use of religious arm of colonialism, the Christian missionaries. Chinua Achebe's "Things Fall Apart" demonstrates profoundly the beginning of the problem of normlessness among the Igbo, following the arrival of the white man's religion, in essence, Christianity (see Achebe 1996).

Kalu (1985:129) further buttressed that British colonial domination prompted the spread of Christianity in the southern parts of the country and the pagan areas of the Middle Belt. They perpetuated cultural violence and attacked their religious shrines and glorified the legitimacy of the secular colonial frontiers as higher authorities manned by them and required that they should be respected as ordained by God. In this wise, indigenous political and economic systems of the society were practically changed, for example, the introduction of the courts, the warrant chiefs, the court messengers, force labour, attacks on shrines, secrete societies and other clubs, taxations and numerous interference with norms and customs of the people among others, attested to the Western colonial impunity on the social, economic and political systems of the pre-colonial societies in Nigeria.

As the virulent Christianization of these areas was going on, the colonialist on political and economic grounds in the context of divide and rule gimmicks, denied Christian missionaries the penetration into most parts of the north, where Islam had strong footing or where they were considered exclusive for Islamic frontier (Adebisi 1989:12-13, Okwori 2003). Despite granting the Emirs political voracious power to exercise hegemony over the ethnic natives in the north, the colonialists tactically altered profoundly that power and re-directed their focus of governance to meet the authority of Her Majesty, the Queen, vested on the Governor and the Resident Officers in Nigeria (see Sa'ad 1980). Okwori (2003) cited Afikpo to indicate the treachery of Western colonialism. He stated thus: "colonialism reinforced division between the north and the south by ensuring that two major competing religions become dominant".

Olukoshi and Agbu (1996:4) affirmed that this was partly a result of the colonial policy "…as it was important for the sustenance and prolongation of direct British rule as to the creation and maintenance of British neo-colonial influence" *(modification ours)*. Toward the end of colonial rule, Britain established Islam and Christianity in Nigeria as two dominant religions, with the Middle Belt as a battle ground for converts. Before their final departure they also ensured that several competing centres emerge along ethnic and religious lines, which became supervening in the post-colonial era among political elites struggling for state power in the primitive accumulation process.

VI. Post-Colonial Politics, Religious Fundamentalism and Problem of Normlessness in Nigeria

Nigeria emerged from the fetters of colonial rule in 1960 with influential competing centres. It is interesting to note that the Christianity and Islamic presence in Nigeria is more domineering than in any parts of the world (Alao n/d), courtesy of Arab/Islamic and Western/Christian Colonialism. The creation of Nigeria statehood saw the emergence of political elites, who emerged with abused perception about one another and national matters coloured by ethnic, regional and religious considerations, in the struggle for power and access to and control of resources (Olukoshi and Agbu 1996:77). The North-South divides further became reinforced through the use of ethno-religious identity politics (Ayam 2003). The implication was the corrosive relationship and animosity that did not only manifested among elites, but also involving innocent citizens who fail victims of their deceitful pursuits.

Politics at regional level which enjoyed considerable dominance of ethno-religious identity were major centres for aggravating divisive tendencies that was to be manifested in the 1980s. For example, the Eastern Nigeria which was Igbo-Christian dominated had bilateral relationship with the State of Israel, while the Northern Nigeria dominated by the Islamic Hausa-Fulani people, had bilateral relationship with countries in the Arab world, specifically the Saudi Arabia. In each of these regions, no single ethnic or religious minority group was allowed opportunity to emerge to any political relevance. As this was the major political character in the North and South-East regions, the South-West region have put the difference to cultural identity (Kukah 1999).

To foster the completion of *Islamization* in the Northern Nigeria, Kukah (1993) stated that the northern oligarchy established an Islamic organization - the Jamaatul Nasul Islam (JNI). Countervailing decision was taken by the Christians; they established the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) to contend the Islamic forces masquerading itself in the north and to ensure that the secular status of Nigeria was maintained. Okwori (2003) stated that Muslim elites developed new Islamic strategies which he referred to as "economic

jihad" to complete the *Islamization* mission. Religion became a boiling pot or a hot coal burning the lips of Nigerians. Ethno-religious and political mistrust became ensued, and partly explain most reasons for military intervention the country has suffered (see Ademoyega 1981, Kurfi 1983).

The problem became compounded in the 1980s, when there was the growing feelings among Christians that the Muslims in the north enjoyed disproportionate possession of political power and economic resources (Haynes 2009:65). The problem of normlessness became heightened in 1986, in the heart of structural adjustment crisis, when the country was dragged to join the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) (Olukoshi and Agbu 1996:83, Haynes 2009:65). Elaigwu (2005:18) have chronicled that the religious crisis of 1980s and those that subsequently followed were fostered by the militarization of Nigerians psyche; the result of which was wanton destruction of lives and property. Amidst the crises, the military became concentrated on the wanton pillage of state resources for personal gain. Okpeh (2008:108) noted that there were 27 major eruption of religious violence between 1980 and 2005 alone among Christians and Muslims and between sects within these major religions.

After military exit and the return to democratic rule, religion became the most single significant political issue in Nigeria (Korieh 2005). This was because for many people, the military had tinkered with the political landscape and have translated ethno-religious identity into forces for mobilizing sentiments (Lenshie 2010b:1). More than any period in Nigeria history; between 1999 and 2011 the country have experienced dozens of ethno-religious violent conflicts that have further eroded norms and values upon which Nigeria was founded. Haynes (2009:67) considering the explosiveness of religious tendencies, cited Ashafa and Wuye (199:1) as asserting that:

> Religion today, instead of serving as a source of healing sickness, hunger, and poverty, and stimulating tranquillity and peaceful co-existence among human beings, it is used to cause sadness. It is bringing pain instead of relief, hatred instead of love, division instead of unity, sadness instead of joy, discrimination and destruction instead of accommodation and development. This is especially true between some adherents of Islam and Christianity. Nigeria has its own share of this negative phenomenon. The ethno-religious conflict has become a matter so serious and devastating that it can now be seen as a harbinger of the danger of a crisis such as those that have engulfed the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda and Liberia.

The virulent nature of religion became more directed to the erosion of norms and values following the September 11, 2001 attack in the United States. In the north, the introduction of the shariah legal system in 2001 by the Zamfara state government saw the radical mobilization of radical Muslim sects to contest against the secular nature of Nigeria State (Mustapha 2004:270-271). Mamdani (2004) argued that this development emerged on the fringe of political Christianity; political Hinduism and political Judaism.

Halliday (1994:92-93) reiterated Mamdani's postulation that "the recent rise of Islamic politics in the states and popular movements of the Muslims world … is primarily a response to the perceived weakness and subjugation of the Islamic world, and is conceived with an internal regeneration". This explains the formation of radical Islamist such as the *Boko Haram, Kalare* and so on. Their objective for the struggle is the need to establish a Nigerian state base on Islamic theocracy where Shariah is held to be supreme (see Adesoji 2010:95-108, Danjibo n/d 1-21). More often, Nigeria has also witnessed within this period inter-sectarian clashes, for example, between Sunni and Shiite in Sokoto and Kano as inter religious crises also dominate in Jos-Plateau, Kaduna, Bauchi and Kano between Christian and Islamic zealots (Elavgwu 2005:18-29).

Obasi (2008:313) in his study "the role of religion on issues of conflict and peace" argued in this connection that: "religious killings and destruction of properties is not inherent in the nature of true religions. It is the aberration in the way religious practices are carried out. It is on the aberrations in religious practices that Karl Marx sees religion as the "opium of the people." One basic fact remains that despite religious explosiveness, it has continued to be supported by the elites. It is in this context that Karl Marx developed a hostile posture against religion, when he argued that religion is "directly supported by the ruling classes to further their interests and to justify social inequality" (Lenshie 2010a:20).

Elites in Nigeria sponsor Muslims for Hajj in Saudi Arabia and Christians to Jerusalem for pilgrimage in Israel. They go as tourists to see historical relics and come back unrefined. Most of them instead of becoming agents of positive change for promoting peace and unity, they become tools for tearing the country apart. This reflects the internal division the country has been going through since 1980. The enormous resources wasted in this venture would have impacted on the living condition of many Nigerians if they were properly channelled. The elites would not stop supporting religion, because the guise provides the means for exerting dominance over the poor and gullible population who benefits from the so-call gestures.

Electoral politics as from 1999 became religiously motivated and divided. It is on the fringe of religious division that the ascendancy of most unqualified politicians to different political positions at both local and national level was made possible. This process has continued to define the character of inter-

group relationship in the country. Tertiary institutions and in fact, our elementary and secondary schools have become major centres of religious recruitment and convolutions between Christian and Muslim radicals, which often engulf the communities outside the institutional environment.

The intent for religious manipulation in Nigeria is informed by inability on the part of the elites to keep to the social contract with their people, to provide them with the basic human security, but have rather moved into the terrain of tyranny and became buried deeply in brutal drunkenness with power. Alawusa (2011:13) succinctly argue thus:

…the present crops of politicians have failed to make the desired and necessary impact on the lives of the citizenry; they have failed to discharge their constitutional obligations in the sense that they have proved incapable of mitigating the long sufferings of the ordinary people. More annoying is the fact that in spite of the huge amount of money that accrued from the sale of crude oil, especially in the past decade, the people are left to fend for themselves without basic social needs. No water, no electricity, no quality education for our children, no good motorable roads and no standard health care services as our hospitals are nothing more than glorified mortuaries.

These problems are at the core of normlessness in the country, as the culture of "what is mine belongs to the community" has been replaced by brazened individuality and corruption which has become a norm in Nigeria. It is the major reason for outright religious fundamentalism as many people experienced in most countries across the world.

VII. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we try to demonstrate that religion in the traditional society played the regulatory role, because it was the moral power superior to individual and it alone was necessary to stipulate laws and to set the point beyond which man's passion must not go (see Deflem 1989:628). The arrival of Islam and Christianity akin by colonial domination, through abrupt transitions, the society power was disrupted to the extent that it became incapable of regulating man's passion. The result of this is anomie that has dominated Nigeria society today. We also pointed out that the process is further enhanced by elite's manipulation of religious identity. This is because they have failed to respond adequately to the needs of their respective constituencies on which they emerged. The thrush pushed forward by the paper is a call for return to indigenous value system which emphasizes good morals such as honesty, hard work, trust, good name, selfless services, integrity, transparency and probity among others. The bases of it all are that governance and inter-relationship should be guided and directed by the demands of the society which ascribed to the identified principles of good morals. The way the people behaved, dressed and comport themselves in the society should be evident by the role of indigenous value system in the society (see, Fatokun 2005:142). Parrinder (1949:178) citied in Fatokun (2005:142) stated that our moral command was more like the Ten Commandments, with exception of the first and second, such that murder, adultery, theft, covetousness among others was contended. African social and moral ethics which are integral of our value system must be taken serious and taught in our homes and expressed in the society. This is the only way the palpable nature of religion to fundamentalism and problem of normlessness in Nigeria can be reduced.

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